



# COMPLEMENTARIANISM & PREACHING

---

This paper aims to formulate a position on how complementarianism can and should function within Acts 29, specifically in relation to whether it is legitimate or appropriate for women to teach in the primary, regular gathering of a local church. In other words, this is about defining the acceptable breadth of the public practice of our complementarianism when the church meets together.

This paper is necessary because there is a breadth of practice in Acts 29 which needs addressing and assessing. Therefore, it is written for Acts 29 churches and, although it is primarily an internal document, it will be used as a metric for Assessment.

In its final form, this will be a position paper, formally approved by the Board and so an integral piece of the Covenant Renewal. It is intended to be global in its reflections and conclusion, albeit addressed largely to the contexts of the majority of our constituents.

The paper seeks to carefully and thoroughly unpack #4 of our 5 Distinctives.

**ACTS 29  
POSITION PAPER**

# COMPLEMENTARIANISM & PREACHING

Acts 29 Position Paper — July 2018

## ABSTRACT

### *Purpose*

This paper aims to formulate a position on how complementarianism can and should function within Acts 29. Given the breadth of practice which exists within Acts 29, this topic needs to be assessed and addressed.

To this end, the paper examines the Acts 29 Distinctive (#4) on complementarianism. It unpacks each paragraph in turn, explaining and expounding on the biblical rationale behind our position in order to provide a basis for our continued fidelity to male headship in the home and in the church.

This paper will be used in our Covenant Renewal process and also as a guide for Acts 29 Assessment.

### *Contents*

As well as expounding on each paragraph of our Distinctive, the paper highlights the missional aspect of complementarianism in a lost and watching world. Integral to our position is the firm conviction that women are essential to the life of the church and the work of gospel ministry. Acts 29 opposes universal patriarchy, universal hierarchy and any form of male oppression whatsoever.

Unpacking key biblical texts, the paper particularly explores whether women should preach in the gathered congregation. While acknowledging that a biblical range of application will exist among Acts 29 churches, this paper insists on the foundational understanding that the under-shepherding of the gathered church through preaching is restricted to elders, and that elders are to be men.

### *Conclusion*

It is hoped that the paper will clarify what it means for us to be complementarians, and thus what it means to sign the Covenant Renewal and to apply for membership in Acts 29.

We believe that biblical complementarianism, being a structure set in place by God, is a means to the joyful thriving of God's people and a light for the good of the watching world.

# INTRODUCTION

We are a diverse, global family of church-planting churches characterised by theological clarity, cultural engagement and missional innovation. An integral and essential part of our theological clarity, which informs our cultural engagement and our missional innovation, is our convictional complementarianism. This is #4 of our 5 Distinctives:

*We are deeply committed to the spiritual & moral equality of male & female and to men as responsible servant-leaders in both home and church.*

*Both men and women are together created in the divine image and are therefore equal before God as persons, possessing the same moral dignity and value, and have equal access to God through faith in Christ. Men and women are together the recipients of spiritual gifts designed to empower them for ministry in the local church and beyond. Therefore, women are to be encouraged, equipped, and empowered to utilise their gifting in ministry, in service to the body of Christ, and through teaching in ways that are consistent with the Word of God.*

*Both husbands and wives are responsible to God for spiritual nurture and vitality in the home, but God has given to the man primary responsibility to lead his wife and family in accordance with the servant-leadership and sacrificial love characterised by Jesus Christ. This principle of male headship should not be confused with, nor give any hint of, domineering control. Rather, it is to be the loving, tender and nurturing care of a godly man who is himself under the kind and gentle authority of Jesus Christ.*

*The Elders/Pastors of each local church have been granted authority under the headship of Jesus Christ to provide oversight and to teach/preach the Word of God in corporate assembly for the building up of the body. The office of Elder/Pastor is restricted to men.*

There is no awareness of any desire in the family to move towards an egalitarian position. However, it is clear that there is a divergence of opinion developing within Acts 29 as to how this conviction functions within the local church. Given the importance of this position to us as a “diverse, global family of church-planting churches,” it is critical we address the issue carefully. This paper aims to exegete our distinctive #4, paragraph by paragraph, so that we are all clear on its implications and applications. This approach to the issue has been adopted so that it might be clear that there is nothing novel in this understanding, but is a clear articulation of what our position as Acts 29 has always been.

# PARAGRAPH #1

***We are deeply committed to the spiritual and moral equality of male and female, and to men as responsible servant-leaders in both home & church.***

## ***1. We are culturally distinctive in a hostile world because we submit to the Bible.***

We feel ever more keenly that complementarianism is radically different from the mainstream view of gender, primarily in the west, but also increasingly in other contexts. Culturally, we have bought into a flattening, homogenous worldview in which we try to eradicate all differences between male and female. In such a fiercely ideological context, to openly stand for a complementarian perspective is bringing us into sharp conflict with a hostile & watching world. But it is vital we hold to the orthodox biblical doctrines which have sustained the church for centuries. This is not just for the sake of tradition, but because the Bible is our authority.

The Acts 29 church planting primer, *Multiplying Churches* describes the pressing nature of the issue: *"...the pressure points today are gender and sexuality. The relativism of our postmodern culture cares little for doctrinal affirmations. It is happy for us to believe whatever we want. But it will not tolerate dissent from its sexual and egalitarian agenda. [Thus,]...our thinking [can become] driven by the culture rather than the Word of God. And that sets us on a trajectory leading to doctrinal compromise."*<sup>1</sup>

Our call is to faithfully live in, delight in and proclaim the gospel of Christ, found in God's Word. God's people have always stood within, and yet distinct from, surrounding culture as they hold out the word of life - we must maintain that faithful stance. We also believe that this is more demanding and more liberating for both men and women than any other philosophy or theory of gender and sexuality. This is because in submitting to the Bible we submit to something that is relentlessly good news.

## ***2. We oppose universal patriarchy and universal hierarchy.***

This allows us to say that a biblical model of headship and submission for marriage and the household of faith is not a universal relationship that should characterise how all women relate to all men. Paul is specific in his instructions to Timothy, noting that the context for this behaviour is the household of God, the church:

*"I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth."* 1 Timothy 3 vv.14-16

---

<sup>1</sup> *Multiplying Churches: Exploring God's Mission Strategy*, edited by Steve Timmis, Christian Focus, 2016

### **3. We oppose male oppression.**

We know that, increasingly, the complementarian view will be demeaned and dismissed as a pretext for male oppression. It is seen not merely as one view among many, but (in a western context at least) a culturally reprehensible conviction.

The first paragraph in our distinctive means that we are resolutely opposed to any philosophy or practice which gives any men any freedom or encouragement whatsoever to domineer any women in any way!

These are much-needed statements in our diverse, global family. In non-western contexts, our insistence on spiritual and moral equality needs to be heard as truly revolutionary.

## **PARAGRAPH #2**

***Both men and women are together created in the divine image and are therefore equal before God as persons, possessing the same moral dignity and value, and have equal access to God through faith in Christ. Men and women are together the recipients of spiritual gifts designed to empower them for ministry in the local church and beyond. Therefore, women are to be encouraged, equipped, and empowered to utilise their gifting in ministry, in service to the body of Christ, and through teaching in ways that are consistent with the Word of God.***

### **4. We encourage women to use their gifting in the ministry of the church.**

The second paragraph in our distinctive moves us into the arena of service in the church. Much of what the Bible calls ministry involves the use of the Bible. There are multiple ways in which the Word of God is brought to bear on the church. In Colossians and Ephesians, it is done so in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. All Christians are to bring the gospel to bear on one another's lives and circumstances, as well as faithfully teach the gospel to those who do not know Christ. In Corinthians, everyone came to the assembly with a "hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, an interpretation." Whatever stance is taken on the cessationist/continuationist divide (and this is not the context to debate it), it is clear that there was a word-focused contribution from anyone in the church, regardless of gender or role. But these contributions are distinct from, and not to be confused with, the formal under-shepherding of God's people through the preaching of the Word.

In the letter to the Romans, we see Paul warmly greeting several women, commending their work alongside men for the advance of the gospel. It cannot be insignificant that the very first person he mentions is Phoebe, the likely deliverer of the letter to the Romans, to ensure that she will be welcomed and helped:

*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks*

*for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.” (Romans 16 vv.1-16)*

There are 29 people mentioned by name or title (mother, sister) in this warm and extensive greeting from Paul. Of that number, 10 are women: Phoebe, Prisca (Priscilla), Mary, Junia, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus’s mother, Julia, and Nereus’s sister are all clearly esteemed and gratefully commended. *“Both Christ and his apostles had some of their best friends among the devout (and upon that account honourable) women.”*<sup>2</sup>

And yet deep friendship is not the only feature characterising these relationships. These women were commended for their gospel work. They were not just pleasant companions, they were fellow labourers for the kingdom. Henry points out that Phoebe likely was a deacon: *“As a servant to the church at Cencrea: diakonon, a servant by office, a stated servant, not to preach the word... but in acts of charity and hospitality.”*<sup>3</sup> He also highlights the way Paul commends Priscilla’s theological understanding, writing that *“...the good wife of the family was so very eminent and forward in religion, so eminent that she is often named first.”*<sup>4</sup> As confident complementarians, we must ensure we make room for and highly esteem the friendship, theological contributions and hard-core, Christ-honouring gospel work of the women in our churches the way Paul did.

In *No Little Women*, Aimee Byrd writes that a key way to develop and deploy women as the invaluable partners in gospel ministry that they are is to view them as ‘*necessary allies*,’ a culturally fresh take on understanding the ‘helper’ in Genesis 2 v.18:

*“... the same word is used to describe God as a ‘helper’ to Israel throughout the Old Testament. And when we look at these verses, we see that this word communicates great strength. Psalm 89:17 is particularly interesting: “For you are the glory of their strength; by your favour our horn is exalted.” Here we have our word ‘ezer,’ usually translated helper, translated instead as ‘strength.’ These verses are also saturated in military language as they describe God as*

---

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible, Romans, Chapter 16. <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/romans/16.html> Accessed on 2 February, 2018

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*



*Israel's 'ezer.' The root for this word is used 128 times in Scripture, meaning 'rescue' and 'save.' It refers to God's rescue in thirty cases, which we see mostly in the Psalms.*"<sup>5</sup>

John McKinley expands on this:

*"The issue in 'ezer' is neither equality nor subordination, but distinction and relatedness. She is to be for the man as an ally to benefit him in the work they were given to do. Just as 'ezer' tells of God's relatedness to Israel as the necessary support for survival and military perils, the woman is the ally to the man, without which he cannot succeed or survive. Unlike 'helper,' that could seem optional, and allow the man to think he's otherwise adequate for his task without the women, the distinction of ally marks the man's dependence upon her contribution."*<sup>6</sup>

McKinley goes on to make an important point about the kind of culture we ought to cultivate in our churches:

*"While it's imperative to uphold the main work of the ministry of Word and sacrament, that doesn't mean that women, and in fact all lay members, don't contribute to and participate within this ministry. While we do have male leadership in the ministerial office, we don't want to promote a male culture in the church. Women are not only necessary allies to their husbands within their personal households but are also necessary allies to the men in carrying out the mission of the household of God. And in this way, women have distinct and diverse contributions to make alongside their brothers in Christ."*<sup>7</sup>

In the context of encouraging all women in church to flourish in the use of their gifts, we need to be attentive to the following issues:

### **5. We avoid unhelpful extremes.**

As stated in *Multipling Churches*<sup>8</sup>, two extremes reflected among complementarians are:

1. *Formal complementarianism* (in contrast to a *functional* complementarianism) where women, de facto, do whatever men do.
2. *Fearful complementarianism* (in contrast to a *thankful* complementarianism) where women have no significant role at all.

Both of these positions are unhelpful and to be avoided.

### **6. We are attentive to role, context & function.**

The primary tool through which headship is exercised in Christ-honouring homes and

---

<sup>5</sup> Aimee Byrd, *No Little Women: Equipping All Women in the Household of God*, P&R Publishing, 2016, p.25

<sup>6</sup> From John McKinley, "Necessary Allies: God as Ezer, Woman as Ezer," lecture, Nov. 17 2015, cited by Aimee Byrd in *No Little Women*, pp 25-26)

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Multipling Churches: Exploring God's Mission Strategy*, edited by Steve Timmis, Christian Focus, 2016

churches is the rightful handling of the Word of God. What sets apart these two communities from the wider community is the fact and manner of their submission to God's Word. They are comprised of people who intentionally submit to the rule of King Jesus, whose rule is exercised through the Scriptures. In the church, that responsibility is invested in those formally recognised as elders/ pastors/ bishops. The distinctive characteristic of these men is the aptitude to teach (1 Timothy 3 v.2). In all things they are to be exemplary exponents of ordinary, mundane, everyday discipleship: like all members of the household of faith they are to be respectable, hospitable, generous, self-controlled, gentle. But, in this one thing, they are to be distinguished. As elders/ pastors/ bishops, they direct the affairs of the congregation through the careful handling of the word of truth.

This emphasis connects well with the directions Paul gives to Timothy concerning his role in Ephesus as he sets the church in order, restoring it to gospel fidelity:

- *"Sound doctrine"* (1 Tim. 1 v.10)
- *"the gospel of the glory of the blessed God"* (1 Tim. 1 v.11)
- *"being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine"* (1 Tim. 4 v.6)
- *"devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching"* (1 Tim. 4 v.13)
- *"keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching"* (1 Tim. 4 v.16)
- *"Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching"* (1 Tim. 5 v.17)
- *"If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness"* (1 Tim. 6 v.3)
- *"guard the deposit entrusted to you"* (1 Tim. 6 v.20)

The means by which the church is rehabilitated is the means by which the church will grow. Timothy is to oversee the appointment of men who will do what Timothy was tasked with doing: that is, to grow the church through *"the gospel," "the whole counsel of God," "the Scriptures."* This occurs significantly, though not exhaustively, in *"public reading, preaching & teaching"* (4 v.13). When the church formally and intentionally gathers is when the Scriptures are read and expounded.

There is a weightiness to this *"public reading, preaching and teaching."* For instance, in the book of Nehemiah we see the central importance of Ezra's reading of the Law as Nehemiah sought to not merely build a wall, but to reconstitute the people of God under the covenant. It is a helpful parallel:

*"And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden*



*platform that they had made for the purpose... And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. Also... the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense,<sup>9</sup> so that the people understood the reading.” (Nehemiah 8 vv.1-8)*

Luke’s description of what Jesus did as he embarked on his ministry is also relevant:

*“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,*

*‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’*

*And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4 vv.16-21)*

The significance of these two examples is the weight they give to this role and function of reading and expounding the word of God. There is nothing perfunctory about it. It is a defining, shaping activity. It sets the Word of God in the centre of the congregation, and it is through that word that the Lord rules his people.

This was Timothy’s vital task. He was to model it for the leaders because it was precisely this task which was to be assumed by the elders/ pastors/ bishops. That is clear from 1 Timothy 5 v.17: *“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching.”*

Paul’s aim here is not to distinguish ruling elders from preaching elders, but to specify the nature of the rule: *“the elders who direct the church, that is, those who work hard in preaching and teaching.”* The nature of ruling well is the faithful exposition of the Scriptures, for that is how Jesus leads his church. The elders who do this are worthy of double honour.

What this establishes for us is the vital importance of elders/ bishops/ pastors and the essential aspect of their ministry, namely leading the congregation through the teaching of the Scriptures. That is a critical way in which they express their leadership, for as was noted earlier, that is how they are primarily distinguished from others in the church - both men and women.

This puts the focus not only on the **role**, but also significantly on the **context**: namely, *the gathered congregation*. This is pivotal to the issue we are addressing. The church is led, metaphorically speaking, from ‘the pulpit’ as the Word of God is expounded. It is that which

---

<sup>9</sup> “...giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read.” (NIV)

primarily sets the agenda, establishes the parameters, expounds and applies the truth to both the body as a whole and the daily lives of the individual disciples. That is the task of the elders/ pastors/ bishops. It is public and formal. It is authoritative and shaping. If anyone wants to know what the church believes, they sit under the word as it is taught week by week by those leading the church. That is how those leaders lead the church.

In a recent Acts 29 blog, Yancey Arrington helpfully explains:

*“The pulpit is the most effective place where blossoming congregations not only see what the church believes about certain doctrines but, just as importantly, how they apply those doctrines. People enter the doors holding all kinds of assumptions about what a church is and how a church should act.*

*The pulpit ministry, then, is a catalytic instrument whereby the preacher explains how this church intends to embody its theology:*

- *When we say complementarian, this is what we mean ...*
- *When we say we believe in God’s sovereignty in salvation, this is how that looks ...*
- *When we say we’re missional, this is how that value surfaces in this body ...*

*The pulpit ministry also serves as catechesis for congregants - including current and future ministry leaders. With each sermon, people are being corporately disciplined not only in what the church believes but expressly how the church believes it.”<sup>10</sup>*

## PARAGRAPH #3

***Both husbands and wives are responsible to God for spiritual nurture and vitality in the home, but God has given to the man primary responsibility to lead his wife and family in accordance with the servant-leadership and sacrificial love characterised by Jesus Christ. This principle of male headship should not be confused with, nor give any hint of, domineering control. Rather, it is to be the loving, tender and nurturing care of a godly man who is himself under the kind and gentle authority of Jesus Christ.***

### ***7. We model the gospel pattern in church and at home.***

As Ephesians 5 vv.31-32 shows us, marriage is a picture of the gospel: *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”* There is deep meaning, and power to communicate gospel truth, within our relationships – particularly the gender relationship in marriage. This is God’s beautiful design:

---

<sup>10</sup> Yancey Arrington, “Planter, Become a Better Preacher”, TGC Acts 29 Blog <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/planter-become-better-preacher/> accessed on 30th Jan, 2018

*“...Marriage and gender roles are not social or cultural constructs. They are divinely revealed. And they are also revealing in the sense that they are given by God as a revelation of his passionate commitment to his people. They point to the gospel. And, if they are designed by God, we are not free to redesign them.”<sup>11</sup>*

*“Of course Christian egalitarians uphold the sanctity of marriage. But in Ephesians 5 Paul does not simply say that marriage points to the relationship of Christ to his people. He also says how it points to that relationship. The wife submits to her husband so that she pictures the church’s submission to Christ. And the husband is to love his wife so that he pictures Christ’s love for his bride. It is not marriage in general that illustrates Christ’s union with the church. It is marriage with male headship, sacrificial, reciprocating love and female submission. To redefine the gender relationships within marriage is fatally to blur the picture that marriage presents.”<sup>12</sup>*

As within marriage, there are clear gender distinctions when it comes to the household of faith. These distinctions are by the design of our good Creator, for his glory.

### **8. We model gospel patterns with missional purpose.**

Within Acts 29, mission necessarily drives us forward. Complementarianism does not merely exist alongside our mission but is integral to it because it displays something vital, true and pertinent about God. As Paul shows in 1 Corinthians 11, it gives an intimate glimpse into the relational dynamics within the economic Trinity - a stunning picture of the willing and joyful submission of the Son to the Father in the economy of redemption. This picture of the Trinity shows us the beauty of the temporal, willing subordination of Jesus, the Son, to the Father.<sup>13</sup>

Because of these things, we need to display our convictions as something beautiful, enriching, affirming and desirable, regardless of the wider cultural discussion. This means that we will almost always be in conflict with the wider culture, whether in our permissiveness or our restrictions. But headship is about creating a culture of flourishing. Godly men stepping up to the role of leadership to which God calls them is essential to the flourishing of the church, and serves as a contrast to the ungodly models of male leadership we see in the world. This must be so, in both the regular household and the household of faith. As we recognise that there are roles women cannot play (as is true of most men) and functions women should not perform (as is true of most men), we need to work hard at ensuring everyone is developed and deployed as disciples and gospel ministers.

### **9. We recognise a legitimate range.**

As we take a step back from this exegesis of our distinctive, the question, in the church and in the home, is essentially this: as those who believe that the Bible, as the Word of God, is

---

<sup>11</sup> [Multiplying Churches: Exploring God’s Mission Strategy](#), edited by Steve Timmis, Christian Focus, 2016, p.156

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*, pp 157-158

<sup>13</sup> For a helpful and brief explanation of this, see Ligonier Ministries’ “What’s the Difference between the Ontological and Economic Trinity?” excerpt taken from R.C. Sproul’s commentary on John: <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/whats-difference-between-ontological-and-economic-trinity/> (accessed 30th Jan 2018)

our final authority in all matters of faith and conduct, which roles and functions for women best express that conviction and lead to health and vitality in the local church and in the home? A number of questions of application are provoked because the position necessarily leaves open a range of issues.

But there is one specific, essential question as far as the local church goes: *in what contexts is it permissible, desirable and beneficial for a woman to teach or preach?*

We maintain that biblical revelation is clear: the shaping and directing role of preaching the Word of God to the gathered people of God is limited to the church's elders.

## PARAGRAPH #4

***The Elders/Pastors of each local church have been granted authority under the headship of Jesus Christ to provide oversight and to teach/preach the Word of God in corporate assembly for the building up of the body. The office of Elder/Pastor is restricted to men.***

### ***10. We uphold the essential role of elders for leading the church.***

This last paragraph draws our attention to something that is critical to our position, namely that there is something significant about the physical act of gathering. There is something defining about when the people of God come together. It is a visible demonstration of the nature of the church: a diverse people, brought together by the gospel, submitting to that word in both life and doctrine. This significance is affirmed and celebrated consistently throughout the Bible.

In the Old Testament, Sinai was a defining moment for the people of God. In fact it was when they were formally constituted as such. On four occasions in Deuteronomy it is called the *"day of gathering,"* in which the LXX uses the word ekklesia.

In Deuteronomy 4 v.10 the text reads, *"How on the day that you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, the Lord said to me, 'Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.'"*

It is even more explicit in Deut. 9 v.10: *"And the Lord gave me the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words that the Lord had spoken with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly (church)."*

See also Deut.10 v.4: *"And he wrote on the tablets, in the same writing as before, the Ten Commandments that the Lord had spoken to you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly."*

See also Deut. 18 v.16: *"just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly..."*

In his speech in Acts 7, Stephen refers to that event: *“This is the one who was in the congregation (church) in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us”* (Acts 7 v.38).

And in Hebrews 12 we find the writer describing the glory of the new covenant and contrasting it with the old in terms of the privileges enjoyed by the people of God. His reference points are the assembly (church) at Sinai and that at Zion.

It is this focus on the assembly or act of assembling that informs Matthew 18 v.20: *“where two or three are gathered, I am there in the midst of them.”* Paul probably references this statement, but at the very least gives it similar weight and significance in 1 Corinthians 5v.4: *“So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present...”*. Lest we think this applies only to formal, disciplinary moments, Paul makes a similar point in 1 Corinthians 11 v.18, *“I hear that when you come together as a church...”*. Also in 1 Corinthians 14 v.26, when he is clearly describing the regular gathering of the church, *“When you come together...”*.

In fact, the very word *“church”* requires an actual assembly, cf. Acts 19 v.32. This is so significant that scholars like Donald Robinson saw the word *“church”* as more of a verb than a noun. Church fundamentally involves actual *‘churching,’* that is, gathering. The church has to gather, not least because in that gathering the agenda is set and the church resourced for its missional scattering.

It is due to the importance and significance of this event, in which the Word of God is brought before the people, that the preaching/teaching of the Scriptures is the responsibility of those duly recognised and appointed as elders/ pastors/ bishops to formally teach it. It ought not to be formally taught in this context by others who are not elders/ pastors/ bishops, for the act of teaching not only has an inherent authority, it also bestows authority in the office/ function of the elders. As John Stott put it, *“Preachers are to be neither inventors of new doctrines or editors who delete old doctrine. Rather they are stewards faithfully holding out scriptural truths to Gods household. Nothing more, nothing less and nothing else.”*<sup>14</sup> This is how vital it is. Preaching/ teaching to the gathered church is the exercise of Christ’s rule among his people. This means it is not the context for women to teach. Nor, for that matter, is it the most suitable place for men who are not elders/ pastors/ bishops to teach (although, for exceptions to see, see below).

This relates to one type of teaching/preaching in one particular context: namely, the corporate gathering of the church. But nothing should be permitted which allows this to be undermined, albeit unintentionally. This is where the formal, as opposed to the functional, complementarianism needs to be avoided. Like justice, male headship in home and church happening under the radar is not sufficient; both need to be visible. The church is God’s mission strategy in the world, revealing God’s glory in her allegiance to God’s ways. As we live as people of a different Kingdom, we proclaim the excellencies of our King.

---

<sup>14</sup> John Stott, *The Challenge of Preaching*, ed. Greg Scharf, Eerdmans, 2015, page 96

## ***11. We celebrate and acknowledge biblical restrictions as good news for women, the church and the world.***

In the blog “Women Teaching Men -- How Far is Too Far?”<sup>15</sup> Mary Kassian re-orientates the discussion so that, for a woman, it pivots not around “how far can I go in teaching men” but rather “how can I serve Jesus and love what God loves?”

She expounds her own thought process in answering that question:

*If I am a woman who is gifted at teaching, at what point do I cross the line?*

*As in the case of purity, I believe that putting together a set of rules about permitted behaviours would be both misleading and ridiculous. Furthermore, I believe that asking “How far is too far?” is asking the wrong question.*

*For me, a better question is: “Do I love what God loves? Am I treasuring Jesus by treasuring God’s model of headship? Do I uphold it and support male headship as a good and beautiful aspect of God’s wise plan? Does how I exercise my teaching gift indicate that I value it?” And, “How can I best honour Christ in how (and in what context) I teach?”*

*I believe the question of how to honour Christ through the exercise of my teaching gift revolves around the issue of whether I’m acting like a church-father<sup>16</sup>. Am I doing something that is, or will likely be construed as, setting the doctrinal and spiritual direction for my entire church family?*

*...The way I determine if teaching in a specific religious venue to a co-ed audience honours male headship is by trying to determine how closely that particular situation mimics the nature, role, and function of a church-father (i.e. elder) in governing and providing public doctrinal instruction for the local-church family.*

*I try to pin down where the venue sits on each of the following eight continuums:*

- 1. Context:** congregational (church) → non-congregational. *Is this local-church or is it not exactly church?*
- 2. Nature:** exegetical → testimonial/inspirational. *Am I forcefully interpreting a text of Scripture or sharing from my life and experience with biblical support?*
- 3. Authority:** governmental (directive) → non-governmental (non-directive). *Am I establishing the official standard for the community?*
- 4. Relationship:** close (personal/relational) → distant (impersonal/non-relational). *Am I in a community relationship with these men? Am I seeking to mentor them?*
- 5. Commitment:** formal → informal. *Have the listeners made a formal commitment to me or to this community?*

---

<sup>15</sup> Mary Kassian, “Women Teaching Men - How Far is Too Far?” Referenced on March 17, 2017 at: <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/women-teaching-men-how-far-is-too-far>

<sup>16</sup> The term can be considered synonymous with elder. Also in the following paragraph.



6. **Obligation:** *obligatory* → *voluntary*. Are the listeners obliged to listen to the teaching that takes place in this context? Can they be disciplined and corrected for failing to obey?
7. **Constancy:** *habitual (ongoing)* → *occasional*. Does this happen often and repetitively or infrequently?
8. **Maturity:** *sister* → *mother*. Does my age and spiritual maturity create a situation where I am speaking as a mother would to her sons?

*The more a teaching venue leans toward the left (the first part of each pairing), the less likely it is that the venue is an appropriate one for me to provide co-ed instruction. The more the speaking venue leans toward the right (the second part of each pairing), the more likely it is that I might be a helpful teacher in this context.<sup>17</sup>*

This invites us to careful reflection and prudence as regards the contexts where men are taught by women. The biblical texts are demonstrably asymmetrical on this issue, and we must acknowledge and bear witness to that asymmetry.

## **12. We are not squeamish about the force of the prohibition in 1 Timothy 2 v.12.**

The foregoing helpfully unpacks some key issues in the key text, namely 1 Timothy 2 v.12: *“I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain silent.”* Graham Beynon writes thoughtfully and helpfully on this passage, and we will highlight a few excerpts:

*“The context appears to be that of the gathering of the church (indicated by 2 v.8) and involves specific instructions for men and women as to how they are to behave. The instructions to the women fall into two categories: that of their ‘adornment’ and that of activities with respect to men. This is then followed by a rationale in vv.13-14 and finally what is presumably an encouragement in v.15.*

*The passage has a key word tying it together: ‘propriety’ occurs in verse 9 and 15 and is hence a key idea in regard to the overall attitude and conduct Paul expects. In addition there is a balanced structure to the commands in verse 11-12:*

- v11 *Learn in silence (11a) in full submission (11a)*
- v12 *Not to teach (12a) not to exercise authority (12b) to be in silence (12c)*

*Hence silence/teaching and submission/authority form two pairs, and in addition the repetition of ‘silence’ forms an inclusio.*

*...The word used for ‘silence’ (ἡσῦσια) can mean silence, quietness, or a peaceable attitude. Hence it may convey a sense of deference to those teaching and listening to them, without requiring absolute silence.*

---

<sup>17</sup> Mary Kassian, “Women Teaching Men - How Far is Too Far?” Referenced on March 17, 2017 at: <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/women-teaching-men-how-far-is-too-far>

*...Some take 'to teach' to refer to no teaching whatsoever: this is clearly untenable given the reference to women teaching in Titus 3 v.2. Instead the reference is to not teaching a man. Some take this to mean no teaching by a woman of a man; others take the teaching in question to be 'authoritative' teaching of some sort.*

*...These factors lead us towards an understanding of the prohibition to be against an 'authority position' of teaching, rather than a blanket prohibition of any women ever teaching any man."<sup>18</sup>*

Across all contexts and cultures in our family, this will, in practice, mean that this prohibition is to be applied to the gathered church as it sits formally under the word of God as it is taught. This, by its very nature, is authoritative teaching.

However, there are complementarians who would refute this claim. Andrew Wilson and John Dickson have both argued for the permissibility of women preaching, as does John Frame. Wilson distinguishes “*Big-T*” and “*Little-T*” teaching, Frame talks about “*special*” teaching and “*general*” teaching and Dickson works from a very specific definition of teaching as being the preservation and impartation of the fixed traditions of Jesus as handed on by the apostles. This paper is not the appropriate context to engage fully with these positions, but one or two points of engagement may be helpful.

As Wilson leans on Dickson’s view of teaching as a specific form of communication, the following response can be applied to both. The text about the role of women when the church gathers in 1Tim 2 is followed immediately by specific instruction concerning the qualifications of an elder. The one distinguishing characteristic of elders from other godly men in the church, is their aptitude to teach, cf. 1Tim 3 v.2. If Dickson is right that contemporary preaching is not teaching, it is difficult to see what actually sets an elder apart from anyone else.

Finally, it is sometimes said that Keller takes a similar position. However, here is an excerpt from an email: “*regular preaching would be a de facto exercise of church authority, even if, technically the woman was not an elder. But if she regularly preaches she is forming people’s biblical doctrine and understanding in a much more profound way and therefore is doing the work of an elder*”.

### ***13. We have the courage of our convictions in our theological conclusions and in our practical outworking.***

This paper began by stating that differences are emerging within Acts 29 as to how our understanding of complementarianism should function. The most pressing question, then, is how should we approach these differences? Does the way we approach other potentially divisive issues provide us a way forward? We allow for differences in theology and practice, with the understanding that Christians can, before God, hold to different interpretations

---

<sup>18</sup> Graham Beynon, “The Role of Women in Christian Ministry.” Please see the addendum following the conclusion for Beynon’s full paper.

of God's word while still sharing a united desire to follow Jesus in proclaiming the gospel through planting gospel-centered churches. Historically, we have made the distinction between open-hand and closed-hand issues for the sake of gospel partnership and the advance of the kingdom.

For all the attraction of this approach, we cannot lose sight of the fact that, as an organisation, we have, from our inception, knowingly taken our stand on complementarianism and so regard it as a closed-hand issue. We have done so because we are persuaded that this issue is important enough, both biblically and culturally, to be a "*hill to die on.*" By contrast, the position taken on spiritual gifts as articulated in Distinctive #3, is written in such a way as to make it possible for both continuationists and cessationists to be part of Acts 29. The explanation of our understanding of what it means to be complementarian is both prescriptive and proscriptive. Once again, the final clause of our Distinctive states the position clearly: "*The Elders/Pastors of each local church have been granted authority under the headship of Jesus Christ to provide oversight and to teach/preach the Word of God in corporate assembly for the building up of the body. The office of Elder/Pastor is restricted to men.*"

If this means anything it means that ***the formal preaching/teaching of the local church, in whatever is the primary, regular gathering of that church, is the role and responsibility of the local elders.*** They do not have the authority to delegate this. They certainly cannot delegate this where and when it is specifically forbidden to do so, as it is in 1 Timothy 2.

There are three outstanding issues which can be helpfully clarified.

1. If there are exceptions to the general position that ***the formal preaching/teaching of the local church, in whatever is the primary, regular gathering of that church, is the role and responsibility of the local elders,*** they will be infrequent and notable. For example, if there is a series such as Issues Facing Christians Today, non-elders, both male and female, can be utilised to help the church grapple with specific issues. For example, the church might ask a gynaecologist to speak into the issue of abortion. At the same time, it should be the elders who establish the doctrinal position of the church on the issue from a faithful and clear exposition of Scripture.
2. Given the importance of gathering and preaching/teaching in that context, the primary, regular gathering of the church is not the best context in which people's teaching gifts are tested. Alternative opportunities should be created for this if none already exist. It can be appropriate to nurture known gifts in this context if a man shows credible elder potential, and also a context to develop candidate elders. However, both of these will be the exception rather than the *norm*.
3. There is opportunity for visiting preachers, but they should come with the commendation of their local church and, unless they are speaking on a known specialism, would ordinarily be formally recognised elders in their own context.

We should and must celebrate the contribution that others make to that shaping event of the primary gathering of the local church. We do that through creating opportunities for

their contributions. In this, there is liberty and flexibility. For example, whatever our view of prophecy in terms of what it looks like and its current availability, in Paul's view it was clearly part of the word-based gifts and played a role in encouraging and edifying the body as a whole. It was available to women as well as men who were not elders. These, or similar kinds of contributions, ought to be intentionally built into the life of the local church. This will not answer detractors of this position, but it will give less opportunity to dismiss these convictions as mere chauvinism.

## CONCLUSION

Since we are a family of church-planting churches, it is not surprising that we have highlighted the missional aspect of complementarianism. The local church is God's mission strategy, and the structures God has established for his church are not ours to change. We aim to faithfully live in allegiance to the Saviour's Word, trusting that our Father's glory is displayed in the obedience of his people. Integral to our position is the firm conviction that women are essential to the life of the church and the work of gospel ministry. We oppose universal patriarchy, universal hierarchy and any form of oppression whatsoever.

As a diverse, global family, we recognise that there is a legitimate range of application among Acts 29 churches on aspects of the outworking of complementarianism. The particular focus of this paper however, is in answering the specific question as to whether women should preach in the gathered congregation. If the gathering is the occasion when the church is shepherded by the exposition of God's Word, the position of Acts 29 is that it is not an appropriate context for women to teach because it is the primary responsibility of the male elders as under-shepherds.

This paper aims to clarify what it means for us to be complementarians and what it means for us to sign the Covenant Renewal. Most importantly, it clarifies what it means for us to confidently and joyfully live out our shared convictions for the glory of God, the benefit of the church, the blessing of our diverse, global family and the good of the watching world.



**ADDENDUM:  
THE ROLE OF WOMEN  
IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY**

---

Graham Beynon

Minister, Grace Church, Cambridge, UK

Director of Independent Ministry Training,  
Oak Hill Theological College, London, UK

# 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to address the role of women in Christian ministry. A number of issues relating to the role of women will be assessed, especially exegesis of the pertinent passages and the meaning of key words. A summary of the biblical teaching and its application in today's situation will also be attempted. While differing views will be mentioned lack of space prevents a comprehensive rehearsal of all the opposing arguments.

In grappling with this issue it is important to note a number of more fundamental factors which will influence one's approach. Some of these are discussed briefly where necessary in commenting on texts below; however they are raised here as anyone reading in this area will soon realise their importance and the variety of approaches they can engender. For an example of the way these issues play into the discussion, and can dominate it, see Giles' article and the responses.<sup>19</sup> It may well be that the whole debate will move more to these areas than discussion of the texts in question.

## 1.1 Hermeneutics

Particularly important factors are:

- The accuracy with which the background settings of letters can be determined and the extent to which they should affect our reading of the letter.
- The extent to which the cultural embodiment of a biblical principle and the principle itself can be distinguished.
- The effect of difficult verses within some of the texts in question<sup>20</sup>: here we find the difference between saying we may not understand all of a passage fully and saying we therefore cannot understand/apply any of it.

## 1.2 Systematics

There is great variation in the way different texts are synthesised: some arguments turn on asserting which are the more 'fundamental' texts and reading all others in their light. Typically this involves either taking Galatians 3:28 as fundamental and reading equality of roles from it into other texts, or pitting the descriptive texts of what women did against the didactic texts prohibiting ministry.

## 1.3 Today's culture

It is very easy for the changes in culture with regard to the role of women to affect our view on this subject – and this cuts both ways. One side can think that any restrictions on the role

---

<sup>19</sup> K. Giles, 'A Critique of the "Novel" Contemporary Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 Given in the Book Women in the Church', Part I EQ, 72:2, (2000), pp151-167, and Part II, EQ, 72:3, (2000), pp195-215. Replies: A. Kostenberger, 'A Response',

<sup>20</sup> Usually 1 Cor 11:10, and 1 Tim 2:15



of women today are simply hangovers of ignorant male chauvinism, and the other side can see any consideration of change as bowing to liberal feminism. Yet, others see application of biblical principles as being radically determined by our cultural setting.

### *1.4 Related issues*

Clearly one's overall view of Biblical teaching on personhood and sexuality, and also on male-female relationships in marriage, come into play in this discussion.

## **2. MEANING OF 'HEAD'**

NOTE: this section involves a more technical discussion. Some readers may wish to move directly to the summary in 2.6.

### *2.1 Introduction*

This is an important issue for understanding 1 Cor 11 (and also Eph 5). The main debate is whether κεφαλή carries a meaning of leader/superior and hence 'authority over' or a meaning of 'source', especially 'source of life', with no connotations of authority. Understanding of Paul's meaning should come from (a) his own use by examination of each context, (b) examination of the LXX which is the most determinative document for lexical studies outside of the NT, and (c) extra-biblical literature from as close to NT period as possible.

[NOTE: There are no other occurrences of κεφαλή in the NT in other than a literal sense outside of the Pauline literature.]

### *2.2 Pauline literature*

There are seven passages in which Paul uses κεφαλή. These are shown in the table below. Examination of these shows that authority is a common theme to least some of them. It is true that others have an element of 'source of life' which needs to be acknowledged. However this is both not as dominant as some claim, and is also a 'both/and' rather than an 'either/or' situation. Arnold has demonstrated that the references in Ephesians and Colossians are most probably drawn from a physiological understanding of the head functioning as the leader/authority and the source of growth/nourishment.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> C. E. Arnold, 'Jesus Christ: "Head" of the Church (Colossians and Ephesians)' in Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ, edited by J. B. Green and M. Turner, (Paternoster, 1994).

<i>Text</i>	<i>Summary</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1 Cor 11:3	Christ head of man; man head of woman; God head of Christ	Passage does involve discussion of origin (v8), but also involves issues of authority
Eph 1:22	God placing all things under Christ's feet and making him head over everything	Superiority and authority are clear from context
Eph 4:15	Growth of the body up into the head who is Christ	The idea of growth is present but so is that of leadership
Eph 5:23	Husband is head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church	Leadership/authority is clearly present but so is source of nourishment
Col 1:18	Christ is head of the church	Firstborn gives idea of supremacy and original source
Col 2:19	From Christ the head the whole body Source of growth is clear but so is leadership grows	Source of growth is clear but so is leadership

### 2.3 LXX

*Ro'sh* is used of a leader/superior 180 times in the LXX; this is often translated as ἄρχον (60%) but another 13 words are used to translate it including κεφαλή (18 times)<sup>22</sup>. Of these 6 are variant readings, 4 preserve a head/tail contrast and 8 are definite examples.

Hence it is claimed by one side that this is an unusual translation so rare that that the metaphorical use of κεφαλή to mean leader/superior is without support.<sup>23</sup> Given the restriction of most of the occurrences to one section of Judges (10:18; 11:8, 9, 11), it is further claimed to be the result of one particular scribe who was unaware of this inappropriate use.<sup>24</sup>

In response:

- The dismissal of variant readings should not be allowed: while the variants clearly exist they still demonstrate that κεφαλή was used of a leader/superior; nothing more than their presence in some manuscripts, and their meaning in that context, is being claimed.
- Ruling authority may still be present in the head-tail contrast; examination of the context suggests that it is.
- The small fraction of translations of *ro'sh* by κεφαλή is actually to be expected unless the translators were to preserve a metaphorical meaning every time. Instead they chose words for which the normal meaning was 'ruler'. This does not demonstrate they thought κεφαλή was inappropriate, only that they did not seek to use a metaphor in the majority of passages.

<sup>22</sup> The exact figure is debated depending on who is counting but it only differs by 1-3.

<sup>23</sup> G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, (Eerdmans, 1987).

<sup>24</sup> P. B. Payne, 'Response', in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, edited by A. Mickleson, (IVP, 1986).

- Some of the other words than κεφαλή are used to translate ro'sh meaning leader/superior are found only a handful of times, but no one questions whether the same meaning is intended.
- No LXX examples of κεφαλή meaning 'source' are found. Given the normal rules of lexical study the fact that 18 examples of one interpretation but none of another are found is decisive.

## 2.4 Extra-biblical sources

From biblical and extra-biblical material Grudem cites 49 metaphorical uses of κεφαλή where a person of superior rank is meant. This includes 12 from the NT and 18 from the LXX, leaving 19 extra-biblical occurrences.<sup>25</sup> These findings have been challenged from different quarters:

- Payne gives extra-biblical examples where κεφαλή is claimed to mean 'source'.<sup>26</sup>
- Fee says of Grudem's examples that there are 'serious exegetical questions as to whether the authors intended a metaphorical sense of "authority over".' Instead Fee says that all the evidence demonstrates is that metaphorical usage as 'leader' can be found but that this is the exception that proves the rule. He concludes that Paul's readers would most naturally have understood him to be referring to κεφαλή as source. Fee draws mainly on the work of Payne in this analysis.<sup>27</sup>
- Cervin also criticised Grudem's work saying many of the extra-biblical examples were ambiguous or false.<sup>28</sup>
- C. Kroeger quotes many examples from Classical and Patristic writings where κεφαλή is seen to mean source; in fact Kroeger concludes that any meaning as authority/leader is completely absent.<sup>29</sup>

Grudem replies<sup>30</sup> that:

- The examples given by Payne either do not appreciate the full context and/or are ambiguous.
- The examples given by Kroeger are either the same ones as suggested by Payne which Grudem has replied to, or they simply do not demonstrate what she claims. In fact her conclusions are quite misleading as material from the Apostolic Fathers and early Patristic writers demonstrates that use of κεφαλή as

<sup>25</sup> W. Grudem, 'Does Kephale Mean "Source" or "Authority Over" in Greek Literature', *Trinity Journal*, 6, (1985), pp35-59.

<sup>26</sup> P. B. Payne, 'Response', in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, edited by A. Mickleson, (IVP, 1986).

<sup>27</sup> G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, (Eerdmans, 1987).

<sup>28</sup> R. S. Cervin, 'Does Kephale Mean "Source" or "Authority Over" in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal', *Trinity Journal*, 10, (1989), pp85-112.

<sup>29</sup> C. Kroeger, 'Head', in *Dict of Paul and His Letters*, (IVP, 1993). See also fuller article in G. G. Hull, *Equal to Serve*, (SU, 1987).

<sup>30</sup> See both W. Grudem, 'The Meaning of Kephale ("Head"): A Response to Recent Studies', in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by W. Grudem and J. Piper, (Crossway, 1991); and 'The Meaning of κεφαλή ("Head"): An Evaluation of New Evidence, Real and Alleged', *JETS*, 44, 1, (2001), pp25-68.

leader is common. This data shows that such a meaning could easily have been intended at the time of writing the NT.

- Grudem's response to Cervin concedes one or two examples but demonstrates the inadequacy of the overall criticism.

Hence Grudem concludes that there are no *unambiguous* examples of κεφαλή meaning source, and only a few possible examples. Where these occur the idea of authority is usually also present.

These conclusions are supported by the independent work of Fitzmyer who concludes that the meaning ruler/authority is part of the normal metaphorical usage for κεφαλή and that a meaning of source cannot be adequately demonstrated.<sup>31</sup>

Further support comes from the study of Max Turner.<sup>32</sup> He discusses the existence of homonyms for the word κεφαλή primarily that of 'beginning' and 'ruler'. As homonyms these would have been thought of as independent words. However Bedale's influential article first suggesting that κεφαλή could mean 'source' fails to recognise how separately these words would have been conceived, and instead relies on their being confused. Turner also brings linguistic rules to bear on the subject which draw further into question those possible occurrences where κεφαλή might mean 'source'. He concludes that there is no good evidence of κεφαλή meaning 'source' in the public domain of Paul's day. He ends with: 'Those who wish to protest that that "head" as "authority over" is relatively rare should at least be prepared to admit that "head" as "source" is considerably rarer (probably to the point of vanishing altogether).'<sup>33</sup>

## 2.5 Other interpretations

Thiselton<sup>34</sup> suggests a meaning of 'pre-eminent, foremost and synecdoche for a representative role'. I.e. he wants to allow multiple meanings and include an element of 'leadership' without following what he sees as Grudem's narrow reading. Cervin<sup>35</sup> and Liefeld<sup>36</sup> suggest similar meanings. Grudem's response is simply that such a meaning is not found in the literature of the time or in any of the speciality lexicons. That is not to say that ideas of pre-eminence are not present as the connection between eminence and leadership/authority was very strong. However it does mean that to argue for a meaning of pre-eminence without any concept of authority is wrong.

---

<sup>31</sup> J. Fitzmyer, 'Another Look at *Kephale* in 1 Corinthians 11:3', NTS, 35, (1989), pp503-511; and '*Kephale* in 1 Corinthians 11:3' *Interpretation*, 47, (1993), pp52-59.

<sup>32</sup> Turner M. 'Modern Linguistics and the New Testament', in *Hearing the New Testament*, edited by J. Green, (Eerdmans, 1995).

<sup>33</sup> Turner M. 'Modern Linguistics and the New Testament', in *Hearing the New Testament*, edited by J. Green, (Eerdmans, 1995), p172.

<sup>34</sup> A. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGNT, (Eerdmans, 2000).

<sup>35</sup> R. S. Cervin, 'Does Kephale Mean "Source" or "Authority Over" in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal', *Trinity Journal* 10, (1989), pp85-112.

<sup>36</sup> W. L. Liefeld, 'Women, Submission and Ministry in 1 Corinthians', in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, edited by A. Mickleson, (IVP, 1986).

## 2.6 Summary

It has to be said of this debate that much turns on the interpretation of the researcher in question: what to one is a clear example of κεφαλή used as 'source' is ambiguous to another, or even an example of 'authority' to another. Hence it can come down to claims by both sides as to which is the 'majority' and 'rare' usage. The situation is worsened by apparently sloppy (or even fraudulent) scholarship on occasions, and by great overstatements of the evidence in popular books.<sup>37</sup> This is unfortunate for the lay person who ends up not knowing which side to believe. My opinion on examining a great deal of the evidence and reading portions of the primary sources is for κεφαλή carrying an 'authority/leader' meaning, but on occasions also involving a 'source of life/nourishment' element in addition. This is only ever an *additional* component and whether it is present should be determined contextually.

## 3. 1 CORINTHIANS 11

The above discussion on meaning of head is extremely influential (but not determinative) on the interpretation of 1 Cor 11:2-16.

### 3.1 Head as 'source'

If head as 'source' is used then the argument of verse 3 must be as follows:

- Christ is the source of man in creation
- Man is the source of woman in creation
- God is the source of Christ in eternity OR in the incarnation

This is the position of most egalitarians who usually conclude that nothing in this passage suggests subordination of women.<sup>38</sup> The requirement for a head covering is usually seen as a culturally appropriate sign of respect for one's husband. Hence the biblical principle is taken to be 'mutual respect' only, and not 'respect of male leadership'.

As well as the debate over semantic range many disallow the meaning of 'superior/authority' here because of what they see as a heretical subordinationist Christology (see especially C. Kroeger<sup>39</sup>). However this is not appreciate the distinction between functional and ontological subordination and many do not perceive that to say that God is the source of Christ in eternity is to run close to the same risk – some almost say Christ is God's first creation. Others (e.g. Meir) say that source of existence is in view but that the order of creation necessarily involves subordination.

---

<sup>37</sup> For example G. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, (Baker, 1990), claims that there is not a single use of κεφαλή as 'authority' in the NT or the extra-biblical literature.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. C. S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, (Hendrickson, 1992).

<sup>39</sup> C. C. Kroeger, 'The Classical Concept of Head as Source', in G. G. Hull, *Equal to Serve*, (SU, 1987).

[Interestingly this was the view of Bedale's influential article in 1954 which first suggested the meaning of source; he stated that the consequence of man being the woman's source in Paul's thought was the subordination of the women, but has been rather selectively quoted since.<sup>40</sup>]

### 3.2 Head as 'leader/authority'

If head as leader/authority is used then the argument is:

- Christ is the leader/authority of man
- Man is the leader/authority of woman
- God (the Father) is the leader/authority of Christ

This is not set up a four tier hierarchy (God-Christ-Man-Woman) but rather is considering 3 pairs of relationships. The relationship of headship between man and woman mean it is inappropriate for a woman to pray/prophesy publicly without a head covering. While the exact meaning of head coverings continues to be debated it is most probable that within the culture of the day to do so was an act of insubordination to her husband and hence shamed him.

### 3.3 Argument from creation

Paul gives further arguments as to why a head covering is required for a woman but not for a man. It is debated as to whether these are complementary to the concept of headship or constitutive of it; but the flow of argument suggests the later.

Verse 7 states that man is the image and glory of God but woman is the glory of man. Again this is not creating a three tier hierarchy but establishing two sets of relationships. The idea of 'glory' is dominant and is best interpreted as 'giving honour to', hence man should give honour to God and woman should give honour to man. This is not to deny that women are to honour God, rather within God's created order one of the ways they do so is by honouring their husband.

This concept is further explained by the order of creation - man being created first - and also in the reason for the creation of woman - she is created *for* man (v8-9). These comments are not expanded but in the context are an argument for male leadership and hence suitable dress in public meetings. Paul's argument of the chronology of creation is also seen in 1 Timothy 2 and hence should be seen as a fundamental plank in his thinking about male-female relationships. This is probably drawing on the notion of primogeniture where the firstborn has an elevated status and becomes head of the house.

The comment on woman being made for man is best taken as Paul's comment on Genesis 2:18 ('a helper suitable for him'). While this must not be taken to regard Eve as no more than

---

<sup>40</sup> C. L. Blomberg, 'Neither Hierarchalist nor Egalitarian', in Two Views on Women in Ministry, edited by C. L. Blomberg & J. R. Beck, (Zondervan, 2001).



Adam's aide (the meaning of 'helper' gives the sense of rescuing Adam as God rescues his people), Paul clearly reads it to support his argument with regard to male headship.

Verse 10 has caused much discussion and received little by way of a satisfactory answer. The first issue is whether the 'authority' referred to is the women's or not; the most usual reading of the Greek suggests it is ('she should have authority on/over her head')<sup>41</sup>. However the flow of argument from earlier could mean it is the husband's authority being referred to - i.e. 'authority on her head' is Paul's compressed way of referring back to the head coverings already discussed. It is this reading that justifies the NIV's addition of 'a sign of authority'. A good argument is made for this by Schreiner.<sup>42</sup>

However even if this verse does refer to the women's authority it cannot be made to mean, as some suggest, that Paul is referring to the women's 'right' to prophecy and pray. That is to run against the flow of argument which focuses on *how* women are to go about these activities, not that they have the right to do them (which is simply presumed). Some readings along this line have to take Paul to be vacillating in his thought here rather than presenting a coherent argument. Others suggest that Paul is asserting the woman's right to wear whatever she likes on her head, but that earlier he wants her to show respect by wearing the appropriate covering. Against this though is that the language is that of obligation - Paul is saying the woman 'ought' to have authority on her head. Probably the best way of understanding the argument if the 'authority' is the woman's, is that 'control' of one's head is being referred to. I.e. Women should exercise voluntary control of their heads (by using the appropriate covering) so as to recognise the leadership of men.<sup>43</sup>

The additional reason (because of the angels) is probably best explained by the reference in the Qumran documents to angels being guardians of appropriate worship.<sup>44</sup> There are also numerous other interpretations. However understanding this reference to angels is not necessary to follow the flow of Paul's thought through the chapter.

### **3.4 Affirmation of equality and dependence**

In 11:11-12 Paul appears to give a balancing comment in case the preceding argument were to be over interpreted. This affirms that there is mutuality between man and woman. This is expressed by saying one is not 'without' the other and that the woman is 'from' man , but man is 'through' woman. Hence he appears to want to affirm the equality and mutual dependence of men and woman, while also insisting on male headship. Some egalitarians use these verses to assert that Paul negates any role differences, but this to read Paul against himself and not accept he can hold both equality and differentiation together.

---

<sup>41</sup> This was first suggested by M. D. Hooker, ['Authority on Her Head: An Examination of 1 Corinthians xi. 10', *NTS*, 10, (1966), pp410-416] and has been followed by various commentators since including Gordon Fee.

<sup>42</sup> T. Schreiner, 'Head Coverings, Prophecies and the Trinity', in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by W. Grudem and J. Piper, (Crossway, 1991).

<sup>43</sup> C. L. Blomberg, 'Neither Hierarchalist nor Egalitarian', in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, edited by C. L. Blomberg & J. R. Beck, (Zondervan, 2001).

<sup>44</sup> J. Fitzmyer, 'A Feature of Qumran: Angelology and the Angels of 1 Cor xi. 10', *NTS*, 4, (1957), pp48-58.

## 4. 1 CORINTHIANS 14

The context of this passage is the church gathering. It is clear from here, as well as from chapter 11, that women played a part in this gathering – there is the expectation that they will prophesy and pray, and in 14:26 is the expectation that each person brings something to contribute to the meeting (no comment on gender restrictions being made).

The restriction in 14:34-35 is in the context of evaluating prophecies (v29), and it is only prohibition from this part of the meeting that makes sense given the expectation of woman's involvement.<sup>45</sup> The command is for the women to keep silent (σιγάω) which is the normal word for remaining silent while others speak – previously in verse 28 and 30. Instead they are to be subject (ὑποτάσσω) which Paul uses for being under the control or authority of another – it has previously been used in v32 with reference to the 'spirit of the prophets' being under the control of the prophets themselves (see further references under the 1 Timothy 2 discussion).

The reason given for this command is 'the law'. This is almost certainly a reference to the creation narrative which Paul sees as teaching male headship – there is no reference within the Mosaic law to women remaining silent in public gatherings. Egalitarians often suggest that 'the law' refers to Jewish tradition which is thought to require the silence of women, and hence this is an accommodation to the surrounding culture (reference is often made to Paul voluntarily putting himself under the law in 1 Cor 9).<sup>46</sup> However when Paul uses 'the law' he is always referring to the OT canon. Alternative suggestions that Paul is here quoting the teaching of his opponents in Corinth and opposing their view<sup>47</sup> are quite unpersuasive.<sup>48</sup>

Any questions the women have must be directed to their husbands at home. This is the most unusual part of Paul's instruction: given that women did speak in the meeting it is strange that they might not ask questions of clarification regarding the prophecies and their evaluation. It has been suggested that the questioning referred to carries a strong sense of interrogation. This could imply questioning in such a way as to influence the evaluation process or questioning the authority of those conducting it. However it is unclear how this attitude would then be allowed with regard to their husbands at home.

Any suggestion that the problem being addressed was women 'chattering' in church and disrupting the meeting has to be forcibly read into the passage. The word for speaking is the normal word for ordinary speech (λαλέω). It is often claimed that Paul gives this prohibition because women were interrupting teaching with questions, and that they interrupted

---

<sup>45</sup> D. A. Carson, 'Silent in the Churches', in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, edited by W. Grudem and J. Piper, (Crossway, 1991).

<sup>46</sup> C. S. Keener, Paul, Women and Wives, (Hendrickson, 1992).

<sup>47</sup> As argued by G. Bilezikian, Beyond Sex Roles, (Baker, 1990).

<sup>48</sup> See D. A. Carson, 'Silent in the Churches', in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, edited by W. Grudem and J. Piper, (Crossway, 1991), for a full discussion.

more than men because of their relative lack of education.<sup>49</sup> This view has to its credit a good interpretation of Paul's instruction about asking questions at home, but it falters on several counts:

- The relative understanding of those listening to Christian teaching is far more likely to relate to how long they have been converted and in the church than their formal education.
- There is no hint in the passage that interrupting the flow of teaching was an issue.
- Paul relates this prohibition to what 'the law says', but this view has no convincing explanation for such a grounding.
- Paul nowhere hints that this prohibition should be relaxed once these women are more educated as proponents of this position suggest he does.

[It is not uncommon for some to excise this passage altogether on text critical grounds e.g. Fee<sup>50</sup>; however see Carson for a discussion and rebuttal.<sup>51</sup>]

## 5.1 TIMOTHY 2

### 5.1 Context

The context appears to be that of the gathering of the church (indicated by 2:8) and involves specific instructions for men and women as to how they are to behave. Presumably these instructions are chosen because of the Ephesian situation.

### 5.2 Structure

The instructions to the women fall into two categories: that of their 'adornment' and that of activities with respect to men. This is then followed by a rationale in v13-14 and finally what is presumably an encouragement in v15.

The passage has a key word tying it together: 'propriety' occurs in verse 9 and 15 and is hence a key idea in regard to the overall attitude and conduct Paul expects. In addition there is a balanced structure to the commands in verse 11-12:

v11	Learn in silence (11a)	in full submission (11a)	
v12	Not to teach (12a)	not to exercise authority (12b)	to be in silence (12c)

Hence silence/teaching and submission/authority form two pairs, and in addition the repetition of 'silence' forms an inclusio.

---

<sup>49</sup> See this view argued by C. S. Keener, Paul, Women and Wives, (Hendrickson, 1992).

<sup>50</sup> G. D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, NICNT, (Eerdmans, 1987).

<sup>51</sup> D. A. Carson, 'Silent in the Churches', in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, edited by W. Grudem and J. Piper, (Crossway, 1991).

### 5.3 Learning in silence

The word use for 'silence' (ἥσυχία) can mean silence, quietness, or a peaceable attitude. Hence it may convey a sense of deference to those teaching and listening to them, without requiring absolute silence.

Some have taken this as a command 'to learn' and hence deduced that the problem was uninformed women who shouldn't teach. However 'to learn' is the expectation not the command; rather the focus of the command is the manner of learning.

### 5.4 Being in full submission

The word for submission (ὑποταγή) is given a superlative sense by the addition of 'full/all'. The use of the noun elsewhere in Paul is seen in the table below.

<i>Text</i>	<i>Summary</i>	<i>Comment</i>
2 Cor 9:13	The submission that accompanies your confession	Obedience to a higher authority/ allegiance is in view
Gal 2:5	Paul and his companions not submitting to the false brothers	Not giving in to a false authority
1 Tim 2:11	Woman being in full submission	Contrasted with having authority
1 Tim 3:4	Children of the overseer submitting to their father	Obedience to parent

The use of the verb (ὑποτάσσω) in Paul is also illuminating as it appears to have great overlap in its semantic range. It is often used of the submission required to God/Christ; however when used of submission between people/groups of people the following are seen in the table below.

<i>Text</i>	<i>Summary</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Rom 13:1, 5	Submission to the governing authorities	Clear order of authority in view
1 Cor 14:32	The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets	Control over the spirit by the individual
1 Cor 14:34	Women are not allowed to speak but must be in submission	Submission shown by remaining silent during evaluation of prophecy
1 Cor 16:16	Submit to the household of Stephanas and to everyone who labours in the work	Submission and respect of those who lead to the church; or are involved in its ministry
Eph 5:21	Submit to one another; women to husbands	Mutual submission in the church, but reference to wives submitting to husbands and husbands loving wives

Eph 5:24	The Church submits to Christ so wives to their husbands	Parallel between submission to Christ and husband
Col 3:18	Wives submit to your husbands	Repeat of Eph command with parallel being husbands loving wives
Titus 2:5	Wives to be taught to be submissive to their husbands	Repeat of Eph and Col command in context of teaching younger women
Titus 2:9	Slaves being subject to their masters	Clear authority structure in view
Titus 3:1	Submission to the governing authorities	Clear order of authority in view

In light of Paul's consistent use of this word it is extremely hard to not to admit that he is speaking of submission to a higher authority in 1 Tim 2:11. This is opposes the (minority) view of some egalitarians who claim ὑποτάσσω means 'to identify with'<sup>52</sup> or 'to defer'.<sup>53</sup>

### 5.5 Not to teach

The word for teach is the normal word in Paul's letters (διδάσκω) which is always used of positive instruction. This prohibition has traditionally been taken to limit women's teaching role in some way (discussed further below). The main egalitarian response is that this verse refers to a prohibition on women teaching false doctrine. This is dependent on attempts to reconstruct the situation in Ephesus and say that women were propagating false teaching. The content of such teaching is usually assumed to contain such elements as encouraging women to dominate men and repudiate traditional roles such as marriage and childbearing.

Some elements of this are accepted by all: for example that the false teaching had a specific influence on women is suggested by the reference in 2 Timothy 3. However there are numerous reasons why this reading of the prohibition is not persuasive:

- There is no mention made of the women propagating this heresy themselves but only men.
- It is unlikely that all women should be prohibited from teaching just because some were influenced by heresy – Paul doesn't silence every man.
- There is no mention of women propagating false teaching as a reason for the prohibition in 2:9-15; the reference to Eve is with regard to her deception, not to her teaching Adam falsely (although it is possible to read the whole fall account as Adam being influenced by Eve).
- This interpretation requires paraphrasing Paul as saying 'women are not permitted to teach a man false doctrine'. If so it is remarkable that Paul would use this phrasing given it allows the possibility he would permit false teaching in another context.
- When referring to false teaching elsewhere Paul uses different language which makes expressly clear that he is doing so.

<sup>52</sup> For example Hull, *Equal to Serve*, (Revell, 1987).

<sup>53</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, WBC, (Word, 1988).

## 5.6 Not to have authority

The word for ‘authority’ (αὐθεντέω) is only used here in the NT. Debate has raged over its meaning from extra-biblical sources. However it seems clear that its normal meaning is ‘authority over’. Attempts to make it a negative concept e.g. domineering authority, fail both with regard to the lexical studies<sup>54</sup>, and the immediate context. In particular Kostenberger has shown that the joining of the two infinitives (to teach ... to have authority) by οὐδὲ requires both words to have either a positive or a negative sense.<sup>55</sup> Given the positive sense of ‘to teach’ one cannot then attribute a negative sense to ‘authority’.

Those egalitarians who take on board the issue of sentence structure argue that both διδάσκω and αὐθεντέω have a negative meaning.<sup>56</sup> This is only achieved by making διδάσκω refer to ‘false teaching’ – see the discussion above. Other suggestions as to the meaning of αὐθεντέω e.g. to proclaim oneself the originator of another (C. Kroeger) have not received any acceptance.<sup>57</sup>

It is often suggested that Paul chose this comparatively rare word because the meaning he intended was not given by others i.e. the rarity of the word chosen suggests a specific and rare meaning. This is not an insignificant point but the most commonly used other word for exercising authority (ἐξουσιάζω) is only used four times in the NT, twice with reference to positive use of authority and twice with reference to negative domineering use of authority.<sup>58</sup> Purely statistically therefore it could be argued that Paul chose this ‘rare’ word to avoid the more ambiguous use of ἐξουσιάζω. All this shows is that with such limited usage claims of ‘rare’ words carry little weight.

## 5.7 Rationale for the prohibition

Paul gives two reasons for the prohibition: (a) Adam’s being created first, and (b) Eve’s being deceived rather than Adam. The first of these corresponds to his reasoning in 1 Cor 11 and as is the case there is not expanded beyond a simple statement. However it is hard not to see Paul reading something of an authority/leadership concept out of the fact that Adam was created first.

The second reason revolves around deception. Some have taken this to indicate a greater degree of gullibility by women as the reason that they should not teach. However that is

---

<sup>54</sup> H. S. Baldwin, ‘A Difficult Word’, in *Women in the Church*, edited by A. J. Kostenberger et al, (Baker, 1995). It is particularly important in this regard to note the differences found between the verb and noun. The later does have a very negative force in some contexts, even referring to murderers, but the verb never has such a strong force before the 10th century. Only one example of a negative domineering has been found from Chrysostom and this is where the word is used in a hyperbolic sense.

<sup>55</sup> A. J. Kostenberger, ‘A Complex Sentence Structure in 1 Tim 2:9-15’, in *Women in the Church*, edited by A. J. Kostenberger et al, (Baker, 1995).

<sup>56</sup> See for example I. H. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ICC, (T&T Clark, 1999).

<sup>57</sup> R. C. Kroeger and C. C. Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman*, (Baker, 1992).

<sup>58</sup> Used in 1 Cor 7:4 (twice) positively; Luke 22:25 and 1 Cor 6:12 negatively.

both not a necessary reading of Paul's words and would not fit with their role in teaching described below.<sup>59</sup>

It is better to take this as a reference to the order of creation being overturned. Rather than the women following her head (the man) she follows one of the creatures, and Adam rather than acting as head, follows his wife. Note that in Genesis 3 God's words to Adam particularly condemn him for 'listening to his wife.'

Many egalitarian views see the rationale presented as responding to an element of the false teaching. For example countering the idea that women were the source of men (Kroeger) or a taking the 'myths and genealogies' to involve human origins (Marshall). Both these views then see the reference in verse 13 as Paul setting the record straight on this misunderstanding. However for this to make sense in the context one has to again regard the teaching of verse 12 as false teaching, and to have Paul change tack to the content of the teaching with no indication that he has done so.

Another approach of egalitarians is to say this refers to uneducated women - they should not teach but they should learn presumably so that they can then teach. This view sees the rationale in verses 13-14 as saying that Eve was created after Adam and so did not receive the command not to eat from a certain tree from God i.e. she was uneducated and so deceived.<sup>60</sup> However this is to read far more into Paul's reference to the Genesis account than is there, and to presuppose a great deal about the Ephesian context.

If the understanding suggested of this rationale for the prohibition is correct then it has a grounding that surpasses any factors specific to the Ephesian situation. Rather it is part of the created order which should be reflected today just as much as in any situation in Paul's day.

### **5.8 Saved through childbearing**

Exegesis of verse 15 has generally fallen into two camps, neither of which significantly affect the above discussion. It is taken to be either a reference to the birth of Christ (so Knight<sup>61</sup> and Stott<sup>62</sup>) or simply to child-bearing generally (so Marshall<sup>63</sup> and Moo<sup>64</sup>). In the later case it clearly cannot mean that children are actually necessary for salvation, but rather it is to stress the attendant circumstances of salvation which should involve 'normal' feminine roles. Given that virtually all of the women on the receiving end of the letter would have been married it is not unreasonable to choose child-bearing as the single most differentiating

---

<sup>59</sup> As women are clearly to teach younger women it would be strange to say that the gullible are to teach the even more gullible.

<sup>60</sup> See for example C. S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, (Hendrickson, 1992).

<sup>61</sup> G. W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC, (Eerdmans, 1992).

<sup>62</sup> J. R. W. Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, BST, (IVP, 1996).

<sup>63</sup> I. H. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ICC, (T&T Clark, 1999).

<sup>64</sup> D. Moo, 'What Does it Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?', in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by W. Grudem and J. Piper, (Crossway, 1991).



factor to stress a role difference between men and women. The idea of 'suitable role accompaniments' is also given by the repetition of propriety (first mentioned in verse 9. However correct understanding of this verse is not necessary to follow the argument up to this point.

### 5.9 Application of the prohibition

Overall application is discussed below but this passage raises several issues that should be discussed here.

Some take 'to teach' to refer to no teaching whatsoever: this is clearly untenable given the reference to women teaching in Titus 3:2. Instead the reference is to not teaching a man (ἀνδρός) is the subject of both infinitives). Some take this to mean no teaching by a woman of a man; others take the teaching in question to be 'authoritative' teaching of some sort. This clearly depends on (a) how the two prohibitions are combined, (b) contextual factors within 1 Timothy, and (c) synthesising the prohibition with examples and instruction elsewhere.

a) With regard to combining the two prohibitions they should probably be taken as distinct functions but which are extremely closely related. Kostenberger's analysis of the syntax gives comparable constructions elsewhere in the NT. In many cases the two elements are virtually synonymous e.g. 'do not be unsettled or alarmed' (2 Thess 2:2), whereas in others they are distinct but related ideas e.g. 'do not teach error or pay attention to myths' (1 Tim 1:3-4). In the case of 1 Tim 2:12 the precise prohibitions of teaching and authority are distinct enough to be separated (rather than treated as synonyms). However the two concepts are closely connected - so the elder/overseer is one who teaches and has authority, but he uses his authority in teaching - prohibiting false teaching and promoting truth.

b) Other factors within 1 Timothy:

- The word for 'teach' can be taken to relate to the passing on of the authoritative teachings/traditions. In some contexts the verb is used in relation to this (e.g. 1 Cor 4:17; Eph 4:21; Col 2:7; 2 Thess 2:15), and a cognate noun refers to authoritative traditions. However this is not demanded by the word itself which can refer to a wide range of teaching including specific instructions to Timothy (1 Tim 4:11; 6:2), and believers teaching one another (Col 3:16).
- The word for 'not permit' here is the same as in 1 Cor 14:34 (of only 3 uses in the Pauline corpus, the remaining one of which is with regard to God in 1 Cor 16:7). This might indicate a similar prohibition as in view as in 1 Cor 14 and so strengthen the idea of only limiting authoritative teaching.
- The repeated reference to 'silence' (see 'Structure' above) suggests that Paul is giving two instructions which both relate to something within the public meeting.
- The next verses in the letter discuss the qualifications for an overseer who is clearly someone who is to teach and to have authority to manage/rule the congregation. The transition can be read as Paul continuing on a theme he has already started in 2:9-15.

c) Other examples and instruction are discussed below.

These factors lead us towards an understanding of the prohibition to be against an ‘authority position’ of teaching, rather than a blanket prohibition of any women ever teaching any man. The influence of examples and instructions to women to teach in some capacity will strengthen this conclusion – see below.

## 6. EXAMPLES OF AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR WOMEN’S MINISTRY

A variety of passages either give examples of women ministering in some context<sup>65</sup> or give an instruction that can reasonably be taken to apply to women as well as men. These give us more of a positive picture of what was happening / was expected to happen. An attempt to synthesise these elements with those covered already will be given in the next section.

<i>Text</i>	<i>Summary</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<i>Prophecy</i>		
Acts 21:9	Philip’s daughters are prophetesses	Prophecy expected from women
1 Cor 11	Instructions for head covering in public prophecy and prayer	Public prophecy and prayer expected from women
<i>Teaching</i>		
Titus 2:3-4	Older women are to be teachers of what is good to the younger women	Women are to teach other women
1 Cor 14:26	Each person comes to the church gathering with a hymn, a teaching, a revelation, an interpretation	No gender limitation given so some contribution from women expected including a ‘teaching’
2 Tim 1:5 & 3:14	Timothy probably being taught by his mother and grandmother	Women teaching children
Col 3:16	Teach one another	No indication of restriction to men but note that the idea of ‘one another’ (this can refer to an activity within a group rather than between every individual of the group)

<sup>65</sup> See especially A. Kostenberger, ‘Women in the Pauline Mission’, in *The Gospel to the Nations*, edited by P. Bolt & M. Thompsen, (IVP, 2000).

Acts 18:26	Priscilla and Aquilla explaining the way of God more accurately to Apollos	A women seen involved in teaching a man (in a private setting with her husband)
------------	--	---

*Fellow-workers*

Rom 16:3	Priscilla and Aquilla called fellow-workers with Paul	Great involvement in the work of the gospel – no indication as to whether this involved teaching.
Rom 16:12	Tryphena, Tryphosa and Persis all work hard in the Lord	Great involvement in the work of the gospel – no indication as to whether this involved teaching.
Phil 4:2-3	Euodia and Synteché contended at Paul’s side in the cause of the gospel	Great involvement in the work of the gospel – no indication as to whether this involved teaching.

*Deacons*

1 Tim 3:8,11	Most likely a reference to female deacons	Involvement in service but not teaching or ruling the church
Rom 16:1	Phoebe a deacon/servant on the church at Cenchrea	Probably example of a female deacon

The most difficult of these references are those referring to prophecy because here we have an activity we know women can and should take part in, but we are less clear what the activity is. However it seems reasonable to suppose that prophecy has overlap with other of the ‘word’ ministries.<sup>66</sup> It is very unlikely that it is purely predictive in nature (despite some predictive examples in Acts) as a predictive prophecy cannot be ‘weighed’. The result of prophecy is the building up of the church in encouragement and comfort (1 Cor 14:3); most notably prophecy results in instruction and learning (1 Cor 14:18, 31). Hence it is not unreasonable to presume an overlap with teaching, and perhaps, as is often suggested, prophecy often involves insights relating to the application of gospel truth.

Some egalitarians interpret 1 Tim 5:2 as referring to women elders and Rom 16:7 as to female apostles in the same sense as the apostolic circle. However 1 Tim 5:2 clearly refers to older women. Romans 16:7 contains the following issues (a) it may/may not refer to a woman; (b) it may say either that they are outstanding among the apostles OR in the eyes of the apostles; and (c) it probably uses ‘apostle’ in its non-technical sense of ‘messenger’ or ‘missionary’ (e.g. 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25). Taking the reference to be of a woman who acts as a messenger/missionary it certainly contributes to a high view of the contribution a woman can make in ministry.

<sup>66</sup> D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, (Baker, 1987).

Some attempt a syllogism as follows:

- Paul says to respect and submit to all those who labour as his fellow-workers (1 Cor 16:15- 16)
- Various women are referred to as Paul's fellow-workers who labour (see table above)
- Therefore these women must be respected and submitted to.

However this is to require Paul to have a far more specific meaning by these terms than he does. Those in 1 Cor 16 are probably leaders who Paul commends submission to, but that does not mean that everyone he regards as a fellow-worker is a leader.

Deborah acting as a judge of Israel (Judges 4) is often quoted as an example of a female leader figure. However there are several factors which should make us hesitate before drawing too much from it. Most importantly Deborah doesn't lead Israel out of battle as do the other (male) judges; rather she hands over leadership to Barak.

In summary these examples and instructions certainly suggest women should be very much involved in the life of the church – considered fellow-workers in the cause of the gospel. This will presumably take a variety of forms depending on gifting. However some teaching element seems to be present (especially suggested by Col 3:16 and 1 Cor 14: 26, and by our understanding of prophecy).

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The above discussion leads us to conclude:

a) We assert both:

- the equality of men and women, and
- the differentiation in role in the church between men and women, stemming from creation.

The equality means that the differentiation in role is never to imply a demeaning of personhood.

b) We affirm both:

- the valuable and necessary role of women in the church, and
- that they are prohibited from certain activities within the church.

The prohibition from certain activities must never be taken to demean the value of women's contribution.

c) We see that women *should* teach and train younger women and children.

d) We see that women *should* have a part in the public meetings of the church and that this can contain a teaching element.

e) We see that women *should not* have the decisive role of weighing prophecy, or giving authoritative teaching in the church, which is to be the role of male elders.

It is statement (d) that is most controversial to some complementarians who would wish to restrict the role of women further. The conclusion of allowing women a teaching function in the church is arrived at by the following reasoning:

The restriction in 1 Timothy 2 is seen to be referring to the authoritative teaching of the church such as is seen in weighing of prophecy. This role is linked with (and perhaps should be identified with) that of elders/overseers whose primary role is teaching and governing the congregation; two functions which go hand in hand. A variety of factors (discussed above) suggest that this is a likely interpretation of the prohibition rather than a blanket statement about any woman and any man in any situation.

In addition it is this interpretation that best fits Paul's prohibition in 1 Tim 2 and the mass of data which indicates that women contributed to public meetings in a way that included elements of teaching (esp. Col 3:16 and 1 Cor 14:26).

Some outstanding questions remain, especially that of what current day prophecy is. In addition we are challenged by this study as to how closely our current church gatherings approximate to those described in the NT, especially with regard to (a) contribution from many people, and (b) weighing of contributions by the leaders.

## 8. SUGGESTED APPLICATIONS

Application will depend greatly on the practices of the church in question. However looking at the common elements of a church we could suggest the following:

- Only male elders where an eldership is present.
- Only male preachers at Sunday services on the basis that these are usually uncontested proclamations of authoritative teaching. These should be done by the elders of the church or under their supervision. However this restriction turns greatly on the way in which preaching is perceived within the congregation and the extent to which it is an 'eldership' function. It would be possible for a woman to teach publically under the authority of the elders where that was appropriately understood.
- Contribution of other sorts to Sunday services by men and women. These should/could include prayer, reading Scripture, giving testimony of lessons learnt or God's action in one's life, introducing songs, etc.
- There is also a place for contributions which are 'between' public preaching and leading a service. For example contributions following an exposition which

suggest particular applications or relevance. These should be welcomed by women as well as men.

- Male and female leading of Bible study discussion groups but preferably with an elder present, or at least under some kind of elder supervision.
- Male and female leading of seminars/talks with questions again as under the authority of the elders.

This is not to presume any kind of infallibility for elders of a congregation – indeed their teaching should be questioned by the congregation – but it is to expect a respect for their teaching and leading which is not accorded to others.

