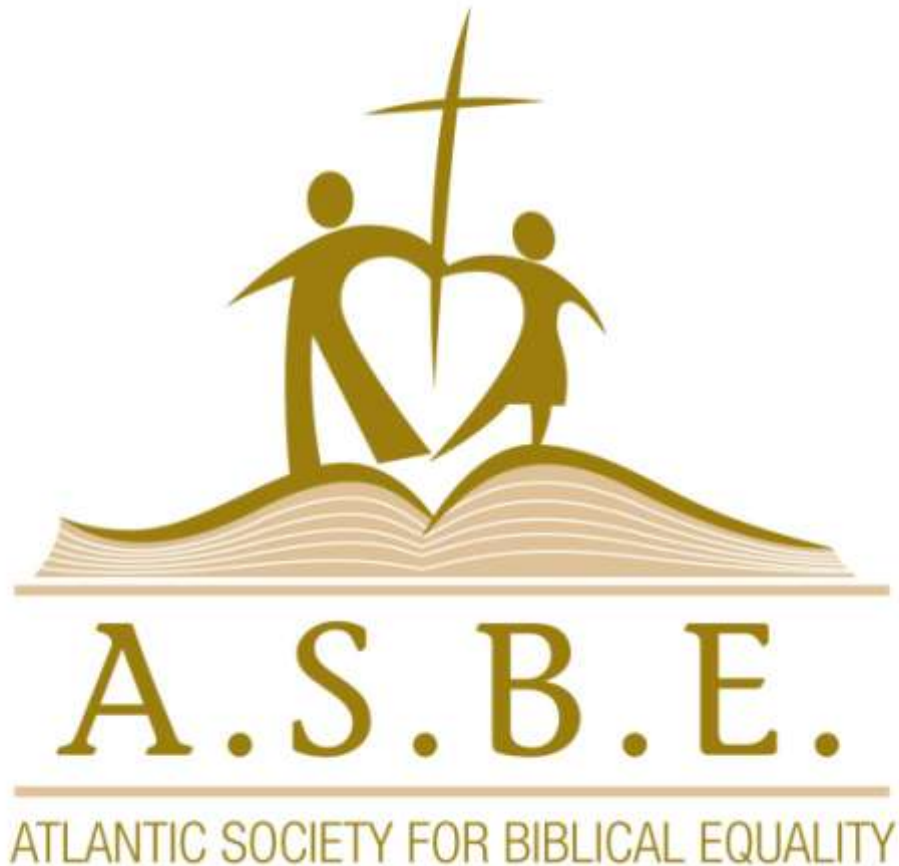


**Men and Women – Partners or Rivals?**  
**A Biblical View of Male-Female Relationships**



**Study Guide on Biblical Equality**

by

Hugh A. McNally

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**Logo:** The ASBE logo on the title page communicates our message that men and women, working together in equal partnership, based on the teaching of the Bible and made possible by the cross, brings joy and harmony to the home and to the church.

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## Introduction

### Understanding Biblical Equality Issues

The role of women in the home and in the church continues to be a controversial issue in evangelical churches today. On one side are the “traditionalists” or “complementarians.” They believe that in the home husbands should take the leadership and wives should submit to their authority. They believe that in the church women should not be pastors or elders. Women’s place in the church should be a helping role, not a leadership role. On the other side are the “biblical egalitarians.” They believe that in the home husbands and wives should work together as equal partners. They believe that God calls and gifts women as well as men for ministry, and when he does, women should be encouraged to use their gifts in teaching, preaching, and holding positions of leadership in the church, including that of Senior Pastor. Complementarians are usually opposed to the ordination of women, while egalitarians support the ordination of women. Biblical egalitarians believe that leadership should be based on calling and gifting rather than gender.

There are evangelical, Bible-believing Christians on both sides of these issues. The difference between the two is not the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. Both agree that the Bible is our God-given standard for faith and practice. One difference, however, is in the area of hermeneutics – how we interpret the Bible and apply its message to life. Another difference is the cultural background and life experiences we bring to the task of interpretation. No interpreter approaches the Scriptures without presuppositions. When an issue becomes controversial, people tend to take sides in the debate. When this happens, it becomes difficult to approach the Bible with an open mind. We are tempted to look for proof texts to support our view rather than being willing to examine our views critically in the light of what the Bible teaches. As J. I. Packer asserts in his book, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, we must be willing to subject our views to the teaching of the written Word of God.

### My Personal Journey to Biblical Equality

I am a graduate of Gordon College and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. I also studied for a year at the University of Toronto (History) and a year at the Hartford Seminary Foundation (History of Religions). I confess that I was not much interested in biblical equality issues during the first twenty years of my ministry. However, I believe that the early influence of Rev. Josephine Moore on my life predisposed me to have an open mind on the question of women in ministry. It was through her ministry that I accepted Christ as my Savior and Lord. In 1954 she was ordained by my home church, the Prince William United Baptist. She was the first woman to be ordained in the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches. I was also influenced by the fruitful ministries of the gifted women missionaries with whom I served in India.

Sometime around 1980 I picked up a magazine in a doctor’s office and found an article written by an ardent female feminist, whose name I do not remember. In the article she claimed that the teaching of Christian Churches has been a key factor in the oppression of women. She had collected a number of quotations from Christian leaders down through the centuries to prove her point. Two of these quotations stood out for me. The first was by Tertullian (c. 160-c. 220), who wrote to women, saying,

And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil’s gateway: you are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: you are the first deserter of that divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God’s image, man. On account of your desert, that is, death, even the Son of God had to die (Tertullian, “On the Apparel of Women,” *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. IV, Eerdmans, 1956, p 14).

The second was by the great Protestant reformer, John Calvin (1509-1564), who wrote,

As the woman derives her origin from the man, she is therefore inferior in rank. . . . as the woman was created for the sake of the man, she is therefore subject to him. . . . God's eternal law . . . has made the female sex subject to the authority of men. On this account all women are born, that they may acknowledge themselves inferior in consequence of the superiority of the male sex (John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Calvin Translation Society, 1848, pp 357-358).

On page 361, he advises women to accept their inferiority as a fact of God's creation, "Let the woman be satisfied with her state of subjection, and not take it amiss that she is made inferior to the more distinguished sex."

As I became more sensitized to these issues and to the aspirations of Christian women, I became increasingly aware that the views of Tertullian and Calvin were still with us in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

- In 1957 Donald Guthrie wrote, "The idea of woman's subjection is not only ingrained in the conviction of the mass of mankind . . . but also appears to be inherent in the divine constitution of the race" (Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale, 1957, p 76).
- In 1958, Leon Morris wrote, "Neither in her origin, nor in the purpose for which she was created can the woman claim priority or even equality" (Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, Tyndale, 1958, p 153).
- In 1978, Ralph Earle wrote, "It was the woman who was deceived by Satan and who disobeyed God. Since she was so easily deceived, she should not be trusted as a teacher" (Ralph Earle, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, Zondervan, 1978, p 362).

In most areas I have deep respect for the writings of these men; I have benefitted greatly from reading their books. However, in this area I believe that they have been more influenced by patriarchal culture going back to the pre-Christian Greek culture than they have been by the teaching of the Bible.

Evangelicals today, who are opposed to biblical equality, admit that women are fully human and fully created in the image of God, but then negate this by their teaching about gender roles and male spiritual headship. Wayne Grudem and John Piper in their book, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, published in 1991 and republished with a new preface in 2006, stated, "We are persuaded that the Bible teaches that only men should be pastors and elders. . . . So it is unbiblical, we believe, and therefore detrimental, for women to assume this role" (pp 60-61). In the same book, Douglas Moo wrote, "In the light of these considerations, we argue that the teaching prohibited to women here (in 1 Timothy 2:12) includes what we would call preaching . . . and the teaching of the Bible and doctrine in the church, in colleges, and in seminaries. Other activities – leading Bible studies, for instance – may be included depending on how they are done" (p 186).

## My Response

At the 1986 Assembly of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches (CABC) notice was given that at the next Assembly, delegates would be asked to vote on whether or not our Convention should stop ordaining women. In preparation for this vote, the editor of the *Atlantic Baptist* asked a number of people to write articles, both pro and con, on this issue for publication in the April 1987 issue. I wrote one on "Women in Ministry." When the church secretary finished typing it, she said to me, "Do you realize that you may never get another pastorate in our Convention?" By then this possibility no longer concerned me. Writing the article had forced me to do a lot of thinking and reading. I had become convinced that the Bible taught the equality of men and women based on gifting and calling rather than gender.

In August 1987 a new organization was formed in the United States called Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) [www.cbeinternational.org](http://www.cbeinternational.org). I discovered it through *Christianity Today* and became a member in 1989. Soon after, I wrote another article for the *Atlantic Baptist* entitled “Women Are Persons.” In it I discussed four false ideas that “keep women from enjoying the respect and dignity they deserve as persons created in the image of God,” and may also keep some of them “from coming to Jesus Christ to receive forgiveness and new life.” The four false ideas are:

1. Women are inferior to men;
2. Women were responsible for mankind’s fall into sin and God is still punishing them for this grievous act;
3. Women are the tempters of the pure; and,
4. Women are somehow the possession or the property of men.” You will find a copy of this article on our ASBE web site [www.biblicalequality.org](http://www.biblicalequality.org).

Both of these articles were later published in *Priscilla Papers*, the academic journal published by CBE International.

When I retired in 2000, I wrote down a list of things I wanted to accomplish in retirement. One was to start a chapter of CBE in Atlantic Canada. I believed that there was a lack of solid biblical teaching on male-female equality issues in my own denomination, the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, and perhaps in other denominations as well. However, I got involved in serving on the CABC Council, working with the Executive Minister of the CABC as a research assistant, and teaching in the Lay Pastor Training program. As a result, I kept postponing the CBE chapter project. In the fall of 2008 I decided it was now or never; I wasn’t getting any younger. So I began working on starting a CBE chapter.

Through consultation with the President of CBE, Dr. Mimi Haddad, I decided to establish an independent organization rather than a CBE chapter. In April 2009 the Atlantic Society for Biblical Equality (ASBE) was founded. We were incorporated by May 1 and had a live web site by the end of November 2009. Early in 2010 ASBE was registered with the Canada Revenue Agency “as a charity because it advances religion and the concept of equality as found in the Bible, by providing workshops, conferences, and printed and electronic resources to the public.” ASBE now has over 100 members. We held our first Conference at Crandall University in the fall of 2011, and a second Conference is being planned for the fall of 2013.

People ask me why I am willing to put so much time and effort into ASBE. Here are five reasons:

1. I believe that the Bible is God’s Word. When we misinterpret it, we distort God’s message to the world. This is a serious matter.
2. I believe that God wants the Church to set all his people, both women and men, free to use the gifts he has given them.
3. I worry that the increasing gap between women’s place in modern society and women’s place in the church is contributing to a significant drop in the number of women, who regularly attend church worship services. A Barna Group Survey in 2011 indicated that since 1991 the percentage of women attending church had decreased 11 percentage points and the number of women who had become “unchurched” had increased 17 percentage points.
4. I am afraid that the hierarchical stance of some churches on gender roles is turning many young men and women away from the gospel. For them, hindering women from fully using their God-given gifts is a justice issue.

5. I am concerned that some men are using hierarchical teaching about male / female roles to justify violence against their wives and children. I discuss this concern more fully in Lesson 13.

These are some of the concerns that fire my passion and convince me that biblical equality is not a side issue. I believe it is a central issue and critical to the future of the church. If you enter “Christianity and oppression of women” in Google, you will get more than 9 million results. This clearly shows that biblical equality is not a small or side issue. As evangelical Christians, we cannot afford to sidestep or ignore it.

### **Introduction to the Course on “A Biblical View of Male-Female Relationships”**

Early in 2012 I taught an Adult Sunday School course at Kentville Baptist Church on *Men and Women – Partners or Rivals? A Biblical View of Male-Female Relationships*. I divided the course into 13 lessons. Each lesson was an opportunity for me to share with the class some of what I have learned about biblical equality over the past thirty years. I enjoyed teaching and discussing the biblical basis for women and men working and serving together as equal partners in the family, the church, and the community.

Several people suggested that my hand-out notes would be useful resources for church leaders (pastors, deacons, small group leaders, and Adult Sunday School teachers). The result is this Study Guide, useful both for teaching and personal study. Lesson 12 could be split into two or three lessons. It is longer because I wanted to explain what violence / abuse is, why it is a men’s issue, what men can do to prevent violence against women, and why we all hesitate to get involved.

The last page is a list of recommended books for those who wish to explore biblical equality issues in greater depth. I have identified, with an asterisk, those books which were most helpful to me in preparing the 13 lessons.

### **Notes of Appreciation**

I am deeply grateful to all of those who have helped and encouraged me in writing these lessons and preparing them for publication and distribution. I will not try to list everyone for fear of omitting someone, but there are a few who deserve special mention. I am grateful to Dr. Harry Gardner, the President of Acadia Divinity College, an ASBE Director, and a long-time friend, for his encouragement at times when I was ready to give up on the project. I am also grateful to Eveline DeSchiffart, the Executive Assistant to the President of Acadia Divinity College and the Corporate Secretary of ASBE, for her excellent work in formatting the Study Guide and doing the final editing.

Dr. Allison Trites and Samantha West deserve special appreciation for their work in editing the first draft. Dr. Trites, Payzant Distinguished Professor of New Testament, Emeritus, Acadia Divinity College, and an ASBE Director, edited the text for accuracy of content and faithfulness to the Scriptures. Samantha West, an experienced communications professional, who has a Master of Arts in English and is currently completing her Master of Divinity at Acadia Divinity College, edited the text for clarity, grammar, and consistency of style.

Finally I would be remiss if I did not give credit to my dear wife, Shirley, for her wise advice and help in research, plus typing the original lessons and all the subsequent additions and revisions. Without her support and encouragement, I would never have finished the project.

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## Lesson 1: Basic Beliefs and Principles

### Basic Principles of Interpretation

1. The Bible is the inspired Word of God and our authority for faith - what we believe, and practice - how we act (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12-13).
2. The Bible does not contradict itself. Where it appears to contradict itself, it is either a problem of interpretation or translation. We should use the Bible to interpret itself.
3. In interpreting the Bible we should start with from the clearly understandable passages and then move to those that are more obscure or difficult to understand.
4. We need to read the Bible as evangelical Christians. Alan Padgett in *As Christ Submits to the Church*, (pp 17-30) states that Christians need to approach the Bible in three ways:
  - a. The *Conventional Way* is to discover the plain, historical, or literal sense. This is done through historical and linguistic research. The patient and scholarly work of biblical scholars over the years has given us a better understanding of the nature, origin, and background of the various books of the Bible, but this by itself is not enough.
  - b. The *Canonical Way* is to discover the central theme of the Bible as a unit and to read it in the light of that theme. If Jesus really is the Savior of the world, the incarnate Word and the Messiah, the whole of the Bible needs to be read in the light of Christ. It is God's story of redemption. "The unity of the books of the Bible in one canon is itself a faith statement grounded in the gospel of Jesus Christ" (p 27).
  - c. The *Contemporary Way* is the Christian community searching for the truths of the Bible and how they apply to our worship, discipleship, and witness today. We value loving and knowing God above all, and we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Bible in doing this. The Bible comes alive for us when God speaks to us through it.
5. In interpreting a verse or section of the Bible we need to be aware of its context. What is the purpose or theme of the book of which it is a part and how is it related to that purpose or theme? Some biblical authors state their purpose clearly as John does in John 20:31. Other books require a careful study, but the insight we gain by doing so is worth the effort.

### Seven Basic Biblical Principles (Truths) about the Place and Role of Women

These principles apply to the place and role of women in society and in the church. Our interpretation of particular passages should not contradict these principles.

1. **As human beings, women are created in the image of God.** Genesis 1:27 states that both men and women are created in the image of God. "God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." Being created in the image of God has to do with our humanness and our personhood, not our sex. The image of God in us is evident in two ways:
  - our ability to think, to communicate, and to make decisions; and,
  - our ability to enter into deep personal fellowship with God and our fellow human beings.

Both men and women share equally in these endowments.

2. **As human beings, women share equally with men in the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28.** God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” This verse is the biblical basis for all science and for our responsibility to care for our environment. We are stewards of the good earth and its resources. Both men and women share in this stewardship.
3. **As females, women are equal and complementary partners with men in marriage.** This is the teaching of Genesis 2:18-25. In verse 18, God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” The Hebrew word *ezer* translated “helper” in this verse has no implications of inferiority or a subordinate position. In 16 of the 21 verses in which *ezer* is used in the Old Testament, it refers to a super-ordinate helper and in no case does it refer to a subordinate. In most cases, it is used of God as being a helper to his people.

God showed man that there was no companion corresponding to him among the animals. There was no one with whom he could share life as an equal partner. So God created a woman from the side of the man, and brought her to the man. When the man saw the woman, he was ecstatic and exclaimed, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’, for she was taken out of man” (Genesis 2:23). Woman was a suitable companion and partner for man, and “that is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh” (2:24).

4. **As fallen creatures, women share with men in the consequences of sin.** We do not live in a perfect world. In this fallen world, things are not as God intended them to be. Everything including relations between men and women has been affected by the fall. The changes described in of Genesis 3:16, “Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you,” are the result of sin having entered human relations. One outcome of the fall was “the battle of the sexes” and the first casualty was the open, equal partnership of Genesis 2.
5. **As redeemed persons, Christian women are part of God’s new creation in Christ.** “If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here” (2 Corinthians 5:17). In the new creation, Christian men and women are being renewed in the image of their Creator (Colossians 3:10). The image of God in us, which was marred by the fall, is being restored by the new birth and spiritual growth. This restoration makes possible a new order of human relations in which the curse is overcome. In other words, the effects of sin on human relations should be reversed in the Christian community.
6. **As disciples of Christ, women are called to be ministers for Christ.** The great commission of Matthew 28:18-20 was given to the whole church, not just to the men of the church. In fact it has been the evident blessing of God upon the ministries of women missionaries that has caused many people to change their views on women in ministry.
7. **As members of Christ, women receive the Holy Spirit and from the Holy Spirit gifts for ministry.** We live in the age of the Spirit, inaugurated by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Peter cited Joel 2:28-32 to explain the event, “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophecy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy” (Acts 2:17-18). The Holy Spirit is given to all believers, both men and women, and all are gifted for ministry.

***Discussion Questions:***

*Do you agree that the above seven basic truths are taught in the Bible?*

*Why should we seek to interpret the difficult passages in a way that agrees with these basic truths?*

## Lesson 2: What Jesus' Example and Teaching Tell Us about Human Relationships

### Thinking the Same Way Jesus Thought – Philippians 2:1-21

This passage starts with a “therefore,” that refers back to 1:27-30, where we are urged “to conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27). To do so, we must stand firm in the Holy Spirit, working together to proclaim and live out the Good News of Christ. Our steadfastness and unity will be a testimony to the not-yet-Christians around us, our friends, neighbours, colleagues, and fellow workers.

This is followed in 2:1-4 by a description of what a worthy life is like.

1. It is a life of fellowship, a life of being united with Christ and with one another by the Holy Spirit.
2. It is a life in which we really care for one another, love one another, agree with one another, and work together with a common purpose.
3. It is a life in which we are not selfish or conceited, but in humility value others above ourselves and are willing to serve them. We take up the role of a servant out of love, not for our own self-interest, but for the good of others.

In 2:5, we are told that in our relationships with one another, we are to have the same attitude of mind that Jesus had. The “we” includes all Christians, regardless of their sex, race, education, or social status. The issue is not simply one of imitating Jesus, but rather of living out the virtues and ethics of Jesus in our life situation. Jesus had equal status with God the Father, but he didn't cling to the advantages of that status. Instead he set aside the privileges of deity and became human. He took on the status of a servant. He lived a selfless obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death for our sakes, and it was the worst kind of death – crucifixion.

In 2:20-21, Paul describes Timothy as a person “who will show genuine concern for your welfare.” He is not like others “who look out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.” Timothy had the same attitude of mind that Jesus had. This is the attitude of mind we should have.

#### ***Discussion Questions:***

*Why should we cultivate an attitude of mind like Jesus had?*

*How should we go about cultivating an attitude of mind like Jesus had?*

*What would be the practical results of having an attitude of mind like Jesus had?*

### Understanding What True Leadership Is – Mark 10:35-45; 9:30-37

The brothers James and John came to Jesus and asked him to give them the positions of greatest power and prestige in his kingdom. When the other disciples heard about this, they were upset with James and John. As a result Jesus called the twelve disciples together and explained to them what it means to be a true leader. “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all” (10:42-44).

Just before James and John came to him with their request, Jesus had taken the twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him in Jerusalem. Now he reminds them of what he had told them and points to his ministry and his death as examples of what true servant leadership is. “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (10:45).

In all four Gospels, Jesus consistently taught and lived out a model of leadership that is loving servanthood in action. In the letters of Paul we also find teaching about mutual submission out of reverence for Christ. A key verse is Ephesians 5:21, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Alan Padgett in chapter 2 of his book, *As Christ Submits to the Church: a Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission*, states his belief that servant leadership and mutual submission are closely related concepts. He also argues that servant leadership and seeking to control others are diametrically opposed ideas of leadership. To be great or first in God’s kingdom is to be a servant of all. This is what Jesus taught and exemplified. What he is calling for from us is not just an attitude change but also action.

We are so influenced by our culture, where power and control over others is sought after, that we find servant leadership and mutual submission hard concepts to accept and harder to practice. The same was true for Jesus’ disciples. We have just discussed what happened after the third time Jesus told his disciples about his death. The same thing happened previously after he had told them the second time. As they were walking along, the disciples were arguing about who was the greatest among them. Hearing this, Jesus set them down and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all” (9:35). Servant leadership practiced in the context of mutual submission is the goal for which we should aim in the Christian community.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

*Do you think that servant leadership will work in our world? Why or why not?*

*What is at stake in practicing servant leadership and mutual submission?*

*What is at stake if we do not practice servant leadership and mutual submission?*

### **A Practical Demonstration of Servanthood – John 13:1-17**

John sets the stage very carefully for Jesus’ demonstration of servanthood.

1. First, John tells us that Jesus deeply loved his disciples (13:1). The motivation for what he is about to do arises from his love for them. He wants them to be able to accomplish the mission he will give them.
2. Second, John wants his readers to know that washing his disciples’ feet is not a sign of weakness. John tells us that Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God (13:3). Jesus wanted his disciples to know how things work in his kingdom. That is why he washed and dried their feet. He wanted them to serve one another. God’s kingdom works by mutual love, caring, and service. Jesus said, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (13:15).

To understand the power of Jesus’ act of washing his disciples’ feet, we need to remember that in Jesus’ day only a lowly servant or a slave would wash someone’s feet. This is why Peter, at first, refused to let Jesus wash his feet. To Peter, Jesus was his Lord and Teacher. In Peter’s view, washing his student’s feet was not something someone in Jesus’ position should do. Jesus, however, directly linked humble service

to his lordship and his teaching (13:13-14). Jesus not only washed their feet, but he also humbled himself and died for them on the cross. “He consistently took up the role of a servant and lived out the ethics of mutual submission” (Padgett, p 55).

***Discussion Questions:***

*Why did Jesus wash his disciples' feet?*

*What was he trying to teach them?*

*How can we put this lesson into practice today?*

*What connection does the example of Jesus washing his disciples' feet have with male-female relationships?*

***Summary Discussion Questions:***

*What do the three Scripture passages discussed in this lesson tell us about the desire for power and authority over others?*

*How does Jesus' example and teaching about leadership relate to male-female relationships in the home and in the church?*

*How are they more supportive of partnership than hierarchy?*

## Lesson 3: God’s Plan for Male-Female Relationships

### Introduction to Genesis 1 and 2

The first two chapters of Genesis have prompted many questions.

- Did God create the universe in seven days? Do we live on a young earth, perhaps only 24,000 years old?
- Or do we live on an old earth, millions of years old?
- Are Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 mythical or factual history?

In my opinion these questions miss the real message of Genesis 1 and 2.

The purpose of Genesis 1 and 2 is to give us a basic understanding of life. There is a God, who is the creator of the universe, including the planet on which we live. He created humans in his own image to have a relationship with him and to care for his creation. All humanity is one family, leaving no room for sexism or racism. He created men and women to be equal and complementary partners. These chapters explain to us God’s plan for human relationships.

Some ask why there are two contradictory accounts of creation, Genesis 1:1 to 2:3 and Genesis 2:3-25. My answer is that the two do not contradict one another, but rather each provides a different emphasis:

1. The first focuses on God as the creator of the universe and all living creatures, including humanity.
2. The second focuses on the creation of the man and his partner.

### God Creates Human Beings, Male and Female – Genesis 1:26-31

This passage tells us that God created human beings and assigned to them responsibilities in his creation. The Old Testament Hebrew word for humanity is *adam*. This word is used in three different ways in the first four chapters of Genesis.

- In 1:27 it refers to humanity or human beings.
- In chapter 2 it refers to “the man” as different from “the woman.”
- In chapter 4 it is used as a personal name for the husband of Eve.
- Like the French language, the Hebrew language has only two genders, masculine and feminine; there is no neuter. Therefore, the use of the pronoun “him” for a human being in some translations does not tell us anything about the importance of the male, especially when this is immediately followed by “male and female he created them.”

What does it mean to be created in God’s image, in God’s likeness? It is interesting to note that the plural “us” and “our” are used to refer to God: “Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness.” This may be a reference to the Trinity, to relationship within God himself, and a suggestion that we are meant to live in relationship with God and with one another. There are certainly many “one another” relationship commandments in the New Testament. (See John 13: 34-35; Romans 12:10,16; 13:8; 15:7,14; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 4:2,32; 5:21; Colossians 3:13,16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8; 4:9; 1 John 3:11,23; 4:7,11-12; 2 John 1:5.)

Another clue is provided by the task given to us humans. We are different from the rest of creation because we are created in God’s image and have been given dominion over the earth. This stewardship of the earth is given to both men and women; together we share in God’s ongoing activity of ordering and caring for the earth, all its living creatures, and especially our fellow human beings. There is nothing in Genesis 1 that suggests anything other than an equal partnership of men and women in this undertaking.

**Discussion Questions:**

*What possible connection is there between God as Trinity and our relationship with one another as human beings?*

*In what ways do we share in God’s ongoing creative activity?*

**God Creates the Man – Genesis 2:5-17**

The creation of the man takes place in the context of the planting of the Garden of Eden. In 2:5 there is an intentional wordplay. The man *adam* is created from the ground *adamah*. On one hand, this affirms our physical nature and our close connection with the earth. On the other hand, it prepares the reader for the man’s responsibility to take care of the Garden, an earthy task. We came from the earth, and we are dependent on the earth for life.

Another issue is the symbolism of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Why does God tell the man that he must not eat of the fruit of this tree, and that if he does, it will bring death to him? Victor Hamilton writes “What is forbidden to man is the power to decide for himself what is in his best interests and what is not. This is a decision God has not delegated to [him] ... Man has indeed become a god whenever he makes his own self the center, the springboard, and the only frame of reference for moral guidelines. When man attempts to act autonomously, he is attempting to be godlike” (*The Book of Genesis*, p 166). Hamilton’s interpretation makes good sense to me. It is clear from Genesis 3:1-5 that this prohibition also applies to women.

**Discussion Questions:**

*Does Hamilton’s understanding of the tree symbolism ring true to you? Why or why not?*

**God Creates an Equal Partner for the Man - Genesis 2:18-25**

Genesis 1:31 tells us that “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” Genesis 2:18 is the first mention of something that was not good in God’s creation. God says, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” God evaluated the situation and came up with the solution – a solution many people have misunderstood.

The misunderstanding begins with the King James Version, which reads, “I will make him an help meet for him.”

- Many have turned “help meet” into helpmate, not realizing that in 1611 the adjective “meet” meant suitable or precisely adapted to the need.



- The Hebrew word translated “suitable” literally means “as in front of him.” The woman God creates will correspond to the man; she will be neither a superior nor an inferior, but an equal partner.
- Our understanding of the word “help” has been affected by our use of this word in English to refer to a subordinate as in domestic help or farm help. However, the Hebrew word *ezer*, translated help or helper in English, never refers to someone who is in a subordinate position. In most of the 22 times it occurs in the Old Testament, it is used of God as our helper (Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7,26,29; Psalms 33:20; 70:5; 115:9-11; 121:1-2; 124:8; 146:5; and Hosea 13:9).
- The verbal form of the noun *ezer* means “help”, “save from danger”, “deliver from death.” The woman in Genesis 2 delivers or saves the man from his solitude or aloneness.

Naming the animals is part of man’s dominion over the animals. It also shows that a suitable helper for man will not be found in the animal world. Then God creates woman from the side of man. Most translations have the word “rib”, but the more accurate translation is “side.” This fits with the man’s exclamation, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” The man was made from earth, but the woman was made from man.

Both the man and the woman share the same spectrum of human strengths and weaknesses. Women were created not to serve men, but to serve God together with men. In this complementary partnership, they are fulfilling God’s plan for men and women.

***Discussion Question:***

*Why is a correct interpretation of Genesis 2:18 so important in our understanding of male-female relationships?*

## Lesson 4: How the Fall Changed Male-Female Relationships

### The Tempter's Methods – Genesis 3:1-7

Genesis 2 ends with a picture of harmony. The man is excited about the woman whom God has given him to be his equal partner. The man and the woman are ready to work together in an open relationship with no secrets and no manipulation. In Genesis 3, sin and disobedience to God enter in and the relationship changes. We call this the fall, the breakdown of God's plan for human relationships.

The fall begins with the serpent's dialogue with the woman. The serpent is described in 3:1 as being more crafty and shrewd than any of the other creatures God had made. In the New Testament the serpent is identified as Satan (Romans 16:20; Revelation 12:9; 20:2). How the serpent tempts the woman is a pattern for how Satan tempts everyone. In a sense the serpent was speaking to both the man and the woman because 3:6 tells us the man was with her during the conversation. It is worth noting that the serpent uses the plural "you" throughout the encounter, but it is the woman who enters into dialogue with the serpent.

The serpent begins by expressing his surprise that God would be so mean and by exaggerating God's prohibition. "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" In this one sentence Satan has moved God from a charitable provider to a cruel oppressor. This prompts the woman to defend God. As she does, she also exaggerates. To God's warning, "You must not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," she adds the words, "You must not touch it." This opens the door for the serpent's next assertion, "You will not certainly die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Satan questions not only the truth of what God said, but also his motive for saying it. He suggests that God is trying to keep something good from the man and the woman. Becoming like God is a temptation hard to reject. The woman shifts from her commitment to doing God's will to doing her own will, and this brings serious consequences.

The fruit looked fresh and delicious, and believing that eating it would make her wise, the woman ate it. She gave some to the man and he also ate it. Immediately they began to feel the consequences. Their ideal relationship of trust and love begins to change into one of shame and mutual suspicion.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

*In what situations, in your personal experience or your observation of others, have you seen the same methods at work that the tempter used against the woman?*

*"Knowing" in the Bible is always more than "knowing about;" it is also about experiencing. Was it right in your opinion for God to try to protect us from experiencing good and evil?*

### The Beginning of the Blame Game – Genesis 3:8-13

The man and the woman, who have just begun to hide their openness with one another, are now seeking to hide from God. The fellowship they enjoyed with God prior to their fall has been replaced with guilt and fear. God calls to the man, "Where are you?" Victor Hamilton in his commentary believes the question is designed to draw the man out rather than driving him out. "Why are you hiding?" would have been a more pointed question. The man does not include the woman in his answer. "I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

The man's response does not answer God's question, but rather the question, "Why are you hiding?" However, his response is only partial. It avoids the real explanation. The fact is he is afraid of God because he knows he has disobeyed God's command. God knows the real reason and asks, "Have you eaten the fruit I commanded you not to eat?" The man admits that he has eaten the fruit, but does not take responsibility for his disobedience. Instead, he blames both God and the woman: "It was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit, and I ate it." Instead of a simple yes, the man became devious and defensive. God now turns to the woman and asks, "How could you do such a thing?" Instead of accepting responsibility for what she did, the woman replied, "The serpent deceived me. That's why I ate it." Taking responsibility for one's decisions and actions is necessary for an equal partnership to work. Blaming others only makes matters worse. The blame game is part of our fallen nature.

**Discussion Questions:**

*Why is taking responsibility for one's own decisions and action so important?*

*Why do we often prefer to play the blame game?*

**Reaping the Consequences of Disobeying God – Genesis 3:14-19**

The serpent (3:14) and the ground are cursed, but the man and the woman are not. God puts enmity between the serpent and the woman and promises that a descendant of the woman will crush the serpent's head (3:15). Many see this as a reference to Jesus, the son of Mary, who broke the power of the devil (Hebrews 2:14-15) and disarmed the powers and authorities ... triumphing over them by the cross (Colossians 2:15). Others have seen it not only as a reference to the coming Messiah, but also a reference to the struggle between those who follow and obey God and those who follow and obey Satan. The early Christians were very much aware of this ongoing struggle and their role in it (Acts 26:17-18; Ephesians 2:1-7; Colossians 1:9-14).

Genesis 3:16 is a key verse in the present debate between those who believe in equality and those who believe in hierarchy.

1. The key question is whether the verse is God's prescription (rule) of how male-female relationships should be, or whether it is God's description of what will happen to male-female relationships as a result of the fall. I believe it is a description.
2. A second issue is how this verse should be translated. The Hebrew *issabon* occurs twice in 3:16 and once in 3:17, but only the King James Version translates it the same in all three places as "sorrow." It can also mean "toil" or "pain." Several scholars argue that the desire the woman has for her husband is a desire to dominate, and point to 4:7 as an example of how "desire" and "rule over" are used in this way. If this is correct, then the last part of 3:16 is about a battle of wills, a power struggle, between men and women. This power struggle hurts both men and women. It is a rejection of the respect, love, and caring for one another that is both life-giving and life-nurturing.

**Discussion Questions:**

*If the Bible is the story of redemption, is it surprising to find a hint at the outcome of the story here in Genesis 3? Why or why not?*

*Do you see Genesis 3:16 as God's order for male-female relationships or as a description of what happened to God's ideal as a result of the fall? Why?*

*In the light of 2 Corinthians 5:17 why should we be striving for a restoration of God's ideal plan for male-female relationships?*

## Lesson 5: What Galatians 3:26-4:7 Teaches about Male-Female Relationships in the Family of God

### The Theme of Galatians – The Context of Galatians 3:26–4:7

In Lesson 1, I noted that in interpreting a verse or a passage of the Bible we need to be aware of its context. This is especially true of the letters in the New Testament. This is why we begin Lesson 5 by asking what Paul's purpose was in writing his letter to the Galatian churches and how 3:26-4:7 is related to that purpose.

Paul is deeply concerned that the Galatian Christians were turning away from the gospel he had preached to them. False teachers had come to the Galatian churches (1:7; 5:10,12; 6:12-13), teaching that a true Christian must accept Jewish rites, including circumcision and the observation of religious days (5:2; 6:12; 4:10). These false teachers were known as Judaizers, Jewish Christians who wanted to combine the gospel of Christ with Jewish practices and ceremonies. In attacking the gospel Paul preached, they also questioned Paul's qualifications to be an apostle.

Paul's letter to the Galatians is his response to the personal attacks and false teaching of the Judaizers. In 1:10–2:21, Paul defends his apostolic qualifications by pointing to his direct call from God, his independence from the other apostles, his defense of the gospel of grace at Jerusalem, the approval of the other apostles, and his correction of Peter in Antioch.

In 3:1–5:12, Paul states that to be a true child of Abraham one must seek salvation, not in the works of the law, but in faith. The law makes us aware of our sin; faith in Christ sets us free from the law. In 5:13–6:18, Paul shows that freedom from the law does not mean license to do whatever we want, but it is living in the Spirit that brings true freedom and the fruit of the Spirit into our lives.

Paul's message in Galatians and in other letters, such as in Ephesians 2:11–3:6, is about God's plan to create one people of God – a new humanity in which the barriers that divide are overcome by the Spirit. What counts is faith expressing itself through love (Galatians 5:6) and the new creation (6:15).

#### *Discussion Questions:*

*How does having insight into Paul's purpose in writing Galatians help you understand 3:26-4:7?*

*Does God's plan to create one people of God excite you? Why or why not?*

### The Three Barriers Overcome in Christ – Galatians 3:26-29

In verses 3:26 and 27, Paul assures the Galatian Christians that they are already children of God through faith. They have put on Christ. Nothing more is needed, neither circumcision or any other Jewish ritual or ceremony. God is creating a new humanity in which the barriers that divide have no place.

Many people view Galatians 3:28 as the Christian Charter for Human Rights. It states that in Christ all believers are one. The three major social barriers that separated people in the past and still separate them today have been overcome in Christ. There is no place for discrimination or special privilege in the church based on these three barriers, which are:

1. **Racial-cultural** (neither Jew nor Greek). In Colossians 3:11, Paul adds two other groups – barbarians (non-Greeks, who did not speak Greek) and Scythians (a nomadic people originally from Siberia).

2. **Socio-economic** (neither slave nor free). In the Roman world, freemen had the full rights of citizenship, which slaves did not have. Slaves could be highly educated and used by Roman masters to educate their children, but they were still owned by their masters. They were bought and sold in the marketplace.
3. **Sex / Gender** (neither male nor female). Sex / Gender is the heading for this category because both sex and gender are involved in what Paul is discussing. Even though the words “sex” and “gender” can be used interchangeably, they have different meanings in modern usage.

The World Health Organization states the differences clearly and succinctly:

“**Sex**” refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women. “**Gender**” refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

To put it another way: “**Male**” and “**female**” are sex categories, while “**masculine**” and “**feminine**” are gender categories. Aspects of sex will not vary substantially between different human societies, while aspects of gender may vary greatly.

(<http://www.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en/>)

In the debate between evangelical complementarians and evangelical egalitarians, complementarians agree that men and women are equal, but maintain that God has given men and women different gender roles, based on their masculinity and femininity. Egalitarians believe that our sex is God-given. God also gives us talents and spiritual gifts to use in serving him and humanity, but gender roles are a product of the society in which we live.

For a comparison of the two positions, see

- *The Danvers Statement*  
[www.churchcouncil.org/iccp\\_org/Documents\\_ICCP/English/17\\_Male\\_Female\\_Distinctives\\_A&D.pdf](http://www.churchcouncil.org/iccp_org/Documents_ICCP/English/17_Male_Female_Distinctives_A&D.pdf)); and,
- *Men, Women and Biblical Equality*  
[www.cbeinternational.org/files/u1/smwbe/english.pdf](http://www.cbeinternational.org/files/u1/smwbe/english.pdf).

All three categories (racial-cultural, socio-economic, and sex / gender) are the basis for the discrimination and inequality that divide people. Paul’s declaration, based on God’s new creation, is that none of these have any place in the life of the church because in Christ all believers are one.

It is not the absence of diversity but the presence of harmony in the midst of diversity that distinguishes the body of Christ. Equality does not mean uniformity. Individuals do not lose their gifts, talents, or training, but they are to use them for the good of the whole body. In Ephesians 4:1-6 and Colossians 3:12-15, Paul describes what life should be like in the body of Christ. Jesus said that loving one another as he loves us is the mark of true disciples (John 13:34-35).

#### ***Discussions Questions:***

*Are the three barriers described in Galatians 3:28 still a factor in society today?*

*Can you give examples of these at work as a basis for discrimination?*

*Are Christian families and churches measuring up to the ideals set forth in Ephesians 4:1-6 and Colossians 3:12-15?*

### The New Humanity and the Privileges of Sonship through the Spirit – Galatians 4:1-7

“God sent his Son, born of a woman ... to redeem [us] ..., that we might receive adoption to sonship.” “Adoption to sonship” is a legal term referring to the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman culture. These verses are declaring we have all the rights and privileges of sons of God regardless of:

- our race or cultural background;
- our social or economic status; and,
- our sex / gender.

It is the Spirit of the Son in us that assures us of our standing before God. Galatians 4:4-7 reminds us of Romans 8:14-17, where we are also told that if we are led by the Spirit, we are children of God, heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ.

Galatians 3:26–4:7 states that when God has:

- given a person all the rights and privileges of the sons of God;
- called that person into his service; and,
- given that person the gifts to do what he / she has called them to do,

the church has no right to say, based on their race or cultural background, social or economic status, sex / gender, that he / she cannot serve.

Gordon Fee, in an article on Galatians 3:26-29, “Male and Female in the New Creation”, says,

To give continuing *significance* to a male authority viewpoint for men and women, whether at home or in the church is to reject the new creation in favor of the norms of a fallen world. It is to give a significance to being male that in the end usurps the work of the Spirit, not only in the wife and her relationship to God, but also in the church – the expression of the new order and new humanity that is already present, even while it is yet to be” (*Discovering Biblical Equality*, p 185).

#### **Discussion Questions:**

*How does it make you feel to think of yourself as God’s son (child), an heir of God and a co-heir with Christ?*

*Why is male-authority still a factor in many Christian churches and families?*

## Lesson 6: Does 1 Timothy 2:8-15 Forbid Women from Teaching and Preaching?

### The Purpose / Theme of 1 Timothy – The Context for 1 Timothy 2:8-15

Paul left Timothy in Ephesus as his personal representative to deal with the false teachers whose teaching was threatening to destroy the church in Ephesus. The letter is written to Timothy, his “true son in the faith” (1:2), giving him advice on how to handle the situation. The false teaching included false doctrine, myths, genealogies, and speculations that did not help God’s work (1:3-4). The false teachers called themselves teachers of the law, but they did not know what they were talking about (1:5-7). They rejected sound doctrines and made shipwreck of their faith (1:18-20). They were deceived by demons and had become hypocritical liars, forbidding their followers to marry and ordering them to abstain from certain foods (4:1-5). They were taking advantage of some women, perhaps new Christians who had not been thoroughly instructed in the faith, and were encouraging them to spread the false teaching (5:11-15; 2 Timothy 3:1-9).

In reading and seeking to understand 1 Timothy, we should remember that Paul and Timothy had been close associates in ministry for many years. In writing to Timothy, it was not necessary for Paul to explain everything in detail. Timothy knew Paul’s theology. Paul’s abbreviated form of communication in 1 Timothy was not a problem for Timothy, but it can be for us.

#### *Discussion Questions:*

*How does the context help us to understand 1 Timothy?*

*Why is it important to remember the context as we study this letter of Paul to Timothy?*

*Do you sense Paul’s urgency as he writes this letter?*

### Instruction on Prayer for Men and Women (1 Timothy 2:1-6, 8-10)

Paul begins chapter 2 by urging that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for everyone because this pleases God, who wants all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. Men, when they assemble for worship, are to pray without anger or controversy. The false teaching was causing division and controversy in the house churches of Ephesus. These controversies should not be allowed to upset the worship gatherings. In Greek verse 9 begins with a word which means “in the same way.” This indicates that Paul wanted women as well as men to participate and pray in the worship gatherings. But when they do, he wants them to be dressed modestly, with decency and propriety.

#### *Discussion Questions:*

*Should we deal with anger and controversies as part of our preparation for worship?*

*Can how we dress distract others in worship?*

### Instruction for Women on Learning, Teaching, and Leadership – 1 Timothy 2:11-12

These two verses are central to the debate between “complementarians” and “egalitarians.” Complementarians believe these verses clearly forbid women from teaching and preaching. Egalitarians understand it differently. What follows is my understanding of these two verses.

Some women in Ephesus had been deceived by the false teachers and were trying to pass this teaching on to others, both men and women. Paul’s solution to this situation was that women should listen and learn in full submission. It is significant that in the Greek text in these two verses the only verb in the imperative tense, which indicates a command or order, is the verb “learn.” Some argue that the full submission is to men, but the text does not say this. I believe the submission is to God and his Word. The women should have a teachable spirit, not disputing or ridiculing their teachers, but with full intent to obey the truth of God (2:11).

Paul’s use of the present indicative tense suggests that the first part of 2:12 should be translated, “I am not now permitting a woman to teach.” This tense is rarely, if ever, used in a universally applicable command or ruling. The overall purpose of 1 Timothy is to deal with false teaching, not to forbid teaching. The purpose of serious learning is usually to prepare a person for teaching.

The word *authentēin* in the second part of 2:12 only occurs here in the New Testament. Philip Payne, in his book *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, says that the meaning of *authentēin* has changed over time. In an exhaustive research of non-biblical manuscripts, he found not one instance of it meaning “to have authority over” until 100 years after Paul’s time. What he found was that *authentēin* means “assuming authority for oneself” or “to take authority into one’s own hands.” Based on this research, what Paul is prohibiting here is a woman assuming authority to preach and teach without being authorized to do so, that is, assuming the authority to teach before being properly instructed in biblical truth and doctrine. This is different from how complementarians interpret these verses. For instance, Douglas Moo states, “We argue that the teaching prohibited to women [in 1 Timothy 2:11-12] here includes what we would call preaching ... and teaching of Bible and doctrine in the church, in colleges, and in seminaries” (*Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, p 186).

**Discussion Questions:**

*Is the command “to learn” degrading or elevating women? Why or why not?*

*Is what Paul required of women here also required of men? If so, why is this not stated?*

**Lessons from Genesis 2 and 3 in 1 Timothy 2:13-15**

In 2:13-15 Paul adds three comments related to Genesis 2 and 3 that shed further light on what he wrote in 2:11-12.

1. Both Adam and Eve were created by God, but Adam was made first. In fact, Eve was made from Adam. This suggests that women should respect men rather than trying to dominate them (2:13).
2. “Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner” (2:14). Eve was deceived by Satan and this resulted in serious consequences for her and the whole human race. The same was happening in Ephesus. Some women were being deceived by the false teachers and were turning away from the truth, bringing serious consequences to them, their families, and all those who might come under their influence.
3. Verse 15 as usually translated does not ring true for three reasons.
  - a. First, the word usually translated as “women” in English is the singular pronoun “she” in Greek, and obviously still a reference to Eve.



- b. Second, the word translated “saved” in Paul’s letters always means spiritual salvation which raises the question of what possible relationship there is between childbearing and spiritual salvation.
- c. Third, there is a “the” before “childbearing” or “childbirth,” which in Greek usually points to a special event. I believe that what Paul is doing here is balancing Eve’s sin and its consequences with the promise of God in Genesis 3:15 that salvation for women and all people will come through “the childbirth,” that is, the birth of Jesus, the Savior of the world. Paul is offering hope and dignity to all women by pointing out that a woman is the channel through whom the Savior is born. This reminds us of two other Pauline passages: Galatians 4:4-7 and 1 Corinthians 11:7-12.

***Discussion Questions:***

*Does “saved through the childbirth” (referring to Jesus’ birth) make more sense to you than “saved through childbearing?” Why?*

**The Universal Principle Arising from I Timothy 2:8-15**

No one, neither man nor woman, should seek to teach and preach without first having been thoroughly instructed in Christian faith and doctrine.

## Lesson 7: Does 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Teach the Headship of Men over Women?

### The Structure of 1 Corinthians as the Context for 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

In his letter to the church of God in Corinth, Paul begins by thanking God for the grace the Corinthian Christians have experienced and the spiritual gifts they have received (1:1-9). He then proceeds to address a number of problems in the Corinthian church about which he has heard or has been asked for advice (1:11; 5:1; 7:1). Kenneth E. Bailey in the “Contents” section of his commentary on 1 Corinthians, *Paul through Mediterranean Eyes*, lists the five main issues Paul deals with in his letter:

- |  |            |
|--|------------|
| 1. The Cross and Christian Unity                   | 1:10–4:16  |
| 2. Sex: Men and Women in the Human Family          | 4:17–7:40  |
| 3. Christian and Pagan: Faith, Christ, and Victory | 8:1–11:1   |
| 4. Worship: Men and Women in the Church            | 11:2–14:40 |
| 5. Resurrection: Faith, Christ, and Victory        | 15:1-58    |

### Men and Women Leading in Worship – 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is a difficult and obscure passage. The problem Paul is addressing is basically not a gender issue, even though gender plays a role in one rule for men and another for women. Paul makes clear that both men and women may pray and prophesy in the worship service (11:4-5). We usually think of prophesying as foretelling the future, but in 1 Corinthians 14:3 Paul says that those who prophesy do so to help others grow in the Lord by encouraging and comforting them. We could say that prophesying is Spirit-led preaching.

Many have translated words and phrases in it to fit their theories rather than letting the text determine the interpretation. A key to understanding the passage is to take seriously the repeated identification of men’s and women’s head coverings that are disgraceful, improper, and degrading (11:4-6,13-14). A careful reading of the text indicates that the issue is about hair, not about wearing or not wearing a covering on one’s head. The first clue is 11:15 which says that long hair is given to a woman as a covering. An in-depth study of the cultural setting reveals two other clues (Philip Payne in *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, pp 141-187).

1. First, Greek, Roman, and Jewish literature of that era speak of men wearing long, effeminate hair as being disgraceful. Men desiring homosexual affairs advertised their sexual availability by a display of long hair done up similar to women.
2. Second, the culture in Corinth required women to do their hair up in public. Loose hair was considered disgraceful and symbolized sexual looseness in Roman, Greek, and Jewish culture.

Bailey suggests that the message of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 for churches today is:

Men and women have gifts that they share together, and prophesy is among them (Acts 2:17-18). Those with these gifts should participate together in the leadership of worship. When doing so, do not dress in a manner that leads to misunderstanding or in any way detracts from the task of bringing the faithful into the presence of God. Both women and men are created in the image of God. Let the focus be on God, not on yourselves. In the Lord you are equal and mutually interdependent. Let the angels rejoice once again.

**Discussion Questions:**

What do you think of Bailey's application of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 to the church today?

Should we think seriously about how we conduct our lives and our worship in our cultural setting today? Why or why not?

**Theological Basis for Paul's Teaching in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16**

The reason why we need to give special attention to verse 3 is to counteract the way it has been misunderstood and wrongly translated in many modern versions. The key issue in this verse is the meaning of *kephalé*.

- The usual meaning of *kephalé* is the head of a person or an animal.
- It is also used in a metaphorical sense to mean "source," as the head of a river, or to mean "one having authority over," as a leader, master, director, or boss.

Paul in his letters uses *kephalé* in a metaphorical sense 11 times. In most, if not all of these instances, "source" makes more sense than "authority." An excellent example is Colossians 2:19. I believe that "source" is the meaning of *kephalé* in all three times it occurs in 1 Corinthians 11:3.

Translating *kephalé* as "head," as many versions do, may be misleading for English speakers because when we see "head," our minds go directly to ideas like "having authority over" or "being in subordination to," but Paul is not writing about leadership or headship in this verse. He is giving the theological basis for his teaching about the proper hairdo for men and women when leading worship. As a lead-in to this teaching, he says, "I want you to realize that the source of every man is Christ, and the source of woman is the man, and the source of Christ is God." This understanding of *kephalé* explains the order of these three clauses.

1. In creation, Christ is the source of man.
2. In Genesis 2:21-22, man is the source of woman.
3. In the incarnation, God is the source of Christ.

Understood this way, the clauses are chronologically ordered.

Verse 3 also helps us understand some of the verses that follow. If a man wears his hair as if he were a woman, he disgraces Christ who created him as a man. If a woman wears her hair in a way that suggests that she is sexually unfaithful, she is disgracing her husband. Paul is saying to leaders in worship, "Stop and think about what you are doing. It is true that Christ has set you free, but this doesn't mean that you can ignore the context in which you are living. Your witness is more important than your freedom to wear your hair as you wish."

In verses 8 to 12, Paul wants to make sure his readers have not misunderstood his teaching. In verses 9 and 10 the Greek preposition *dia* occurs four times. The common meaning of *dia* is "because of," but in most translations the two in verse 9 are translated "for" and the two in verse 10 "because of" or something similar.

If we translated *dia* as “because of” in all four places, verse 9 would read:

- “For the man was not created because of the woman, but the woman because of the man,” instead of
- “For the man was not created for the woman, but woman for man.”

This fits much better with Genesis 2:18. The sign of authority on her head in verse 10 is her own authority as an equal partner in life.

What do angels have to do with her having this sign of authority? Bailey suggests that the angels had praised God for his first creation (Genesis 1) and they praise God when the consequences of the fall are overcome in his new creation, wherever men and women learn to live and work together as equal partners (*Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*, pp 311-313).

Paul realizes that even verses 9 and 10 as well as verse 3 can be understood in an hierarchical way, so he writes in verses 11 and 12 that in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman, but all come from God.

***Discussion Questions:***

*Does “source” rather than “authority over” make more sense to you in understanding verse 3? Why or why not?*

*Are you surprised that Paul was so concerned that Christian men and women serve together as equal partners in the home and in the church? Why or why not?*

## Lesson 8: Does Ephesians 5:18-33 Teach the Headship of Husbands over Their Wives?

### Introduction to the Ephesian Letter – Context for Ephesians 5:18-33

In some ways Ephesians is different from Paul's other letters.

1. First, there are no personal references, greetings, or messages to or from individuals.
2. Second, the letter is not written to deal with any particular issues or problems.
3. Third, it is like a sermon on "the eternal purpose of God, which he is fulfilling through his son Jesus Christ, and working out in and through the Church" (Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians*, p 13).

Chapters 1-3 are the doctrinal development of this great theme, and chapters 4–6 teach us how it works out in human life and relationships.

As we work through the meaning of 5:18-33, we need to remember what Paul has already written in Ephesians about human relationships. How we interpret 5:18-33 must fit with the following statements:

- "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (4:2).
- "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (4:3).
- "Be kind and compassionate with one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ forgave you" (4:32).
- "Follow God's example... and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (5:1-2).

#### *Discussion Questions:*

*In understanding the letters of Paul, should we assume that Paul does not contradict himself in the same letter? Why or why not?*

### Mutual Submission in Ephesians 5:18-21 – Responsibility of Christians to One Another

In Greek, 5:18-21 is one sentence. It begins with the command to be filled with the Spirit, and then it lists four ways being filled with the Spirit will be evident in our lives and fellowship with one another as Christians. We will:

1. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit;
2. Make music in our hearts to the Lord;
3. Always give thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus; and,
4. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Mutual submission is an evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Joining the word "submit" with the pronoun "one another" makes clear that mutual submission is not about hierarchical relationships, but about serving one another as Christ serves us.

This reminds us of Lesson 2 about our need:

- to think the same way Jesus thought;
- to understand what is true leadership; and,
- to learn from Jesus' demonstration of servanthood in washing his disciples' feet.

We learned that God's kingdom works by mutual love, caring, and service.

**Discussion Questions:**

*Why is mutual submission an important part of the Christian life?*

*Why is mutual submission hard to put into practice?*

### Understanding Ephesians 5:22-24 – Responsibility of Wives to Their Husbands

These three verses, I believe, have been misinterpreted and abused by many preachers, teachers, and commentary writers. In this passage there are three key issues that need to be considered.

1. **First**, verse 22 is closely tied to verse 21. In fact, in the Greek text there is no word "submit" in verse 22. Submit is borrowed from verse 21. Literally translated, it would read, "Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ, wives to their husbands as to the Lord." This brings mutual submission into verse 22 and eliminates any hierarchical understanding of the word "submit."
2. **Second**, we need to pay close attention to verse 23, "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior." In 4:15-16, Christ is described as the source (head) of the whole body. It is from him and through him that the church grows and builds itself up in love.
  - This reminds us of Colossians 2:19, which says that Christ is "the head, from whom the whole body, separated and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow."
  - It also reminds us of John 15, where Jesus says that he is the source of our spiritual life and growth.

Verse 23 should cause us to rethink our relationship to Christ. It is not a ruler-subject, master-servant relationship. We submit to Christ in awe of and response to his self-giving, redemptive, life-giving, and life-sustaining love. This is the model for the relationship between wife and husband. Our submission to one another should be modeled after the relationship between Christ and his church. He serves the church and we serve him. The wife's side of the relationship is described in 5:22-24 and the husband's in 5:25-33.

3. **Third**, head (*kephalé*) is not about "authority over" but about "source of." Verse 23 says that Christ is the Savior of the church, the source of its life and vitality. Without a living connection with him we can do nothing.

**Discussion Questions:**

*Does your idea of the husband being "head" change when you model it after Christ being head of the church? Why and how?*

### Understanding Ephesians 5:25-33 – Responsibility of Husbands to Their Wives

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (5:25-27). The love husbands are to have for their wives is a self-giving, self-sacrificing love patterned after the love of Christ for his Church, the love that moved him to give his life on the cross that we might be saved and transformed into his radiant bride.

After describing how husbands are to love their wives, Paul takes us back to Genesis 2:18-25. He reminds us that woman came from man’s side, so that in a very real sense, a man’s wife is part of his own body. Moreover, in marriage the man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife. The two become one flesh. “He who loves his wife loves himself”(Ephesians 5:28). At the end of this section on wife-husband relationships, Paul writes, “A husband must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband” (5:33). A husband is to love his wife because woman came from man to be his strong partner in life, and she must respect him because woman was made from the side of man.

Short answers to two common questions about this passage:

1. *Why is the wife urged to submit to her husband, but the man is urged to love his wife?*

One suggestion is that some wives have a tendency to dominate their husbands, and some husbands have a tendency to treat their wives as servants rather than strong partners.

2. *Are there any limitations to the submission expected of wives?*

First, a wife’s primary loyalty is to God. She should not submit to her husband if it means acting contrary to God’s will for her.

Second, she should not submit to treatment that destroys her as a person. A wife should not put up with physical or verbal abuse. God wants all of us, both men and women, to flourish and become all he planned us to be.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

*Does loving one’s wife as Christ loved the church include mutual submission? Why?*

*Do you agree that there are limits to submission? Why or why not?*

## Lesson 9: What Colossians 3:1-17 Teaches Us about Male-Female Relationships

### Context for Colossians 3:1-17 – The Supremacy of Christ

Epaphras, a much loved co-worker of Paul, was the one who first brought the Good News of Christ to Colossae (1:7,8). He visited Paul in Rome and brought him news from the church in Colossae. He was probably the one who told Paul about a growing problem in the church. Apparently a false teaching was being introduced to the congregation. It was threatening to undermine the true gospel and bring the Colossian Christians into spiritual bondage. The false teaching downplayed the role of Christ in creation and in redemption. Paul responded by emphasizing the person and work of Christ:

- He is the Son of God, in him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (1:13-14).
- He is the visible image of the invisible God. All things were created through him and for him (1:15-16).
- He is the source of the body, which is the church (1:18).
- In Christ all the fullness of God dwells. In Christ we are brought to fullness (2:9-10).
- Christ is the head over every power and authority (2:10).

#### *Discussion Questions:*

*Why is knowing who Christ is and what he can do for his followers important in a Christian's life?*

*Why is it easy to neglect our relationship with Christ?*

### Essential Steps to Maturity in Christ – Colossians 3:1-8

In Colossians 1:28, Paul says that the goal of his ministry is to “present everyone fully mature in Christ.” In 2:6-7, he adds that this is an ongoing process of transformation. The New Living Translation translates Paul's instructions, “And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught.” Paul reminds them and us that Christ is the source of our spiritual nourishment. If we are not united to him, we will not grow to maturity and we will not be transformed.

In 3:1-8, Paul outlines two essential steps in becoming all we should be in Christ.

1. The first step has to do with our ambitions and goals in life. We are to set our hearts on Christ and how he expects us to live. We are to set our minds, not on the things of this world – riches, success, and power, but on becoming like Christ for our real life is hidden with Christ in God.
2. The second step has to do with putting to death our old sinful nature. We are to live like new persons, like people who have died to a sinful past and are now living in Christ.

Paul gives us two lists of sins that we are to get rid of and put to death.

1. First, we are to put to death sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry.



2. Second, we are to get rid of anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy talk. In other words, we are to clean up our inner desires, our actions, and our speech.

We cannot take these steps on our own. It is only possible as we walk with Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. In our growth to maturity the closer our relationship to Christ the greater will be our transformation.

***Discussion Questions:***

*Why is what we set our hearts and minds on an essential aspect of growing to maturity as a Christian believer?*

*How are we enabled to put to death our old sinful nature?*

**The New Creation – Living the New Life in Christ – Colossians 3:9-17**

In the Old Testament there are numerous predictions that a new day will come when the consequences of the fall will be overcome and right relationships with God and with one another will be restored. One of these is Jeremiah 31:31-34, which speaks of a coming time when God will make a new covenant with his people. In that day God will put his law in his people's hearts and minds, and they will know him in a new way. Another is Joel 2:28-29, which speaks of a time when God will pour out his Spirit on all peoples, both men and women, and they will prophesy. The New Testament tells us that these prophecies were fulfilled in the coming of Jesus and the pouring out of his Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Luke 22:20; Acts 2:16-21; John 7:37-39; Hebrews 8:6-13; 10:15-18).

We live in the new creation, a time of reconciliation and restoration (2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Galatians 6:15). In Colossians 3:9-11, Paul lists several characteristics of the new creation. Lying and deception will be replaced by openness and honesty. The old self with its sinful practices and prejudices will be replaced by the new self, which is being renewed as we become more and more like Christ. In the new creation the old barriers that keep people apart will have no place. Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, men and women, will respect one another as equals and work together as partners in the home and in the church. All this becomes possible when we focus on Christ and let him work in us and through us.

Early in my ministry I wondered why there was not more about the Christian family in the New Testament. Eventually I realized that everything that tells us how Christians should love and support one another applies to the Christian family. More recently I have realized that these passages also apply to male-female relationships in the fellowship and ministry of the church. The most well-known verse is John 13:34-35, where Jesus says, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." We often read these verses without applying them to all our relationships with one another as Christians.

Colossians 3:12-17 is one of these passages about Christian relationships. It tells us how we are to relate to one another.

1. We must be compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, and patient with one another.
2. We must be tolerant of one another's faults and forgive one another even as the Lord has forgiven us.
3. We must love one another for only love can bind us together in harmony.

4. We must work together in peace as members of one body. A body, whose members are not working together, does not function well.
5. We must allow the words of Christ to live in our hearts in all their richness.
6. We are to teach and admonish one another with wisdom through our singing, our words, and our deeds.

If we were to put all these into practice, working together as equal partners would be a lot easier.

***Discussion Questions:***

*Why is it easy for us to forget that we are part of God's new creation?*

*Do you find it easy to read the "one another" passages without applying them to all your relationships with other Christians? Why or why not?*

## Lesson 10: Giftedness and Calling Rather than Gender and Hierarchy of Roles

### Introduction to New Testament Teaching on Spiritual Giftedness

Spiritual gifts are gifts given by the Holy Spirit to Christians that enable them to carry out the ministries God has called them to do. The main passages that deal with spiritual giftedness are Romans 12:1-8, 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40, and 1 Peter 4:7-11. Spiritual gifts are not the same as natural talents or skills learned through education or training. They are manifestations of the Holy Spirit at work in the church. Spiritual gifts are as real today as they were in the early church. Some have argued on the basis of 1 Corinthians 13:8-12 that spiritual gifts ceased with the end of the apostolic age and the acceptance of the New Testament canon. I believe this is a misunderstanding of the text. Prophecy, knowledge, and tongues may be important in the life of the church now, but in the light of eternity they are not permanent. This is what Paul is saying.

Both men and women receive spiritual gifts for ministry. 1 Corinthians 11:4-5 tell us that both women and men may prophesy, that is, engage in Spirit-led and Spirit-empowered preaching of the word of God. Colossians 3:16 says that all members of the body of Christ are to teach and admonish one another. All includes women.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

*In what ways are spiritual gifts and natural talents different?*

*Do you believe all Christians are given spiritual gifts? Why and what difference does it make?*

### Understanding How Giftedness Works – 1 Corinthians 12:1-14

Kenneth E. Bailey in his comments on 12:4-6 uses a neat illustration to help us understand what we need to carry out our calling as Christians. He says that we need three things:

1. The necessary tools;
2. A specific assignment; and,
3. The adequate energy to complete the job.

The Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are involved in making this possible.

1. The Holy Spirit gives us the necessary tools, the spiritual gifts we need to carry out our assignment.
2. The Lord (Christ) gives us our assignment, the task we are called to accomplish.
3. God the Father provides us with the energy we need to complete the task.

*(Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes, pp 334-335).*

We need to note four truths in this passage.

1. The Holy Spirit gives the spiritual gifts to whomever he chooses. There is no hint that sex / gender plays any role in whom he chooses.

2. The Lord gives the assignment, not the church. The Baptist understanding of ordination is that it is the act, wherein the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, publicly recognizes and confirms that a follower of Christ has been gifted, called, and set apart by God to carry out their calling to the Christian ministry, and in the name of Christ, commissions them for this work.
3. It is God working in and through people that enables them to complete the task that God has called him / her to do.
4. Gifting and calling come to all followers of Christ. One assignment is not more important or higher than another. We are all part of one body and each part has an essential task to do.

12:7 and 11 take us a step further in our understanding of giftedness. The manifestation of the Spirit (spiritual gifts) is given to each believer. The purpose of the gifts is for the common good, to build up the body of Christ, not for the personal spiritual enrichment of the one who receives the gift. We must be willing to receive and use the gift we are given, but we don't select the gift. It is the Holy Spirit who distributes the gifts just as he determines.

12:12-14 stress the importance of both unity and diversity in the church. Just as the body has many parts, yet forms one body, so the church has many members, yet forms one body. It is the one Spirit who brings us together. When we enter the body, we should discard those things that divide us, like ethnic, cultural, socio-economic, and sex / gender differences. To accomplish this we need to be walking in step with the Spirit, relying on him for daily guidance. Overcoming our old nature is not easy; we cannot do it in our own strength.

**Discussion Questions:**

*Why is one calling (assignment) not more important than others?*

*Why is it important to remember that it is the Holy Spirit who distributes spiritual gifts?*

*Why are both unity and diversity in the church important?*

**Learning from the Parable of the Human Body – 1 Corinthians 12:15-30**

In these verses, Paul tackles **three problems** that hinder the growth and health of the body.

1. **The first** is the negative fallout from creating a hierarchy of roles within the church. In many churches the pastors are at the top of the hierarchy, then the deacons, then the officers, then the members of the other boards, and so on. What if we are not in any of these roles? Where do we fit in the body? It is easy to begin to think that we are not important and that we don't really belong. In verses 15-18, Paul says that all parts of the body are equally important. "In fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be" (12:18).
2. **The second** is self-sufficiency. It is a problem that affects individual Christians, churches, and denominations. It is often a product of pride, of thinking "I am better than you." Bailey says that it is an even deeper problem when we think, "I don't need you." Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, "A self-sufficient human being is sub-human ... God has made us so that we will need each other" (*Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*, p 344). Paul says that all the parts, even those that seem to be weaker, are indispensable (12:19-21).

3. **The third** is the issue of reproduction. The body of Christ needs to be able to reproduce itself. Many churches today are declining. They are not growing. What is the problem? Bailey believes that the passage 12:22-26 is about the importance of evangelism. He also gives some insights into Paul's understanding of evangelism. It is a very private matter, because one person enters into the private space of another person's inner life. Evangelism involves deep personal relations. Only when authentic trust is built between two people can the deep things of God be communicated from heart to heart. Evangelism must be sacred and honorable; manipulation and personal advantage must never be involved. Evangelism must always be motivated by love, making it possible for the "lost" to be found and for the wounded to find healing. If Bailey is right, this would explain why Paul inserts his "Hymn to Love" at this point in his discussion of spiritual gifts. Without love, we are nothing, and we accomplish nothing.

**Discussion Questions:**

*Why is creating a hierarchy of roles hurtful to the health and growth of the church?*

*Why is saying or thinking, "We don't need you," harmful?*

*Why does Paul stress the overwhelming importance of love in 1 Corinthians 13?*

## Lesson 11: Women Leaders in the Bible

### Introduction to Women Leaders in the Bible

Aida Spencer in her book, *Beyond the Curse*, writes that in the first century,

Women were doing things that were unusual for their time. They were learning religious truths, speaking in public, and speaking authoritatively. Some were teaching. In fact, the New Testament provides overwhelming proof, first, that women held and were approved in positions considered authoritative in the first century, and second, that women were given gifts from God to fill positions for which churches now ordain people (p 96).

This lesson introduces us to seven women in the Bible who fulfilled important leadership roles. If God has banned women from teaching and leadership, it is strange that the Bible honors so many women for their leadership. It is also worth noting that wherever Paul lists spiritual gifts, he never says that any of them are given only to men. (See 1 Corinthians 12:7-11,27-31.)

### Women Leaders in the Old Testament

1. **Miriam** was the sister of Aaron and Moses. When her mother put the baby Moses in a basket and placed it in the reeds along the Nile, it was Miriam who stood watch over him. When Pharaoh's daughter found Moses and decided to adopt him, it was Miriam who arranged for his mother to care for him. Exodus 15:20 says that she was a prophet. She joined her brothers in leading the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. In Micah 6:4, the Lord says, "I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam." When Aaron and Miriam began to talk against Moses and God punished Miriam with a skin disease, the people did not move on until Miriam was healed and restored (Numbers 12:1-16). This suggests that the people viewed her role as essential.
2. **Deborah** was an important leader during the period of the judges (Judges 4:1-5:31). She was known as a prophet (4:4) and a judge (4:5). The people went to her to have their disputes settled. When she delivered a message from God to Barak to attack the army of Jabin, the King of Canaan, Barak did not question the message. His only request was that Deborah goes with him to the battle. She agreed to go with him, and together they led the Israelite army to victory over their oppressors. Under her leadership, the tribes of Israel united in a common cause. In the victory song in chapter 5, she is called a mother of Israel (5:7).
3. **Huldah** was a prophet, who provided leadership during a critical time in the history of Israel (2 Kings 22:8-23:25). During the reign of Josiah, the Book of the Law (probably Deuteronomy) was found. Josiah's secretary brought it to the King and read it to him. What he heard greatly upset Josiah, and he sent five leaders to inquire of God what he should do. Huldah's reputation as a religious counselor was so great that the five went directly to her. She told them what God wanted the King to do (22:14-20). Josiah acted on her counsel and led the nation in a time of religious renewal.

### Women Leaders in the New Testament

1. **Phoebe** (Romans 16:1-2) was a deacon of the church in Cenchreae, the eastern port of Corinth. Paul entrusted her to deliver his letter to the Christians in Rome, and he asked them to receive her in the Lord as his messenger. This suggests that not only did she deliver the letter to them, but she was also the one who would have explained its message to them. Paul also tells them that she had been a

benefactor or patron to him and many others. From the 1940s to the 1990s most English translations of this and other passages about women were biased by a hierarchical understanding of leadership. As a result in these translations, Phoebe became a “servant” rather than a “deacon” and a “helper” rather than a “benefactor.”

2. **Junia** (Romans 16:7) was a Jewish woman and a relative of Paul, who had become a follower of Christ before Paul. It is likely that she was among those Jews from the Diaspora, who became believers on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:5-12,37-41). Paul commends her and Andronicus as being outstanding among the apostles. In the belief that a woman could not possibly have been an apostle, the name Junia was changed in translations to Junias in 1927 and only started to be changed back to Junia in the 1990s. Junias is a man’s name.
3. **Euodia and Syntyche** (Philippians 4:2-3) were leaders in the church in Philippi and co-workers with Paul in preaching the gospel. In his letter to the Philippian Christians, Paul speaks about the issue of a conflict in the church. He urges them to stand firm in one spirit, striving together with one accord for the faith of the gospel (1:27-28), being of the same mind (2:1-2). We are not told whether the differences between Euodia and Syntyche were related to the conflict in the church, but Paul counsels them in the same way. He urges them to be of the same mind in the Lord. There is no hint that these two women should not be in leadership. Paul only wants them to resolve their differences.
4. **Priscilla** (Acts 18:1-4, 18-26; Romans 16:3-4; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19) is the wife of Aquila. The two of them worked together as a team, whether in their occupation as tent-makers or as co-workers with Paul in preaching the gospel of Christ. Scholars have noted that when the New Testament writers refer to their occupation, Aquila is named first. When the writers refer to their ministry, Priscilla is named first, suggesting that she was the more gifted one in ministry and leadership skills. The same order is used in Acts 18:26 in telling how Priscilla and Aquila explained the way of God more accurately to Apollos, a learned man with a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. Some scholars also believe that she wrote Hebrews, a fact that was suppressed because she was a woman.

**An often-asked question:** If Jesus was in favor of women in leadership, why didn’t he include women in his twelve disciples?

1. One answer is that Jesus wanted his followers to realize that he was in the process of establishing a new Israel. The first Israel was founded on the twelve tribes of Israel. The new Israel would be founded on the twelve apostles. See John’s description of the Holy City in Revelation 21:9-14 and Paul’s description of God’s new household in Ephesians 2:17-22.
2. Another answer is that a number of women did join Jesus and his disciples in proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God (Luke 8:1-3).
3. A third answer is that women were the first to proclaim the resurrection and were told to do this by an angel and by Jesus (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18).

**Discussion Questions:**

*When I consider the number of women Paul commended for their labor as his co-workers, I find it difficult to believe that Paul was opposed to women preaching and teaching. Most of the passages used by the opponents of biblical equality are from Paul’s writings. The fact that Paul worked closely with women confirms that these passages have been misunderstood.*

*Do you think this is a reasonable conclusion? Why or why not?*

## Lesson 12: What Men Can Do to Prevent Violence against Women and Children

### What Is Violence against Women and Children? Is Abuse Violence?

(Excerpted from *Making Changes: A Book for Women in Abusive Relationships*, Seventh Edition, 2011)

#### What Is Abuse?

Abuse of a woman is an abuse of power and can be a criminal act. It is about exerting control in a relationship. It is not about problems with anger management or addictions.

Abuse happens in all different kinds of families and intimate relationships. Women are most often abused by their husbands, their boyfriends, the men they live with or have had a relationship with in the past. Women are also abused in dating relationships and lesbian relationships. Women with disabilities and elderly women also report abuse by family and caregivers.

People call abuse of women different things:

- wife battering / wife assault
- woman abuse
- domestic violence
- physical or mental cruelty
- family violence
- violence against women
- wife abuse / spousal abuse
- assault

#### Some Forms of Abuse are Crimes

These forms of abuse are criminal offences in the Criminal Code:

- physical assault: hitting, punching, choking, etc.
- sexual assault
- child abuse
- threats to harm
- withholding food and medical treatment
- threats to kill
- taking your pay cheque
- stalking or criminal harassment (creating fear by repeatedly following, communicating, or attempting to communicate with you or any family member)

#### Types of Abuse

##### Physical

- choking, kicking, punching, slapping, grabbing, poking you
- pushing, shoving, spitting at you, pulling your hair
- physically restraining you, stopping you from leaving
- holding or hugging you when you say “no”
- any unwanted physical contact
- abusing your children
- treating you roughly
- throwing things

##### Sexual

- forcing you to have sex (rape)
- threatening to harm your reputation
- putting you down or comparing you sexually to others
- getting back at you for refusing to have sex
- sleeping around, or threatening to
- treating you as a sex object
- forcing you to look at pornography
- hounding you for sex or forcing certain positions
- accusing you of having sex with other men

##### Verbal

- verbally threatening you (telling you to stop crying ... or else)
- calling you names (stupid, slut, crazy, bitch, whore)
- yelling, shouting, or raising his voice at you
- abusing your children
- being sarcastic or critical
- blaming you repeatedly for things that go wrong
- insulting you or your family
- laughing in your face

##### Financial / Economic

- controlling you by not paying the bills
- refusing to give you money for groceries, clothing, things you need
- spending all the money on things he wants (alcohol / drugs, gambling, trips, cars, sports)
- forbidding you to work outside the home
- taking your money or your pay cheque
- not letting you take part in financial decisions

##### Emotional / Psychological

- intimidating you, making you afraid
- playing “mind games”
- ignoring you, being silent, walking away from you in discussion
- refusing to deal with issues
- putting you down, finding and talking about your faults, brainwashing
- acting jealous, being possessive, falsely accusing you
- treating you like a child
- making you think you’re stupid or crazy
- refusing to do things with you or for you (such as withholding sex)
- not telling you what he is doing and lying
- criticizing how you look



- not allowing you to do what he does himself
- telling sexist or woman-hating jokes
- destroying your belongings
- hurting your pets

#### Social

- putting you down, ignoring you
- embarrassing you in front of your children, making scenes in public
- not letting you see your friends or being rude to your friends
- being jealous of your friends, family, or accomplishments
- being nice to others but changing his personality when with you
- not taking responsibility for the children
- turning your children against you
- choosing friends or family over you
- comparing you unfavorably with other women
- not allowing you to express your emotions (denying your feelings)
- taking your passport or threatening have you deported

**Abuse of women is violence. It is not acceptable.**

#### Why Does Abuse Happen?

Healthy relationships are based on equality and trust. Abuse of women is about power and control, the betrayal of trust, and lack of respect. It's about using force or threats to make you afraid. It's about using fear to control you.

A man may abuse a woman because he ...

- has learned this behavior in his own family
- feels it is an acceptable male role to control women
- is influenced by the way women are shown in the media
- wants to maintain a tough macho image
- believes violence is a way to show male power
- has low self-esteem and wants his partner to be dependent on him
- thinks that there are few, if any, consequences for his violent acts

No matter why he does it, it is not your fault. Every man who is abusive must take responsibility for his behavior. No one has the right to hit or hurt you. No matter what you do, you do not deserve abuse. You do not ask for it.

#### Children Who Witness Abuse

If you have children, you may have decided to put up with the abuse for their sake. Children who witness abuse may be experiencing abuse themselves. **Children often see and hear more than we think.** They have probably seen or heard the violence and it will likely have affected them. **Children who witness parental violence can be as severely affected as children who are direct victims of physical or sexual abuse.** They may:

- be scared, confused, and unhappy
- have physical complaints such as headaches or stomach aches
- blame themselves
- have night-time difficulties such as insomnia, nightmares, or bed-wetting
- behave aggressively or become withdrawn
- cling to their mother or try to take care of her
- exhibit disrespectful / abusive behavior towards their mother
- feel responsible for the violence
- seek punishment by lying or stealing (believing punishment means love)
- be abused too

**Children who witness abuse often learn that it's all right to hurt people they love.** They learn that it's normal for someone who loves them to hurt them, but it's not!

Children from violent homes may end up believing that:

- it's okay for men to hit, boss, or control their partners
  - it's okay for men to bully and control women
  - this is the way that families behave
  - violence is a way to win arguments and get your own way
  - big people have power they often misuse
  - all men are bullies who push women and children around
  - punishment means love
  - women are weak and can be pushed around
  - men are strong and should be in control
  - women can't take care of themselves or their children
  - you can only express anger through aggression and abuse
  - "real men" don't feel or show weakness, fear, sadness, or confusion
  - women are naturally inferior to men
- to be in a relationship, women have to put up with abuse

## How Gender Is Related to Violence against Women and Children

The Bible is the story of **creation, fall, and redemption**. In this section we will focus on the creation of sex by God, the creation of gender by humans, and the striving for biblical equality by Christians. Our mission is the restoration and reclaiming of what was lost in the fall.

God created us male and female. **Sex** is the biological distinction of being male or female. Sex is how God designed and created us. Then the fall came and with it the birth of sin, death, sickness, and gender. The manifestations of the fall are many. They are not part of God's design, creation, or intention. They are also not God's prescriptions, but rather are the results of unfortunate sets of circumstances. One of these is "gender."

**Gender** is the designation of feminine and masculine roles from a socio-cultural standpoint. Gender variables commonly identify us as either masculine or feminine and prescribe a particular behavior. It gives us scripts / expectations for behavior, appearance, roles, and ideologies.

While sex is our biological (God-ordained) distinction of being male and female, gender is our society telling us what we should be like, look like, act like, do, etc. Because sex is divided into male and female, we tend to divide gender into two opposite roles. These are worldly, not Godly, creations.

## Why Violence against Women Is a Men's Issue and Not Just a Women's Issue

Jackson Katz in his book, *The Macho Paradox*, gives four reasons why identifying violence against women as a "women's issue" is part of the problem:

1. **It gives men an excuse not to pay attention.** When we call rape, battering, and sexual harassment a "women's issue," we are helping to shift the responsibility from the male perpetrators of violence to its female victims. The message to women is that it is their job to prevent or avoid sexual and domestic violence. The message to men is that they do not need to get involved. As long as they are not perpetrators, they can ignore the whole issue. Most guys say, "I'm a good guy. These aren't my problems."
2. **Violence against women is a personal issue for men as well as women.** If you are a man, ask yourself, "Are there women in my life whom I love dearly and care about – a mother, daughter, sister, wife, girlfriend, or close woman friend?" If there are, then, by definition, violence against women is an issue that affects you. Every woman who is assaulted physically, sexually, or verbally, is some man's mother, wife, sister, daughter, niece, or friend. Yet we men find it difficult to confront one another on these issues because we have been conditioned to avoid or ignore the subject.
3. **Men are the primary perpetrators.** The dramatic growth in the past 35 years in public understanding of how violence harms women has been a great achievement. However, this focus on what happens to women and what they can do to protect themselves has helped to obscure the role men play in the ongoing violence. Men are not only the primary perpetrators, but also the not-so-innocent bystanders. Although men hold a disproportionate amount of economic, social, and political power, they are not using it to prevent violence against women. We men let the perpetrators and ourselves off the hook by calling it a "women's issue."
4. **Unless men become involved, there is little chance that violence against women will be dramatically reduced.** It will not be reduced by focusing on what women can do to change and to protect themselves from men. We need a paradigm shift in how men think about gender violence. We must get involved and invest the personal, professional, and political time and effort necessary to bring about this change.

## Ten Things Men Can Do to Prevent Gender Violence

[The ten things below are taken from a poster produced by MVP Strategies, a gender violence prevention, education, and training organization. Copyright 1999 by Jackson Katz. The poster is downloadable from <http://www.jacksonkatz.com/PDF/10%20Things%20Flyer.pdf>. It may be reprinted free with credit.]

1. Approach gender violence as a MEN'S issue involving men of all ages and socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. View men not only as perpetrators or possible offenders, but as empowered bystanders who can confront abusive peers.
2. If a brother, friend, classmate, or teammate is abusing his female partner, or is disrespectful or abusive to girls and women in general, don't look the other way. If you feel comfortable doing so, try to talk to him about it. Urge him to seek help. Or if you don't know what to do, consult a friend, a parent, a professor, or a counselor. **DON'T REMAIN SILENT.**
3. Have the courage to look inward. Question your own attitudes. Don't be defensive when something you do or say ends up hurting someone else. Try hard to understand how your own attitudes and actions might inadvertently perpetuate sexism and violence, and work toward changing them.
4. If you suspect that a woman close to you is being abused or has been sexually assaulted, gently ask if you can help.
5. If you are emotionally, psychologically, physically, or sexually abusive to women, or have been in the past, seek professional help NOW.
6. Be an ally to women who are working to end all forms of gender violence. Support the work of campus-based women's centers. Attend "Take Back the Night" rallies and other public events. Raise money for community-based rape crisis centers and battered women's shelters. If you belong to a team or fraternity, or another student group, organize a fundraiser.
7. Recognize and speak out against homophobia and gay-bashing. Discrimination and violence against lesbians and gays are wrong in and of themselves. This abuse also has direct links to sexism (e.g., the sexual orientation of men who speak out against sexism is often questioned, a conscious or unconscious strategy intended to silence them. This is a key reason few men do speak out).
8. Attend programs, take courses, watch films, and read articles and books about multicultural masculinities, gender inequality, and the root causes of gender violence. Educate yourself and others about how larger social forces affect the conflicts between individual men and women.
9. Don't fund sexism. Refuse to purchase any magazine, rent any video, subscribe to any website, or buy any music that portrays girls or women in a sexually degrading or abusive manner. Protest sexism in the media.
10. Mentor and teach young boys about how to be men in ways that don't involve degrading or abusing girls and women. Volunteer to work with gender violence prevention programs, including anti-sexist men's programs. Lead by example.

### **Discussion Questions:**

*Which ones of the above suggestions do you think are most important and why?*

*If men began doing these things at home, in the community, and at work, would it make a difference in how society views violence issues? Why or why not?*

## Understanding Why Men and Women Hesitate to Become Involved

### 1. Scenario One – Degrading Jokes

**Situation:** You are in the lunch room at work. A man who is your boss at work and a member of your church comes in. He starts telling jokes that are degrading and demeaning to women. Others are laughing. Nobody is objecting.

**Train of Thought:** I don't like what I am hearing. It is verbal abuse of women. Should I say something? If I do, would he make life difficult for me at work? What he is doing reflects on all Christians. Does he realize what he is doing? Why is no one objecting? Why are they laughing? Why am I feeling sick inside? Should I get up and leave?

**Possible Options:**

- Do nothing. I don't want to be seen as a prude or lose my job.
- Confront the man right then and tell him why what he is doing is wrong.
- Say nothing at the moment but make an appointment and speak to him privately about how such jokes hurt women and reflect on the other members of the church.
- Go to the pastor and tell him what the man did.
- Write a letter to the deacons / church leaders telling them what happened and asking that they reprimand the man for what he did.

**Your personal choice – What would you do? Why?**

### 2. Scenario Two – Wife Abuse

**Situation:** A close friend from your church tells you that she is being physically, verbally, and sexually abused by her husband. Her husband is a well-respected leader in the church. Your friend describes what he is doing to her. She then asks you for advice about what she should do.

**Train of Thought:** This can't be true. Surely her husband wouldn't do what she says he is doing. But then I have never known my friend to lie to me. Should she go to the pastor? What if the pastor doesn't believe her? The pastor and her husband are close friends. They hunt and fish together. Should she go to the deacons and tell them what is happening? What if they don't believe her? What if they confront her husband and he denies her claims? Will they believe her or him? That could cause a big division in the church, some believing her and some believing him. Perhaps she should go directly to the police and let them handle it. After all, it is a criminal offense. What should I do? As a close friend, should I support her? How will my spouse react?

**Possible Options:**

- Listen to her and pray with her.
- Question the truth of what she is telling you.
- Tell her that it is her duty to be submissive to her husband, no matter what.
- Talk it over with your spouse before you give any advice. You don't want her issue to cause problems in your marriage.
- Offer to go with her to see the pastor, if she chooses to tell him about what is happening.
- Offer to go with her to report the abuse to the deacons / leaders, if she opts to report to them.
- Offer to go with her if she chooses to report the abuse to the police.
- Encourage her not to put up with the abuse any longer.

**Your Personal Choice: What would you do? Why?**

## Lesson 13: What Biblical Equality Is and Why It is Important

### What Biblical Equality Is

In 2002 Alan Padgett wrote an article on this subject for *Priscilla Papers* (Vol. 16, No. 3, pp 22-25). His description of what biblical equality is all about is simple and easily understood.

It is the belief that all people are equal before God and in Christ. All have equal responsibility to use their gifts and obey their calling to the glory of God. God freely calls believers to roles and ministries without regard to class, gender, or race. We believe this because the Bible and Jesus Christ teach it to us.

However, there are still those who misunderstand what biblical equality is. Padgett uses three ideas to develop further the concept of biblical equality.

1. **Human Equality:** All human beings are created in the image of God. For this reason each person deserves our respect and is loved by God. We are children of God by creation. However, this does not mean that all people are the same. God is aware of the differences between the good and the evil, the just and the unjust, women and men, the rich and the poor. Yet we are all equally made in the image of God, and Jesus reaches out to all of us. Jesus ministered to all people and treated them all equally.

The church has not always understood biblical equality or practised it. Church leaders have tolerated slavery and racism. They have welcomed the rich and the powerful, while neglecting the poor. They have taught the inferiority of women and promoted sexism. Sadly, they have tried to defend their teaching and actions by appealing to the Bible. However, their teaching and actions are the result of human sinfulness and cannot be justified by an appeal to the Bible.

2. **Equal Responsibility:** Women and men have equal responsibility in the home, the church, and the community. The ministry and service a Christian is eligible to do is not restricted by race, gender, or social status. All believers are priests in the new people of God (1 Peter 2:4-10). Each person's ministry should be based on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the calling of God they have received.

Husband and wife are equally responsible to Christ for their family. The longest section on men and women in Paul's letters begins with a call to mutual submission (Ephesians 5:21-33). Mutual submission is love in action. It is husband and wife working together as partners, and meeting one another's needs and the needs of their children according to their individual gifting. There is no biblical basis for the teaching of some churches that the husband is "the priest of the home" and that women need the "spiritual covering" of a man in order to fulfil their calling in life. To learn more about these issues, I suggest two books by J. Lee Grady, *10 Lies the Church Tells Women* and *10 Lies Men Believe*. In his gritty style, Grady tells it like it is.

3. **Mutual Submission:** Mutual submission is love in action, not only in the family but also in the church and other human institutions. In his ministry Jesus lived the ethics of love. He came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. He said, "Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be slave of all" (Mark 10:42-45). "The Christian way of love is also the way of the cross." Mutual submission means caring for others and meeting their needs by using our strengths and gifts. Mutual submission does not mean being naïve or foolish. It means entering society with a servant's heart, but also with a wise head that knows that sin corrupts every person and every human organization. We serve wisely and intelligently, realizing that it is the Holy Spirit that gives us the strength, hope, and gifts we need for service and mission. We serve without regard to wealth, class, gender, or race.

The more I think about the implications of biblical equality, the more I realize that it involves a total transformation of how men and women relate to one another. It is a restoration of what was lost in the fall, a return to what God intended the relationship between men and women to be – a partnership characterized by mutual respect, openness, love, and caring. It affects not only how men relate to women, but also how women relate to men.

**Discussion Question:**

*How would teaching and practicing biblical equality in the home, the church, and the community make a positive difference for the better?*

### Why Biblical Equality Is Important

1. **Correctly Interpreting God’s Word:** I believe that the Bible is God’s Word. It contains God’s message to humanity (2 Timothy 3:16-17). When we misinterpret the Bible, we distort God’s message to the world. How we interpret the Bible is a serious matter. If we get it wrong, there are serious consequences in the lives of men and women, and for the future of Christianity.
2. **Freedom to Use the Gifts God Gives:** The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to all followers of Christ, both women and men, for the common good and for the building up of the church. When women are limited by the church in the use of their spiritual gifts, the whole church suffers. It does not make sense to sideline those whom God has called and gifted for his service. It makes sense to give them the freedom and opportunity to use the spiritual gifts God has given.
3. **Impact on Younger Women and Men:** Pollsters tell us that the growing gap between women’s place in society and women’s place in the church is a contributing factor in a significant drop in the number of women who regularly attend church and participate in its ministry. It is also having an impact on young men, who see it as a justice issue. Teaching and practicing biblical equality in the church could help to reverse these trends.
4. **Effect on Evangelistic Outreach:** Hierarchical teaching in many evangelical churches is turning many young men and women away from the church and the good news of new life in Christ. Those who hang in there do so because they are convinced that this is what God requires and they want to obey God. Biblical equality believes that the hierarchy of roles is based on a misinterpretation of the Bible, which is keeping people from giving the gospel a hearing.
5. **Consequences of the Misuse of Hierarchical Teaching:** Some men, who have anger, control, and power issues, use hierarchical teaching about male / female roles to justify violence against their wives and children. They claim that God has made them the head (the boss) of their home and that it is their job to make their wives and children obey them, even if this requires physical and verbal abuse. Many women stay in these abusive situations because they believe it is what God requires of them. Unfortunately this is often what their pastors and church leaders tell them to do. Even sadder is the fact that violence and verbal abuse are part of life in clergy homes more often than we would think. The double tragedy is that these consequences are a result of the misuse of hierarchical teaching, a teaching which itself is not biblical.

**Discussion Question:**

*How has this course helped you understand the importance of biblical equality?*

*Do you feel better prepared to explain and defend biblical equality? How?*

## Recommended Books for Further Study of Biblical Equality Issues

The books marked with an asterisk are the ones which I found most helpful in preparing the lesson handouts. Almost all of these books are available online from [www.amazon.ca](http://www.amazon.ca), [www.chapters.indigo.ca](http://www.chapters.indigo.ca), or [www.equalitydepot.com](http://www.equalitydepot.com) (CBE International Bookstore). Amazon.ca and Chapters.Indigo.ca offer discounts plus free shipping for orders over \$25.

- \* Bailey, Kenneth E., *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians*, IVP Academic, 2011.
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