

Role of Women in the Church

I. Introduction:

The following is a brief look at 1 Timothy 2:9-15 and a summary of Grace Church positions based on our understanding of this key passage of Scripture as it relates to women's roles in the church. Additionally, Appendix A contains the Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, to which we give hearty assent.

II. Discussion of 1 Timothy 2:9-15

The Context of the passage: 1 Timothy 2:9-15 is in the flow of Paul giving instructions for public worship.

A. Instructions to men (v. 8)

Summary: how men ought to pray in church

1. *Pray everywhere* probably has the idea of "in every church," not "in every place"; Paul's focus seems to be on congregational conduct.
2. Paul assumed that men would take the lead at meetings of the congregation.
3. *Wrath* (praying "angry" prayers) and *doubting* (praying without faith) have no place in public prayer

B. Instructions to women (vv. 9-15)

Adornment (vv. 9-10) - Proper clothing – Modest – Discreet.

Women should emphasize *spiritual* preparation and beauty more than *physical* preparation and beauty

a. Paul's emphasis is on church gatherings, but the same principle holds true in other areas.

2. Quietness (vv. 11-12) - Receive instruction – with entire submissiveness.

Women are to show submission, and to yield authority in the church.

a. Submission is the principle; silence is the application of the principle.

b. "Under authority" is the principle; *not teaching* is the application

Injunction: I (Paul) do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man (v. 12). Context – in the church. Remain quiet.

Paul is saying that women should not be recognized by the church as those having authority in the church regarding matters of doctrine and interpretation.

Not all speaking or teaching by a woman is *necessarily* a violation of God's order of authority in the church

C. The Explanation

1. CREATION: Adam was created first, then Eve (Order of creation) (v. 13)
2. THE FALL: Eve was deceived (v. 14)
 - a. Paul's reasons for God's order of authority (vv. 13-14)
 - i. The order of creation: man was created first, and given original authority.

- ii. Paul sees Adam's authority as derived from God, and Eve's authority as derived from Adam
- iii. Eve (representing women) was deceived
- b. Paul clearly places the blame for the Fall on Adam (Romans 5)
- c. Paul's logic in the passage appears to be that the church is to display redeemed relationships which honor God's original structures of authority and stand against the devil's original undermining of those structures by targeting Eve thus circumventing Adam.

Paul's appeal to the original state of creation indicates that these principles apply across all times and cultures.

3. Restored Womanhood in Light of Eve's Curse

- a. Paul seems to be speaking about women who are believers.
- b. By bearing children, woman makes for the best under the conditions of the curse, both for herself and society; even as man makes for the best by working hard in the face of the curse regarding toil
- c. Some say that Paul "has mostly in mind that child-bearing, not public teaching, is the peculiar function of woman, with a glory and dignity all its own" (Robinson)
- d. Most of all, note the positives - *faith, love, and holiness, with self-control* (a good description of the fruit of the Spirit)

IV. Summary

- A. There is a Biblical distinction between what is permitted for men and women within the church.
 - B. This does not prohibit women from teaching individual men on a personal basis (e.g. Priscilla and Aquila taught Apollos – Acts 18:26). Not all speaking or teaching by a woman is necessarily a violation of God's order of authority in the church. Examples might be giving a testimony in church or sharing a devotional in a class setting.
 - C. It remains a clear mandate in God's Word that in an established church situation, women, no matter how gifted and talented, are not to have ecclesiastical authority over men (in our context this primarily refers to serving in the role of pastor or elder). This would preclude them from preaching in a worship service and presiding over the spiritual life of the church.
 - D. A clear correlation is made in this passage between a woman's role in the church and her role with her husband in the home.
 - E. Men have a responsibility in affirming the worth and giftedness of women. Pastors or elders have the role and responsibility to teach sound doctrine. We all have the responsibility, whether married or not, to affirm and encourage the value, dignity, and giftedness of women.
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- 1. It is our responsibility to love our wives as Christ loved the church and to be willing to give up our rights and life for her good. (Eph. 4:25)
 - 2. It is our responsibility to take the initiative on discipleship in the home. We cannot leave that responsibility to our wife. At some point we will stand before God and need to give an account for how we led our family in growing towards Christ-likeness. Thus spiritual leadership must be an intentional decision on our part (Eph. 5:23—29).¹

3. It is our responsibility as a spiritual leader in the home to ensure that our wives are equipped to use their spiritual gifts for the work (ministry) God has called them to do (Ephesians 4:11-12).
4. It is the role of church leaders to not allow usurping of authority (that women may have been tempted to do) or abdicating of responsibilities (That men may have fallen prey to) by anyone in the church – male or female.

The leadership of Grace Church of Orange aligns itself with the Evangelical Complementarian view held by the *Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. (see *Core Beliefs/Danvers Statement on pp.4-5*) which summarized briefly holds that “men and women are equal in the image of God, but maintain complementary differences in role and function. In the home, men lovingly are to lead their wives and family as women intelligently are to submit to the leadership of their husbands. In the church, while men and women share equally in the blessings of salvation, some governing and teaching roles are restricted to men”.

Appendix A

Core Beliefs: The Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

The "Danvers Statement" summarizes the need for the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) and serves as an overview of our core beliefs. This statement was prepared by several evangelical leaders at a CBMW meeting in Danvers, Massachusetts, in December of 1987. It was first published in final form by the CBMW in Wheaton, Illinois in November of 1988.

Rationale: We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. The widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. the tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. the growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. the upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
7. the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;
8. the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;
9. the consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
10. and behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

Affirmations: Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).
3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9).
4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:1-7, 12, 16).
 - a. In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.

- b. In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
 - a. In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).
 - b. In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2).
8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor 12:7-21).
10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.