



**Biblical
Diversity:
God's View
of the Roles
of Men & Women**

Louis & Bonnie Rushmore

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Preface

Over the decades there has been much said about *unity in diversity*. Frequently, though, biblical error has been taught in a sleight of hand attempt to transform *union* with manmade churches into scriptural *unity*. I have always liked the colorful illustration of how two cats with their tails tied together flung over a clothesline may represent *union*, but such a scenario will never depict *unity*. Call it what one may still will not make that affair *unity*. Likewise, call it what one may, *union* of God's people with persons who do not view the Bible alone as absolutely authoritative (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3), who do not subscribe to Jesus' directive on salvation (Mark 16:16), who do not worship "in spirit **and in truth**" (John 4:24), who do not organize themselves as autonomous congregations (Acts 14:23) and so forth is neither representative of true spiritual *unity* nor of *biblical diversity*.

However, the respective God-assigned roles of men and of women in the church and in the home do represent a true picture of *biblical diversity*. In that vein, the content of this book is humbly and respectfully submitted for Readers' review and study in the hopes that Christian men and women will be edified therefrom. Fully embraced, the respective roles of men and women will contribute to stronger churches and more stable, happy homes.

The second section of this little book, written by my late wife, was discovered a year after the passing of Bonnie Sue Rushmore (1956-2015). I do not remember ever seeing the manuscript before, though I know that she taught that material stateside at ladies' inspiration days and abroad in foreign missions. She continues to make a valuable contribution to edification near and far (Hebrews 11:4).

Not disparaging other mediums of mass communication, the printed page is ready when the recipient is ready for it. Literature goes farther and lasts longer than we mortals can accomplish on our own. Bonnie has left behind a godly influence and the means through which even now she participates in the edification of others. I hope to do the same someday.

Louis Rushmore, Evangelist

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The Role of Men:

In the Church

In the Eldership

In the Home

Louis Rushmore

Male Leadership in the Church

Introduction

It is important to emphasize biblical fundamentals, especially when they differ from contemporary religion. Since the churches of Christ belong to Jesus Christ (Romans 16:16), they are obligated to conduct themselves according to what He **authorizes** (Colossians 3:17). Really, all people living in the Gospel Age should heed the words of Jesus Christ rather than Moses or the Old Testament prophets (Matthew 17:1-5; John 12:48). Further, Jesus Christ is the Lawgiver (James 4:12) and Mediator (Hebrews 9:15) of the New Testament, to which people living today must turn for religious instruction. In addition, Jesus Christ condemned alteration of divine instruction with “the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9). The inspired apostle Paul likewise condemned false Gospels (Galatians 1:6-9) and the human will when substituted for the divine will (Colossians 2:23). Hence, one must turn **exclusively** to the New Testament to learn what God has authorized respecting Christianity.

The respective roles for men and women in the church and in the home are not culturally based, but they go back to near creation. They were implemented by God before there was any culture (1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 Corinthians 11:8-9).

The churches of Christ are obligated to implement in congregations the type of church leadership that the New Testament **authorizes**. **Therefore, the churches of Christ do not have female leadership in the church because it is not authorized by God.** Since God has restricted women from leadership roles in the church, this places a serious responsibility upon male members of the church to assume their God-given role (1 Timothy 2:8).

Everyone who respects biblical authority and wants to please God will concern himself with **what Almighty God has authorized**. In the case of church leadership, that means that the local church will be led by godly men, and that the church will not have female leaders. We can no more change the respective roles that God has assigned to men and to women than we can alter God’s plan of salvation. Both corruptions of scriptural instruction would be eternally and spiritually disastrous!

Erosion of Male Leadership

Attitudes in contemporary society around the world already have infringed on the God-given roles of men and of women. Women are not the least inferior to men intellectually and certainly not spiritually. Furthermore, equality between men and women spiritually is a biblical doctrine (Galatians 3:27-28). In addition, equality between men and women in the workplace may prevail, and perhaps that is all right. However, in the home and in the church, God Himself has specified the respective roles of men and of women, and faithful Christians must not deviate from divine instruction. The reason that for over 6,000 years women have been submissive to men in the home and in religion is because God legislated that doctrine in Scripture. For nearly the past 2,000 years, God has included in the New Testament the submission of women to men in the home and in the church. Despite *political correctness* in modern society, perhaps nothing better illustrates the unchanging roles for men and women as God designed them than the immutable fact that the female of our species still must give birth to our offspring. The apostle Paul alluded to this role in 1 Timothy 2:15. The *role of women in the church or in the home* is only controversial to those who do not properly respect the authority of God and His Word.

The inspired Word of God gives several reasons for the subordination of women: (1) “For Adam was first formed, then Eve” (1 Timothy 2:13); (2) woman, not man, was deceived by Satan (1 Timothy 2:14); (3) woman was created **from** man (1 Corinthians 11:8) and (4) woman was created **for** man (1 Corinthians 11:9). Yet, a woman’s salvation and worth are not tied to a man (Galatians 3:28). However, the Gospel does not dissolve physical distinctions between races, political or economic status, or the sexes. The standard for Christians, including women, is not the practices of society around them (Romans 12:2). Final authority for the conduct of Christian men and Christian women in the home or in the church rests with God. Our Heavenly Father has the **absolute right** to distinguish between roles for women and for men.

In the Beginning

Male leadership in the church that Jesus built had its beginning in the Garden of Eden. Yes, 4,000 years before the institution of the New Testament church, Almighty God established male leadership in religion and in the home. This principle of male leadership continued throughout Patriarchy and Judaism, and male leadership persists under Christianity. What we are discussing herein is essentially, “The Role of Men,” except our emphasis specifically concerns male leadership in the church.

By divine inspiration, Moses wrote regarding the aftermath of sin in the Garden of Eden, “To the woman He said: ‘I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you’” (Genesis 3:16 NKJV). Therefore, the subordinate role of women to men does not pertain to custom or culture, but predates both. Also, the Gospel has not altered or removed the subordinate role of women any more than it has affected (1) painful childbirth, (2) sweat and labor, and (3) physical death (Genesis 3:16-19), all of which will remain until the end of time.

By divine inspiration, the apostle Paul connected male leadership in the church to male leadership in the Garden of Eden. “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression” (1 Timothy 2:11-14). Likewise, when writing to the Corinthian church, the apostle expressed the same doctrine. “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God... Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man” (1 Corinthians 11:3, 9). It is no more appropriate for a woman to take for herself a role that God designated for men than it would be appropriate for a man to take for himself the role of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Christian sisters must not presume to teach men publicly, and Christian men do not have God’s permission to allow women to teach men publicly about religion. As far as God and the children of God are concerned, the respective but distinctive God-

given roles for men and for women are unaffected by contemporary culture and society.

Role of Women Defines Role of Men

“The Role of Women” helps define “The Role of Men.” Specifically, whatever is not *the role of women* in the church must be *the role of men*. For instance, women are forbidden in the New Testament to teach men publicly about religion. “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence” (1 Timothy 2:11-12). “Let your women keep silent in the churches [assemblies], for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church [assembly]” (1 Corinthians 14:34-35). Therefore, men have the responsibility for *publicly* teaching God’s Word to other men. However, Aquila and Priscilla, Christian husband and Christian wife, show that a woman may teach a man *privately* (Acts 18:24-26), as long as she does not attempt to take charge over him or to teach in an authoritarian way (1 Timothy 2:12). Christian women can and must teach their non-Christian husbands, too (1 Peter 3:1), but by example if he will not consider their words. In addition, women also speak and teach when they participate in singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Otherwise, women are forbidden by inspired Scripture to preach or to teach men publicly.

The New Testament Defines the Role of Men in the Church

“The Role of Men” in the Lord’s church has been predetermined by God, and it is not subject either to alteration or neglect by Christian men. Before one even entertains discussion of church leaders (e.g. elders, deacons, preachers, and teachers), Christian men (and women) must realize that God has chosen men over women to lead in the church.

In the church, leadership roles are assigned to men and supportive roles are delegated to women. Yet, not even every man can be an elder (1 Timothy 3:1-7), deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-13), preacher or

teacher (1 Corinthians 12:18). However, men as a group are charged by God with the responsibility to guide and publicly teach the church. God has forbidden women these same duties.

That men rather than women are to lead in the church is evident from the New Testament teaching that men are to lead the public prayers. “I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Timothy 2:8). The word “men” means “male.” In addition, “men” in verse 8 are contrasted with “women” in verse 9.

Conclusion

No one dare change any doctrine of the New Testament at all (Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19). Of course, then, especially Christians must be careful to observe the God-given respective roles of men and of women in the church (and in the home). The fact that many males may not rise to the occasion to be teachers and preachers is a sad commentary on men, but that human failure does not negate God’s law respecting the roles of men and of women in the church. The fact that many males may not rise to the occasion to be the husbands and the fathers in the home that they should be is a sad commentary on men, but that human failure does not, for instance, make a wife into a husband or make a mother into a father. The home needs both male and female roles to be the coordinated home that God designed it to be. Likewise, the church needs both male and female roles to be the coordinated church that God designed it to be.

When Christian women take for themselves the role of men either in the home or in the church, it is the fault of Christian men. Women, though, are not blameless. **First**, men ought to take for themselves the roles in the home and in the church that God assigned to them. **Secondly**, Christian men ought to forbid Christian women from assuming for themselves roles that God has not given to them. The respective roles in religion and in the home that God established from the dawn of man’s earthly pilgrimage are still in force. By divine design, the role for public activity in the assembly of the church belongs exclusively to designated males.

Male Leadership in the Eldership

Introduction

The first church of Christ was in Jerusalem. Initially, the apostles of Christ guided the church there, but at some unannounced time, elders were also appointed in the Jerusalem congregation (Acts 11:30; 15:2; 16:4). Christianity spread from Jerusalem into all the world (Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15; Colossians 1:23). Elders were apparently a pertinent part of teaching the Gospel and spreading Christianity throughout the world.

Elders are a part of God's arrangement for the church. The church in Jerusalem had elders (Acts 15:46). Paul ordained elders in every church on the return part of his missionary journey (Acts 14:23). The church at Ephesus had elders (Acts 20:17). Philippi, sometimes called a model church, had elders (Phil. 1:1). Paul left Titus at Crete to "ordain elders in every city" (Titus 1:5). Peter exhorted the "elders which are among you" (1 Peter 5:1). Elders are made such by the Holy Spirit as they meet the qualifications revealed by the Holy Spirit [and have been appointed by the congregation]: "over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers" (Acts 20:28). (Gough 9).

The appointment of elders in local congregations is an essential biblical subject. Further, it deserves careful attention and dutiful application to every local body of Christians. "The apostle Paul instructed Titus to ordain elders in every city in Crete (Titus 1:5). The selection of the right men for this great work was important. Hence, Paul gives a list of qualifications that these men were to possess at the time of their appointment to this spiritual office in the Lord's church" (Stevens). "No congregation can exercise too much care in the selection of its spiritual overseers. These men, when once appointed, either will lead the congregation to greater heights of ser-

vice for Jesus Christ or else will lead the flock toward a lull of lukewarmness, into spiritual stagnation and ultimately toward spiritual death” (Taylor 87).

“The first mention that we have of elders in the church is found in Acts 11:30” (Boles, *Churches of Christ* 9). Every fully organized congregation of the Lord’s church is ruled by elders who are selected according to biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). However, by what means ought a congregation *without elders* be governed? Should a preacher rule the church in the absence of elders? Is it biblically permissible to select a committee to rule the church? Should the trustees govern the church? Does the treasurer have the right to make decisions for the local church? Should the popular vote of all members, men and women, decide matters for the local congregation? Are all faithful, adult male members responsible for deciding church matters? Scripturally, who ought to be responsible for directing the function of a local congregation that does not have elders?

Can a congregation exist scripturally without elders? Yes, it is apparent that congregations in the first century **existed** for a time before the appointment of elders (Titus 1:5). Equally obvious then, they also **functioned** without elders for a time. However, later, these congregations matured to a point where elders were appointed. The question remains, however, “By what means ought a congregation *without elders* be governed?”

No Elders, Yet

So-called “**evangelistic oversight**” is not the solution to church government in the absence of elders. God designed the eldership to be composed of *a plurality of men*, which suggests that no single individual regardless of his virtues and exemplary qualities is suited for such a task. The preacher is not the boss, and he must not allow himself to be the one who makes all of the day-to-day decisions (*until the congregation decides to replace him with someone else*). Instead, as soon as possible, a preacher, minister or evangelist ought to guide men in the congregation toward spiritual maturity. The evangelist needs to empower and train other men to assume areas of responsibility and service – even if he could do it better and more

swiftly himself. The preacher needs to train the congregation as though he is trying to work himself out of a job. However, in truth, there will always be more for God's ministering servant to do than he can possibly accomplish in a lifetime.

A **committee** is a no more suitable alternative for church government instead of elders. The only group of men whose number is less than all the male members of a local church, permitted by Scripture to rule that congregation, is an eldership. Sometimes preachers or other male members have little interest in installing a biblically qualified eldership because they know that they cannot meet the scriptural qualifications to serve in an eldership. Especially willful men who cannot serve as elders realize that their influence and ability to affect decisions would be minimized were an eldership to be appointed over a congregation.

Legal **trustees** are not a permissible option for church government in the absence of elders. Were it not that civil government may require congregations to incorporate and generally obey those laws of the land, churches of Christ would not have trustees since they are not addressed in the New Testament. Therefore, the function of trustees as such pertains to the physical realm and not to spiritual matters. Ideally, where law of the land requires trustees or some similar arrangement, the elders of a congregation ought to serve in that capacity. In that way, God's law and man's law would be fulfilled harmoniously.

Especially a **treasurer** must be cautious not to misuse his position (of service) whereby he attempts to rule the church. While an elder may be a treasurer, a treasurer (even if he is an elder, too) is not equivalent to a plurality of men who serve as elders. Furthermore, expressing the attitude verbally or in action that the treasurer controls the congregation by deciding when and if to write the church checks is ungodly and sinful (3 John 9-10).

A **church vote** wherein women as well as men decide the affairs of the church violates the respective roles of men and women regarding spiritual matters (1 Timothy 2:12-14). Just as in the home (Ephesians 5:22-24; Genesis 3:16), likewise in the church (1 Corinthians 11:8-9), the Bible teaches female submission to male leadership. Clearly, male, adult members have the responsibility for the direction, function and decisions regarding the church in the absence of

elders. When fully organized, a select, qualified and appointed group of men (an eldership) has these responsibilities in each congregation. All adult, male members of a congregation without elders need to cooperate with each other regarding the function of the local church. Then, at the earliest opportunity, from among themselves, they are obligated to select biblically qualified men to serve as elders.

Elders Needed

Sometimes a congregation cannot have an eldership at a certain juncture in its history because it does not have two or more men who are biblically qualified, willing to serve as elders and men that the congregation respects well enough to follow. The biblical qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 both include certain male Christians and exclude other male Christians for consideration for appointment as elders. However, when two or more men satisfy the biblical qualifications for appointment as elders, God's divine plan for the guidance of a congregation is for it to have elders.

Notice Titus 1:5: "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are **lacking**, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you" (NKJV emphasis added). By inspiration, the apostle Paul referred to a congregation without elders as "wanting" (KJV) or "lacking" (NKJV). The same Greek word translated "wanting" or "lacking" in Titus 1:5 appears as "lacking" in Luke 18:22, "lack" in James 1:5 and "destitute" in James 2:15. Review each of these verses and determine if "wanting," "lacking" or "lack" and "destitute" matters. "So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, 'You still **lack** one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me'" (Luke 18:22). "If any of you **lacks** wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). "If a brother or sister is naked and **destitute** of daily food" (James 2:15). Yes, "wanting," "lacks" or "lack" and "destitute" matter.

Barnes, Poole and *Wycliffe* equate "wanting" in Titus 1:5 as "left undone" respecting the appointment of elders. Adam Clarke uses the word "defect" to describe a congregation without elders.

Matthew Henry dismisses the possibility of the appointment of elders as being an optional matter: “Where a fit number of believers is, presbyters or elders must be set; their continuance in churches is as necessary...” Accordingly, it was the procedure of the apostle Paul to appoint elders in every congregation he established. “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23). “There is not a single argument made against the appointment of qualified elders in every church that will stand the test of God’s word” (Phillips 275).

Every fully organized congregation will have biblically qualified elders serving and overseeing it (Acts 20:28). Any congregation that does not have elders is not fully organized according to the pattern for primitive Christianity discernible in the New Testament. Although the biblical qualifications for elders should not be taken lightly, it is possible to misconstrue them, making them so stringent that no mortal could qualify to be an elder. God designed local congregations of the churches of Christ to be ruled by elders who themselves are accountable to God for each soul of the congregation (Hebrews 13:17). Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd under which the under-shepherds or elders serve (1 Peter 5:1-4). That is divine law and pragmatic also for the well-being of any local church.

Biblical Qualifications for Elders

God did not leave the church without appropriate direction in religion. Jesus Christ is the Head of the church for which He died (Ephesians 5:23-25). The Word of God is the authority to which we must appeal, by which we must live and by which we will be judged someday (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 6:46; Revelation 20:11-15). Elders (also biblically known as bishops, pastors, overseers, shepherds and the presbytery) have Christ’s **authorization**, and they have the **responsibility** to guide the churches over which they are appointed (Acts 20:28). Elders possess the greatest responsibility in the world, which is watching for the souls of others (Hebrews 13:17). Consequently, the New Testament contains qualifications that must be met by prospective elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Even the terms

that the New Testament applies to them indicate something about their qualifications and function.

Incidentally, the qualifications for elders are such that each Christian brother or sister, too, ought to strive to possess them for themselves as well. The exceptions among the qualifications are for women that they should be the “husband of one wife.” Of course, Christian men or women may also choose to remain single as did the apostle Paul. Otherwise, though, the qualifications required for elders ought to be the goals of and acquired by every other child of God also. However, these virtues which for every child of God would be worthy goals must be possessed already by Christian men who are appointed to the eldership.

There are very few qualifications listed for the elders which do not belong to all Christians. ...the qualifications mentioned should belong to each man. Why should not a brother have a good report from those who are without the church? Why should he not so live that even those who do not accept the Christian religion would see merit in his character? Why should he not be apt to teach, temperate, blameless, holy, just, a lover of good, patient, given to hospitality, sober, vigilant, and a good husband and father? Why should not every brother control his temper, yield his judgment to others, be a man of peace, refrain from covetousness, and be free from strong drink? There are no impossible qualifications for elders. (Boles, “Qualifications” 30)

There often is confusion regarding elders (and comparable terms) because the biblical description of them differs widely from typical denominational application of them. One denomination dubs as elders unmarried boys who go door to door, two by two, to promote that denomination’s doctrine. However, according to the Bible, elders are married! Another manmade religion styles as bishops unmarried men who rule over an extended geographical area. However, according to the Bible, bishops ruled together over a single congregation, and they were married men. Most denominations equate a pastor with a preacher, whereas the New Testament does

not make that correlation. Instead, God's Word uses the term "pastors" interchangeably with the word "elders." Rather than participate in denominational confusion, we need to turn exclusively to the New Testament for the correct understanding of biblical words: elders, bishops, overseer, pastor and presbytery.

The New Testament applies various terms to the office of elders. "Elders" is translated from the Greek *presbuteros*. However, it is translated "presbytery" in 1 Timothy 4:14. The word that is usually translated as "elder" means older, senior or more advanced in years. It denotes dignity, maturity and experience. The word relates to the practice under Judaism of selecting judges and rulers from among elderly men. The word "elder" or "elders" appears 69 times in the New Testament: 19 times referring to elders of the church, 34 referring to Jewish elders, 4 times referring to age and 12 times in Revelation to elders in heaven. Examples of elders in the New Testament church include: Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 1 Timothy 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14.

The words "bishops" and "overseers" are translated from the Greek word *episkopos*. The word means an inspector, overseer, watcher, guardian, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done correctly, to superintend, guardian of souls or one who watches for others' welfare. The Greek word denotes the function or the nature of the work. *Episkopos* is translated as "bishop" or "bishops," referring to elders in the church in 1 Timothy 3:1-2; Titus 1:7 and Philippians 1:1. It is applied to Jesus Christ in 1 Peter 2:25. *Episkopos* is translated as "overseer" in Acts 20:28 of the KJV and "bishop" in the ASV.

"Pastors" and "shepherds" are translated from the Greek word *poiman*. It means herdsman, shepherd, pastor, manager, director or superintendent. This word denotes tender care and vigilance. This word was applied commonly to the shepherd of sheep (Luke 2). *Poiman* is translated once as "pastors" referring to the offices of elders in Ephesians 4:11. Otherwise (outside the Gospel accounts), it is translated as "Shepherd" and applied to Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd (Matthew 25:32; John 10:11, 14, 16; Hebrews 13:20) under whom there are subordinate shepherds (1 Peter 2:25).

Now that we are acquainted with the biblical names of these elders, we need to examine closely the biblical qualifications that

elders must meet in order to be selected and appointed. Those qualifications appear in two places in the New Testament: 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. “They [qualifications for elders] are distributable into six natural divisions... They are distinguished as they relate respectively to experience, reputation, domestic relations, character, habits, and ability to teach and rule” (McGarvey 53).

***If a man desires the position of a bishop,
he desires a good work (1 Timothy 3:1)***

The prerequisite to the qualifications of elders is that a man “desires” or “not by compulsion but willingly” (1 Peter 5:2) takes the responsibility of being one of God’s elders. “The eldership is not for men who have to be pressured to receive it and then pressured constantly and continuously to retain a place therein” (Taylor 86). “A brother’s motive for wanting to serve as a shepherd over God’s flock must be a proper one. ...No man is fit to serve as an elder as long as his motive for doing so is to boss people around...” (Campbell 20). “Desire” needs to arise from a genuine love for the opportunity to serve the Lord’s church.

The word rendered “office” (KJV) or “position” (NKJV) means “work.” Being an elder is not an office of prestige as much as it is an area of Christian service or work.

A bishop then must be... (1 Timothy 3:2).

The word “be” that prefaces all of the qualifications a man must have before he is a suitable candidate for appointment to the eldership pertains to the qualities he possesses at the time of appointment. Obviously, ongoing sin or impenitent sin in the life of an elder would disqualify him from continuing as one of God’s elders. However, some qualifications required by God of elders are not necessarily perpetual conditions. Does the graduation from home of one’s children nullify the qualification of having ruled his house well and having had faithful Christian children in his home? Does the death of an elder’s wife invalidate the maturity and experience attained throughout his married life?

Paul means that if someone (indefinite pronoun *tis*) can be found who meets the qualifications, then, that person should be appointed as an elder or bishop. The

person being considered must possess the qualifications **at the time of being appointed**. This is indicated by the use of the first class conditional statement and by the meaning of the present tense in the indicative mood. ...many times that when the present tense is encountered someone would say, “that’s continuous action into the future.” This is a mistake. While the present tense may indicate that the action continues into the future (depending upon the type of present tense used), it does not always do so. ... First, it is not sufficient to identify a verb merely as present tense. We must ask, what kind of present tense is it? Second, the meaning of the verb and context in which it is used is extremely important. ... In the indicative mood, the progressive present indicates action in progress in present time. (Stevens)

The word “be” in Greek as well as in English is a linking verb or a verb of being. This type of word describes action that is in progress at the present time. The word “be” in Titus 1:6 does not address circumstances before or after the time during which someone’s virtues are considered respecting his possible appointment as an elder. This understanding has a direct bearing on the proper interpretation of the passages about the qualifications of elders.

Because this verb is in the indicative mood, we know that it depicts **action in progress in present time**. Why is this so important? You cannot use the present tense in Titus 1:6 to prove that twenty or thirty years **after a man has been appointed as an elder**, he must step down if his wife dies. Or, that if his children die in an automobile accident, he must step down because he no longer has children who believe. Or, that if his adult children fall away he is disqualified by that action and must step down from being an elder. An elder may elect to step down under these circumstances, but he is not compelled to do so by the present tense in Titus 1:6. (Stevens)

Blameless (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6)

“Blameless” means not under accusation, irreproachable, unimpeachable. However, “blameless” does not mean sinlessly perfect. From a human perspective, elders may appear perfect – when compared with other men, but they are not without sin from time to time in their lives. Blameless means not worthy of public rebuke, a good citizen in the community and in the church. The prospective elder has “no glaring character defect” (Jackson 29). The following elder qualifications may be an explanation of what it means for a man to be “blameless.” “The eldership is a post of work and a realm of activity requiring men of honor, integrity and uprightness” (Taylor 68).

Husband of One Wife (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6)

Practices by pagans and even the children of God (1 Samuel 1:2; 2 Samuel 3:2-5; 5:13) historically sometimes included polygamy. The apostle Paul informed Timothy that a man having more than one wife was not eligible to be appointed as an elder. “Husband of one wife” literally means one wife at a time or not a polygamist, in addition to in the ordinary sense of being married. “...[E]ither celibacy or polygamy disqualifies a man for the office of a Bishop” (Milligan 328). We can be doubly certain that a bachelor is not eligible biblically to be appointed as an elder since marriage is also implied in the subsequent qualifications in the list of “having his children in submission” and “having faithful children.” “The most likely meaning of this phrase is that the man is to have only one wife and not another woman in his life” (Olbricht). An elder is a one woman man. At the time of his selection to be an elder, he is married to one woman.

Does the death of an elder’s wife automatically disqualify him from continuing to serve as an elder? Some brethren would affirm avidly, “Yes.” An elder may voluntarily resign from the eldership upon the death of his wife, but does the New Testament require him to resign? Did he lose the experience of married life that qualified him initially to be appointed as an elder?

Another question raised regarding the eldership and domestic requirements is, “What should the elder do in case his wife dies? Should he resign the eldership

the next Sunday?” Some have so affirmed but I am not of this number. When initially appointed he had the one wife and met the signal success the possession of that qualification. He may choose to resign and that is his prerogative. However, in my judgment, the Scriptures do not demand that he do so. ...He still has in his background the necessary experience within the family framework to make successful his efficiency in this realm of service that elders render. ...

Suppose an elder of two fine Christian children who are both in their late teens or early twenties are killed together while traveling in an automobile. Yesterday he had children; today he is void of children. Does this mean he can no longer serve? Not at all! He had children – obedient children – when appointed. He met the qualification. ...The very fact of their being taken in this tragic manner would not deprive him of the practical training in household direction characteristic of the past. (Taylor 85-86)

It is possible for a widower who has remarried or a man innocent in a divorce for fornication who remarries to be suitable for appointment as an elder (Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:15). What God styles as innocence should not be held against him.

If his wife has died, and he has remarried, this same rule would apply to his relationship to his new wife. She is to be the one and only woman for him. The dead woman is no longer his wife. “The wife is bound by the law (*to her husband*, implied) as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:39, NKJV). “But if her husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband” (Romans 7:2, NKJV). Jesus’ reply to the Sadducees who did not believe in a resurrection might also imply that after death the union of a husband and wife no longer exists (Matthew 22:23-30). If a man’s

wife dies, the union is broken. They are no longer husband and wife. If this were not true, remarriage would not be permitted. A husband or wife is no longer bound to their dead partner, therefore, if they marry again, they have only one wife or husband. A man can become an elder if, after his wife dies, he marries a woman who is scripturally free to marry him. The same is true of a man who is divorced and remarried for a scriptural reason. He would be qualified to be an elder. He is no longer bound to a woman who has been unfaithful to him, if he has divorced her. (Olbricht)

Still, a congregation must have confidence in its elders and may choose for itself whether to appoint a remarried widower or a remarried divorced man to the eldership.

Just because a man's wife has died or become unfaithful and he has remarried does not mean he is qualified to be an elder. If he does not measure up to the other qualifications, he should not serve. Also, if the congregation will not accept him because he has remarried, even though he had the right to do so, he should not be appointed to the position of an elder. Only those should be assigned the office who meet the scriptural qualifications and who are accepted as leaders by the congregation. (Olbricht)

Steward of God (Titus 1:7)

A "steward" is a manager or treasurer for another; he is an employee. Elders are in the employ of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 5:1-4). There are primarily two treasures for which elders are accountable to our Lord: (1) "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1) and (2) the souls of the congregation over which the elders serve (Hebrews 13:7, 17). Whereas the main area of stewardship entrusted to elders pertains to spiritual matters, elders are responsible for the physical circumstances relating to the local church (e.g., property, money). In addition, they must manage intangibles, too (e.g., opportunities to

proclaim the Gospel near and far). The local congregation and all that pertains to it are in the custody of God’s stewards – the elders.

Temperate (1 Timothy 3:2 NKJV) or Vigilant (KJV)

“Temperate” means not given to extremes. “Each elder must have proper control of his own manner of life. If he is unable to control his own thoughts, his own speech and his own daily deeds, how can he hope to be successful in aiding other people to control their manner of daily decorum in thought processes, in the selection of words and in the execution of daily deeds? An intemperate man would be a failure in seeking to bring out temperance in others” (Taylor 68).

Sober-minded (1 Timothy 3:2 NKJV) or Sober (KJV)

“Sober-minded” means of sound mind, under self-control or discreet. An elder is to be objective, impartial and fair thinking (Hodge 49). He is not to conduct himself impulsively. “An elder should not be wholly given to silly or childish things. It does not mean that a man should never have any humor, but a man who is never serious certainly ought not to be considered for this high office. Being an overseer over the house of God is a very serious business” (L.R. Wilson qtd. in Taylor 69). An elder is levelheaded. “He should be a man of a sound and well-balanced mind, possessing a large amount of good common-sense” (Milligan 330).

Of Good Behavior (1 Timothy 3:2)

“Of good behavior” means orderly. “The life of an elder should be well-directed. A man who is slovenly, careless, and haphazard in his work has no business trying to direct the work of the Lord. ...Some churches have very little system or order in their work” (L.R. Wilson qtd. in Taylor 70).

Hospitable (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8 NKJV) or Given to or a Lover of Hospitality (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8 KJV)

“Hospitable” comes from a word from which we get brotherly love. “Hospitality is love for strangers set to benevolent action. It is love on the lips translated into a dynamic demonstration of what Christianity enjoins in our treatment of other people. ...Elders

MUST be people whose homes are havens of hospitality. ...In the area of hospitality, the wife of an elder must share with him a generous reception of guests. She holds the key to much of his success in this royal realm.” (Taylor 78).

Able to Teach (1 Timothy 3:2 NKJV) or Apt to Teach (KJV) and Holding Fast the Faithful Word (Titus 1:9)

“Able to teach” and ‘holding fast the faithful word to convict gainsayers’ come from the Greek word that means to teach or preach in the public assembly. One of the qualifications for the appointment of elders includes boldly (if necessary) teaching the law of the Lord in the face of opposition (Titus 1:9). Each elder needs to be an able and willing teacher of the law of the Lord (2 Timothy 3:2), in private or publicly. An elder ought to be skillful in teaching. This, of course, requires an accurate knowledge of God’s Word. “Any man unable to stand before a group and teach the word of God is not qualified to be an elder or shepherd. ...Men who cannot – or will not – teach fail in one of the most important qualifications. ...If one is not skilled in teaching the truth, he can neither recognize nor refute the one who objects to truth” (Hearn, “Duties” 13).

Not Given to Wine (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:8 NKJV) or Sober (Titus 1:8 KJV)

“Not given to wine” means to be abstinent, not given over to alcohol. “Without any fear of successful contradiction from any source I confidently contend that a man who imbibes alcoholic beverages is not fit for the eldership of God’s church. ...Liquor consumption in any amount and the eldership of God’s church are totally incompatible” (Taylor 56). There is no place in the eldership for a social drinker.

Not Violent (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7 NKJV) and Not Quarrelsome (1 Timothy 3:3 NKJV) or No Striker (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7 KJV)

“Not violent” and “not quarrelsome” come from different Greek words with the same definitions, not quarrelsome or violent, not prone to smite men. “Striking [is] ...the sense of one who strikes back at anytime at anyone who dares to disagree or who displeases

him; one who lashes out at all who refuse to cater to him. ...Some like to argue, dispute over things of little importance” (Gough 9). The repetitious warning using different but similar words stresses God’s emphasis that this temperament disqualifies one for consideration as an elder.

***Not Greedy for Money (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7 NKJV)
or Filthy Lucre (KJV)***

“Not greedy for money” means to not be devoted to money, not to make it the object of one’s life pursuits (cf. 1 Timothy 6:10). Jesus proclaimed that one cannot successfully serve both God and money with equal intensity (Matthew 6:24).

Gentle (1 Timothy 3:3 NKJV) or Patient (KJV)

“Gentle” means mild and reasonable. An elder must be someone who is approachable by any of the members of the congregation. He is not abrasive, and he is willing to listen.

Not Covetous (1 Timothy 3:3)

“Not covetous” means not a lover of money. The elder does not have an inordinate desire to obtain wealth. He does not permit even legitimate business practices to overpower his devotion to the cause of Christ. Certainly, an elder will not pursue illegitimate business practices to fulfill a love of money. A second reference among the qualifications for elders to the proper attitude toward money highlights a human deficiency as well as emphasizes an essential virtue in God’s elders.

Not a novice (1 Timothy 3:6)

“Not a novice” means experienced, aged as a Christian, not newly planted or a recent convert. A man being considered for appointment as an elder is not unproven, but he has a proven record of Christian service. He is an experienced worker for the Lord.

***A Good Testimony among Those Who Are Outside
(1 Timothy 3:7 NKJV) or Good Report (KJV)***

“A good testimony among those who are outside” means that non-Christians would commend him for his goodness. A man whose past sins still overshadow his esteem in the minds of brethren and

non-Christians lacks the esteem or confidence by brethren and non-Christians to be appointed to so important a responsibility as an elder in the Lord's church. It may be that those past sins have been forgiven by God and man, yet the *consequences* of the past sins may persist and make it impossible to serve in some capacities, in at least the areas in which those things are known. "If a Church will not accept a man he cannot elder!" (Hodge 57). "No man should be appointed an elder whose life and conduct are questioned, even by those of the world" (L.R. Wilson qtd. in Taylor 73). If community members distrust a man, how can he serve effectively as an elder of a congregation whose mission is to make Christians from non-Christians in the community? Religiously, the community may dispute the Gospel truth we take to it, but the community should be able to acknowledge the integrity of the Lord's church and its leaders.

However, if one's past sins, for which he has been forgiven, *do not* undermine the confidence of the congregation over which he is being considered for appointment as an elder or the confidence by the community in his reputation, one's past, forgiven sins would *not* prohibit a man from consideration for appointment to the eldership.

The apostle Paul was a murderer, yet he rose to a height of unparalleled Christian service in the first century. Most of his successes with the Gospel of Christ were in areas of the world where he had not committed Christians to imprisonment and death. He also penned more New Testament books than any other writer (13 epistles). The apostle Peter denied Christ but proved to be a valuable servant, among other things, preaching the first Gospel sermon each to the Jews and to the Gentiles. He also penned two New Testament books. In addition to being an apostle, Peter was also an elder (1 Peter 5:1).

***Rules his own house well, Having His Children
in Submission with All Reverence (1 Timothy 3:4)
and Having Faithful Children (Titus 1:6)***

"Rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence" means his children are not accused of riot, not unruly or insubordinate. "Having faithful children" means trustworthy followers of Jesus; they are Christians.

Scripture establishes that having a single child satisfies the biblical requirement of “children” (Genesis 21:2, 7). “God wants obedient children in an elder’s house. The number is not the issue” (Hodge 53). Therefore, having one or more “faithful children” though one or more children are not “faithful” would not necessarily disqualify a man from consideration for appointment to an eldership. However, a congregation must have confidence in the men under consideration besides their biblical qualifications (Acts 6:3, 6).

These passages consider the conduct of an elder’s children residing in his home **at the time of his appointment** to the eldership. Scripture records the qualifications necessary for men to possess **before** they can be considered for appointment as elders in any congregation (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). The passage in Titus has this to say about an elder’s children. “...having **faithful children** not accused of riot or unruly” (Titus 1:6 KJV). Yet, the context in which those children, among the qualifications of elders, is addressed is revealed in the 1 Timothy passage. “One who **rules his own house** well, having his children in submission with all reverence; (For if a man does not know how to **rule his own house**, how shall he take care of the church of God?)” (1 Timothy 3:4-5 NKJV).

It is obvious from these Scriptures that in order for men to qualify for selection as elders (as far as biblical references to their children), they must have kept their families under control, having Christian children who, incidentally, acted like Christians ought to conduct themselves. Those comprising his family were obedient Christians, demonstrating their Christianity generally and with respect to the home over which their father was head.

The Conduct of a man’s household is evidence of his ability for directing the affairs of the church. If he does well with his household, he would do well in the church; but, if he does not do well with his household, he will not do well with the members of the church. The elder should have his children in subjection. **Unruly children will prevent any man from serving successfully as an elder in the church.** ...Any man who is unable to govern his children correctly by maintaining good discipline, is no man for

oversight in the church. (Noel Merideth qtd. in Taylor 84-85 emphasis added).

Then, a question arises about the appointment of a man to the eldership whose children have already matured and left the home. Naturally, one would ordinarily expect one to meet the qualifications of an elder, including having faithful children (Titus 1:6), while his children are yet in his home. Obviously, from the time his children first obeyed the Gospel (really it starts before this) through the remaining adolescent years while they continue to live at home, one who would be an elder learns (through on-the-job-training) to rule his house. Learning how to guide the home was determined by the Holy Spirit to prepare an elder to help guide the family of God – with other elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

Imagine for a moment if it were the case that the **window of opportunity** for a man to be an elder was limited to the period between the time his children became Christians and graduated from the home (maybe at age 18). If the oldest child obeyed the Gospel at 12-years-old and if either the elder or others expected two or more children to become Christians before the man became an elder, just how many years do you suppose one could possibly serve as an elder? From a pragmatic perspective, it appears that this scenario would greatly hinder the appointment and ongoing activity of an eldership. Further, neither the qualifications indicated in Scripture nor additional information regarding elders that may be gleaned from the pages of inspiration **teach** that one's qualifications for guiding the family of God, which he learned from guiding his own family, somehow evaporate once those children leave the house. Common practice among the churches of Christ, which is indicative of common understanding of the applicable passages regarding elders, **does not** interpret qualifications of elders in such a way as to embrace such a **narrow window of opportunity** for one to serve as an elder. As far as I can ascertain from Scripture, it would be unwarranted and without biblical support to limit the service of an elder to the three or four years his children may continue to reside in his house after two or more of them became Christians.

On the other hand, the conduct of an elder's grown children who no longer reside in his home does not necessarily disqualify one from being an elder. **The Scriptures say nothing that directly**

touches on whether the sins of an elder’s adult children disqualify him from continuing in the eldership. Mothers and fathers have much less control over their grown children. One’s adult children have freewill and may opt to do as they please, irrespective of their upbringing. It is often the case that children will adhere to the training of their earlier years (Proverbs 22:6), or if they depart from it, they will eventually return. However, whatever courses our adult children pursue are ultimately their responsibility and doing. Any decisions resulting from such a scenario, by an elder or the congregation he serves, then, would be a matter of human judgment. Scripture stipulates that an elder must have faithful children when he is appointed.

The only passage of which I am aware that involves challenging an elder pertains to accusations regarding sins in his life. “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear” (1 Timothy 5:19-20 NKJV). As far as Scripture is concerned, that one or more of an elder’s adult children become unfaithful does not necessarily disqualify him from being an elder. Sin in the life of an elder is a different matter. However, especially if all of an elder’s children became unfaithful, one might suspect that something was amiss while the children were yet in the home under the elder’s control and responsibility. Under these circumstances, then, either an elder or the congregation that he serves might deem it best that he no longer serve as an elder.

Ruling one’s house well would include assuming the responsibilities of husband and father in the home. The man who is not the head of his own home is not qualified to be an elder in the church. “An unruly, bossy wife disqualifies an otherwise good man. Thus, wives should help qualify their husbands. ...Sometimes children may disqualify their fathers” (Hearn, “Positive” 7).

Not Self-Willed (Titus 1:7)

“Not self-willed” means not arrogant. “He must be uncompromising in matters of faith and obligation, but not head-strong and unyielding in matters of judgment and expediency. Diotrophes was an example of such (2 John 9-11)” (Gough 9). “The self-willed person is for one man rule and he is that one man” (Taylor 61). A self-

willed man is the adult version of a childish temper tantrum!

Not Quick-Tempered (Titus 1:7 NKJV) or Not Soon Angry (KJV)

“Not quick-tempered” means not overcome by passion, not prone to anger. “The eldership is a place for cool and calm minds – not for hot heads who possess a fiery and uncontrollable temper. Judgments rendered in the heat of fiery anger are not very likely to contain practical prudence or rational wisdom” (Taylor 63). Combustible personalities have no place in the eldership of the church.

***Lover of What Is Good (Titus 1:8 NKJV)
or Lover of Good Men (KJV)***

“Lover of what is good” means a lover of goodness. “No finer index to a man’s real character exists than an examination of what he loves and what he hates” (Taylor 80). The expanse of this love for what is good includes love for good men (e.g., Gospel preachers, Bible class teachers, deacons and fellow elders). The apostle Paul wrote in another place that people who derive pleasure from sinful things and sinful people are worthy of death (Romans 1:32).

Just (Titus 1:8)

“Just” means to exhibit righteousness. An elder is fair and impartial. He is innocent of wrong doing.

Holy (Titus 1:8)

“Holy” means pious and sanctified. “The holy person is one who is right with God” (Taylor 71).

Self-Controlled (Titus 1:8 NKJV) or Temperate (KJV)

“Self-controlled” means having power over one’s appetites, cravings or urges. An elder is able to contain himself from improprieties or sins. He is self-disciplined.

The Work of Elders

“The duties of elders are clearly outlined in the New Testament Scriptures. No elder need plead ignorance with respect to his duties; no membership need be in doubt as to what are the duties of elders. While the duties are weighty and many, they may be learned from

the New Testament” (Boles, *Churches of Christ* 24). “They are to work as caretakers of God’s house (1 Tim. 3:5), overseers/ superintendents of every aspect of a congregation’s work (Acts 20:28), and shepherds of the flock (1 Peter 5:1-3)” (Campbell 20). Elders must possess already the qualifications stipulated by God so that they can perform the work of elders once appointed.

“Their field of labor extends to no further than the limits of their own congregation” (Milligan 337). Elders serve and rule over the congregation that appointed them from among its members. New Testament references to elders pertain to the congregations with which they are identified (Acts 20:17; Philippians 1:1; James 5:14). The pattern for the selection and appointment of persons within the church to certain roles is congregational (Acts 6:3).

A congregation cannot rise above its leadership. How important are qualified elders? A congregation’s spiritual growth, maturity and effectiveness respecting all aspects of Christianity rely heavily upon a qualified eldership leading it. The work of elders pertains to souls and has to do with people’s eternities.

A baker bakes. A policeman polices. A preacher preaches. Abusing the English language a little, an elder elds or elders. The point is that there is divinely given work for elders to do in the congregation over which they have been appointed. Among their duties, elders are to exhort and convict those who contradict sound doctrine (Titus 1:9). They are to watch or guard souls entrusted to them as well as to rule (Hebrews 13:17). To rule implies authority or authorization. Elders are not permitted to make new doctrine, but they are responsible for applying biblical teaching in the lives of fellow Christians in their congregation.

The church is not a democracy in which all the members have an equal voice in directing the affairs. The church of Lord is ruled, when the will of God is carried out, by the Head of the church, which is Christ. He rules through the eldership. Elders are not to be tyrants. They are not to be cruel and heartless, lording it over God’s people, but they are to be as fathers, with wise heads and loving hearts ruling the Lord’s people. Somebody must take the lead; some one must direct the work; some one must carry out the discipline of

the congregation. ...When the Holy Spirit teaches elders to rule over the congregation, it at the same time teaches the congregation to submit to the government of the elders. (Boles, *Churches of Christ* 28)

Take Heed to Yourselves (Acts 20:28)

Elders must make sure that they are right with God before they can lead others correctly. Elders comprise an eldership – a molded unit that acts in unison before the congregation. There is no place in an eldership for chief elders, senior elders, junior elders or bullies. Neither do God’s elders complain to brethren that they did not get their way when with the other elders. Disgruntled, going outside of and circumventing the eldership by an elder gathering supporters is precisely what the apostle Paul cautioned against (Acts 20:29-30). God’s elders practice self-discipline.

Take Heed to the Flock (Acts 20:28)

Elders must also concern themselves with the conduct of each member of the church. If necessary, an infected and contagious sheep must be removed from the balance of the flock to protect it. Elders sometimes are responsible for initiating varying degrees of church discipline to save the sinner and preserve other souls from the infectious nature of sin. Elders must know and care for each sheep.

Feed the Flock (1 Peter 5:1-2 KJV)

The NKJV reads “shepherd the flock of God” in place of “feed the flock of God” in the KJV. A large part of what a shepherd does regarding his sheep is to feed them. Elders need to provide spiritual food for the flock of God. Elders will guide the congregation away from a hurtful spiritual diet toward spiritual food that is healthy and that will help the sheep mature.

Elders are to feed or edify the church (Acts 20:28). Elders may utilize resources to help them accomplish their duties. Human resources include deacons, teachers, preachers and missionaries (evangelists). “It is not wrong for elders to ask or accept advice from others in the congregation who may be as wise, or wiser, and more knowledgeable than they. Any sensible suggestion made by others should be given due consideration” (Hearn, “Duties” 14).

Take the Oversight (1 Peter 5:2 KJV)

Elders have the responsibility in overseeing a congregation to provide for its needs through tending to the individual members. They must also attempt to lead straying sheep back to the fold of safety. Overseeing a congregation is another way of impressing the need for elders to be God's stewards of His people. Oversight works out a lot better when the overseen voluntarily submit to the oversight of the overseers.

Be Examples (1 Peter 5:3)

Elders provide themselves as examples for brethren to follow. If the elders are what God wants them to be, their example will help brothers and sisters in Christ avoid sin in their lives (1 Corinthians 11:1). Elders are to be examples, but they are to be more than examples. They are to shepherd or oversee their respective congregations (1 Peter 5:2), but without being dictatorial (1 Peter 5:3). "What is forbidden in the foregoing text is the abuse of authority, and not the proper use thereof" (Woods 30). Elders are to serve as examples worthy of imitation by the rest of the church, ever mindful that they are answerable to the "Chief Shepherd," Jesus Christ (1 Peter 5:4).

Watch for Wolves (Acts 20:29-30)

Elders must watch for false teachers who will lead brethren in their watch care away from sound doctrine (Romans 16:17-18; 2 Timothy 4:3). Dangers can arise from outside the church or from within the congregation. The apostle Paul told the elders from Ephesus that false teachers would arise from within the eldership (Acts 20:29). Alert elders analyze what preachers and teachers preach and teach to assure brethren are not harmed by false doctrine. At the first notice of wayward or weak doctrine, elders can act to prevent harm. From time to time, elders may need to observe the classes being taught so they can be aware.

Stop the Mouths of Idle Talkers and Deceivers (Titus 1:11)

Elders need to identify false teachers disguised as Gospel preachers and teachers before precious souls are infected with false teaching. Elders need courage to resist inroads of error among the

people of God for whom they watch, and that error may appear publicly or privately. Every Gospel preacher and Bible class teacher ought to be aware that if necessary his elders will arise as he speaks to the congregation to correct or halt his presentation (James 3:1).

Support the Weak (Acts 20:35)

In every congregation there are babes in Christ who are unable to care for themselves adequately. Elders must protect and encourage spiritually weak members. The eldership must plan and execute the plan to nourish weakly members to full health (Hebrews 5:12-14).

Pray for the Sick and Administer to their Needs (James 5:16)

Every Christian has some responsibility toward fellow Christians, and any Christian ought to pray for the sick and do for them what needs to be done if possible. However, elders cannot avoid their heightened responsibilities to pray for the sick and to administer to their needs by delegating it to others, such as to the preacher. Elders cannot hire their work out to others.

Consider and Decide Matters for the Church (Acts 15:6)

Someone must make decisions about the affairs of the church. This ranges from spiritual matters to physical circumstances that involve the local congregation. God has designed that elders shoulder that responsibility. Elders exercise themselves in the area of expediency.

Select and Appoint Teachers and Preachers (1 Timothy 4:14)

Timothy was selected and appointed by an eldership. Commonly, elders select Gospel preachers, and they are responsible as well for each teacher in the congregation over which they have been appointed.

Watch for the Souls of the Church (Hebrews 13:17)

Nothing could be more significant than being responsible to God for the souls of others. Elders bear this great weight. That burden would be lighter if more church members would cooperate with their elders as they attempt to guide them toward the eternal shores of heaven. Elders must watch for souls in the same vein as the watchmen in Ezekiel 33:7-16 were responsible for warning the

wicked from their sins. Elders are guardians of souls placed in their charge.

Elders must be about the business of providing for the spiritual welfare of each member. They are stewards of the souls in their custody, leading their congregation on behalf of our Lord. “The true shepherd will know all the flock, who they are, how many there may be, where they live and what their spiritual condition might be” (Hearn, “Duties” 13).

Selection and Appointment of Elders

Elders are not self-appointed (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The men possessing the grave responsibilities are selected by fellow Christians in accordance with divinely inspired qualifications. Then, the Holy Spirit installs them (Acts 20:28) into the eldership (if they are truly qualified) when the congregation appoints them. Incidentally, elders are made, not born, and they can be unmade as well (1 Timothy 5:19-20).

“Make no mistake about it, this matter of overseership is serious business. It is not for little boys, it is not for non-leaders, it is not for those whose first love is anything but the Lord’s Cause, and it certainly is not for the faint of heart” (Campbell 20). Select and appoint elders carefully, because it is easier to appointment the right men to the eldership than it is to remove unqualified elders. The Lord’s church is too important and it costs too much (Acts 20:28) to risk damaging it by appointing unqualified men to be elders.

“The key to good elderships is in selecting only qualified men” (Hodge 45). The selection and appointment of elders should never be reduced to a popularity contest. Elders should not be selected and appointed based on political victories or business accomplishments. Elders should not be selected and appointed because of their family relationship to other persons, in or out of the Lord’s church. Academic achievements or the lack thereof alone ought not to be the criteria for one’s appointment as an elder. A man’s personal wealth should never be the reason for which he is considered for appointment to the eldership. Surely, the man who is domineering and brash toward fellow brethren is ill-suited to be the Lord’s elder. Churches of Christ set themselves up for dismal failure if their attention to

qualification of elders revolves primarily around two questions: (1) “Is his marriage biblically correct?” and (2) “Does he have faithful children?” To be God’s elder, sundry spiritual qualities found in the biblical qualifications need to be addressed, too. A congregation should never settle for the “*best available*” (Hodge 46) candidates while diminishing the essentiality of the divinely given biblical qualifications for elders. “There are not perfect men! All qualities listed must exist in each elder to an appreciable degree. But the strength of elders is in number. What one lacks another supplies” (Hodge 47).

Enough information appears in the New Testament to clearly indicate that every congregation should have a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Acts 20:17). Yet, obviously before the appointment of elders in any existing congregation, the congregation operated with apparent Divine approval without elders for that interim. Further, the qualifications of elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-11; Hebrews 13:17) and the very terms used to designate them (i.e., pastors, Ephesians 4:11; overseers, Acts 20:28; shepherds, 1 Peter 5:1-4) indicate the function of elders. However, almost everything else regarding elders has been left by God in the realm of expediency. **We do not have any biblical information regarding the selection and installation process.** These details are not stipulated and, therefore, are not a matter of doctrine. Hence, neither are they a matter warranting undue alarm nor disagreement.

There is no method revealed in the New Testament for the selection and appointment of elders. ... There is no instruction given that teaches us how they were “appointed” or they were to be appointed. Since no Scripture teaches us *how* they were appointed, we are left free to appoint them in any way or by any method that does not violate a Scriptural principle and at the same time promotes Christian unity. (Boles, *Churches of Christ* 15)

Since there is no one method of appointing elders specified in the Bible, the example of the selection of deacons may be a good one to follow (Acts 6). The apostles advised the church to look out among them

good men to serve in this capacity. Just so, the congregation, after being taught and instructed in these important matters, can select men to serve as elders. The method is not described in Scripture. (Hearn, "Selection" 5)

In the absence of elders, the Christian men of a congregation are responsible for the affairs of the church, until such time as the congregation has elders. The congregation has the responsibility to appoint qualified men to serve as elders. It would be biblically incorrect for a congregation to go without elders indefinitely if qualified men are present in the congregation. It would also be anti-biblical for a congregation to opt for a form of government, namely a committee (or a single person, etc.), instead of the biblical prescription of elders (or in the absence of qualified men to serve as elders, the male members of the congregation).

Not merely pragmatic, but it is wise leadership of an eldership that will contribute to its own perpetuation. Whether additional elders should be installed before the resignation of an elder or the anticipated incapacity or death of an elder whereby the eldership were dissolved is a matter of opinion and expediency. Perhaps elders may put forth to the congregation for its consideration men that they recommend for appointment to the eldership. Surely, though, year-by-year, the shepherds of the local flock of God will prepare men and women spiritually for greater service. We would expect to find future elders and their wives among those groomed for servant-hood. Passing along (2 Timothy 2:2) the doctrine of Christ (Hebrews 6:1; 2 John 9) alone would go a long way to preparing dedicated Christians for populating the eldership with godly men, accompanied by godly wives. However, a congregation may not have elders yet. Or, it may be that a congregation's eldership has dissolved (perhaps because of the death of one of two elders). How does a congregation go about appointing elders when it does not currently have an eldership?

Whether suggested by an existing eldership or nominated by members of the congregation, Christian men must be examined before appointment to the eldership. Usually, the preacher, elders or teachers rehearse with the congregation over several weeks the biblical qualifications of elders. Hopefully after being refreshed respecting the scriptural credentials that God requires of elders, the

congregation will be better prepared to select and to appoint elders in harmony with God's Word.

Typically in contemporary times, names of Christian men are announced to the congregation for reflection. Any men whose names are put forth who do not desire to serve as elders remove themselves from consideration. Often over the two following weeks, brethren are encouraged to publicize any concerns about nominations, and those apprehensions are studied. Sometimes brothers will remove themselves voluntarily at this time from possible appointment as elders. Otherwise, if misgivings about a nomination are resolved satisfactorily to the men or the eldership, those brothers and others about whom no one expressed reservations are recognized as elders of the local church on a specified day. Other candidates for selection as elders, men about whom the men or the eldership cannot satisfactorily resolve complaints, are not recognized as elders.

Whatever procedure agreed upon by a local congregation is appropriate for the selection and appointment of elders, as long as it does not violate any biblical principles and teaching. They, however, must be appointed in harmony with divinely given qualifications for elders. Yet, some ceremony or officiating in keeping with local customs would go a long way to (1) heighten the realization of the solemnity and importance of the selection of elders and (2) formalize the selection of elders for all local brethren and sister congregations, too. In any case, a local congregation is responsible for the selection and appointment of its own elders. We have a precedent in New Testament Scripture for congregational selection of men for special functions within the church (Acts 6:3). In Acts 6:1-6, the congregation was given instructions respecting the qualifications of the men to be selected. The congregation was instructed to select men from among themselves based on the stated qualifications. Pragmatically, if a congregation is not satisfied with its leaders, it will not follow them; the church needs to select its own leaders. Then, the apostles appointed the men who were chosen by the congregation. Further, we have another biblical example of solemnizing a selection of men from within a congregation for special functions (Acts 13:2-3).

Conclusion

Obviously, God placed qualifications for elders in the New Testament because He deemed them to be important – essential rather than optional. Christians, then, must ascertain what the New Testament teaches about elders. Elders, the presbytery, bishops, overseers, shepherds and pastors are synonymous or interchangeable terms coming from three Greek words: *presbuteros*, *episkopos* and *poiman* (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7). A plurality of elders always serve together over each fully organized congregation (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5; Hebrews 13:17). Incidentally, this means that each elder possesses equal authority with every other elder in his congregation; there are neither senior (chief elders) nor junior elders. “These men are equal in authority, as well as having an equal say in all their duties as shepherds of the flock” (Bryant 11).

There is no greater office of responsibility and service than that belonging to elders. They have the most important responsibility on earth! **One of the identifying characteristics of the church for which Jesus died and over which He is the Head is that fully organized congregations have biblically qualified elders.**

Christians have a right to expect that **each** man serving as an elder meets **each** of the divine qualifications for elders (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). We have a right to expect elders to rule and feed the flock over which they have been selected (Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). Only when fully qualified elders serve in each congregation will the churches of Christ function in harmony with God’s will. God knew what he was doing when he determined that each congregation would be ruled by a plurality of elders who meet divinely given qualifications.

Male Leadership in the Home

In the Beginning

The relationship of the female role to the male role (i.e., women subject to men) pertains to the origin of each gender and the supportive role of woman at creation. “For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man” (1 Corinthians 11:8-9 NKJV). Further, the order of creation affects the respective roles of men and women. “For Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Timothy 2:13). Additionally, woman, represented by Eve, was the first human to sin. “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression” (1 Timothy 2:14). (Adam sinned as a result of his devotion to Eve and his failure to lead as God intended. Scripture, naturally, does not excuse Adam in his sin.)

The subjection of women to men is a divinely given principle that predates both Christianity and Judaism. God instituted the respective roles of men and women in the Garden of Eden, at the dawning of Patriarchy. “To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; **Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you**’” (Genesis 3:16). Therefore, the subordinate role of women to men does not pertain to custom or culture, but predates both. Also, the Gospel has not altered or removed the subordinate role of women any more than it has affected (1) painful childbirth, (2) sweat and labor, and (3) physical death (Genesis 3:16-19), all of which will remain until the end of time.

Throughout Patriarchy & Judaism

Patriarchy is what we typically call that period of time from the creation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden until the inauguration of Judaism when the Ten Commandments were given by God to the Israelites. The word “patriarchy” is a compound word meaning, “father” and “rule.” God ruled through the fathers of the fami-

lies. God communicated with some of the fathers who were responsible for communicating His Word to their families and other families, too.

Some of those fathers to whom God communicated in that time are familiar Bible characters: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the course of that communication from God, the husband and father of the family was given the responsibility for governing his family. Of Abraham, God said, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him” (Genesis 18:19 KJV). The inspired apostle Peter observed that Sarah was submissive to Abraham. “For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being **submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham**, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror” (1 Peter 3:5-6 NKJV).

Likewise under Judaism, male leadership in the home continued as it had begun in the Garden of Eden. Consequently, Numbers 1:4 speaks of the “head of the house of his fathers.” Zacharias confirmed Elizabeth’s naming of their son as John, which indicated that as husband and father, Elizabeth was obliged to be submissive to him (Luke 1:59-63). The background of the Old Testament where it lends insight into the workings of the Jewish home shows that male leadership in the home continued through Judaism.

In Christianity, Too

The reasons given in God’s inspired Word for the respective roles of men and women predate the development of “socio-cultural conditions.” Therefore, social and cultural considerations are irrelevant to the God-ordained roles of men and women. The New Testament plainly assigns differing roles for men and women. Nothing in Scripture or since by any means mitigates, alters or changes in the least what God caused to be inscribed upon the pages of inspiration regarding this topic.

First Corinthians 11 was penned to reestablish among Corinthian Christians the relationship of the roles of men and women to

each other under Christianity. “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Corinthians 11:3). This truth is valid both in the church of our Lord and in the home. Repeatedly in the New Testament one finds male dominance in the home. “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything” (Ephesians 5:22-24). “Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives” (1 Peter 3:1).

The biblically submissive role of women to men in the home and the church does not grant men the right to abuse their wives. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her” (Ephesians 5:25). “So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself” (Ephesians 5:28).

The differing roles of men and women remain constant. Despite *political correctness* in modern society, perhaps nothing better illustrates the unchanging roles for men and women as God designed them than the immutable fact that the female of our species still must birth our offspring. The apostle Paul alluded to this role in 1 Timothy 2:15, “Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.” A woman does not attain salvation by giving birth, but the point of the passage is that she cannot expect to be approved of God while abandoning the role that He has assigned to women.

There is biblical equality between men and women pertaining to redemption as indicated by the following passage. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26-28). However, the roles between men and women are different.

Male Leadership Concerning One's Family

The assumption from 1 Timothy 5:8 is that primarily the head of the house has the responsibility of providing for his family – including his extended family in which may be widows according to that context. “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” There are two primary ways that male leadership in the family manifests itself: Male Leadership Concerning One's Wife and Male Leadership Concerning One's Children.

Male Leadership Concerning One's Wife

Not only was Sarah submissive and obedient to Abraham under Patriarchy, the apostle Peter used that fact as an example for women to be submissive to their husbands under Christianity (1 Peter 3:5-6). It is not enough that wives are willingly submissive to their husbands, but husbands need to embrace their God-given responsibilities in the home. If husbands and fathers do not accept their duties at home, the void will not persist, but wives and children will assert themselves. Somebody has to take charge of the home and make decisions. If the husband does not take charge, his wife will take charge – if for no other reason because someone has to do it.

Teaching in Scripture that a wife must submit to her own husband places the responsibility for the home on the husband. However, in recent years, largely due to societal changes, contemporary roles for men and women have been modified from what God ordained. Scripture, though, has not changed nor has there been any new revelation for nearly 2,000 years. As far as God and the children of God are concerned, the respective but distinctive God-given roles for men and women are unaffected by contemporary practice. Efforts to apply *political correctness* to biblical roles are misguided.

My wife frankly reviewed as objectively as possible feelings she began to experience while working outside the home. A Christian woman is uniquely qualified to summarize some of the dangers to God's arrangement for the home when women go to the workplace. At the same time, a Christian woman can contrast those dangers with God's revealed will respecting the roles of men and women. Bonnie wrote:

The common practice of more women working outside the home in recent years contributes to the confusion of the “role of women.” ... The more time women spent in the workplace earning their own incomes equal to or more than their husbands, the more many women enjoyed being away from home and families... Having decision making jobs in the workplace, women began to believe they could make decisions at home and have the final say as well. Earning an income that was solely theirs made it easier to get a divorce than to work out the problems when the God-given role of the head of the house began to crumble. Unfortunately, the children are the ones to suffer, and as time continues the children repeat the failures of their parents. A cycle starts that is hard to break.

As a wife, woman is more than a mate. She is a partner with her husband in their mutual quest for earthly and heavenly goals, through separate roles. A subordinate and dutiful wife deserves love and kind treatment from her husband (Ephesians 5:25, 28, 33; Colossians 3:19; 1 Peter 3:7). Aquila and Priscilla are a noble Bible example of a husband-wife team worthy of contemporary emulation. First Peter 3:7 reads, “Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.” The role of the husband complements the submissive role of his wife as he provides for and praises her. They are the team, and he is supposed to be the team leader.

The American Standard Version of the Bible reads: “workers at home” where the King James Version has “keepers at home” in Titus 2:5. Truly, God has given to women **work** to do: (1) which they must accept to please Him, (2) which mission should be joyfully received, and (3) for which women deserve ample appreciation for their godly labors. Male leadership in the home regarding one’s wife includes exhibiting love toward her and appreciating her for all she does to make the home. Leadership involves providing for her and empowering her in the home. Male leadership honors the mother of his children with the backing to manage the home, including their

children. Husband and father is half of the team, with his wife and the mother of their children being the other half of the family management team. A Christian wife will submit to the leadership of her Christian husband, but it is easier for her to submit to a godly spouse who takes upon himself the responsibility of leading the home.

When we notice the need for something to be done, we do not consider the overall picture. Then, we step in and do what needs to be done without realizing that we may be overstepping God's place for us in the home and the church. I believe that if men realized God has a plan and role for them and if they would readily accept and act upon that role, women would not think that they needed to step in and help the men in their roles. ... When men fail to accept and practice their responsibilities as fathers and husbands, many women feel "that if it is going to be done, I will have to do it." (Bonnie Rushmore)

It is a man's fault when a woman assumes a role that God never gave her in the home. It is his fault because he allows her to abandon her role and seize his role. Often, he is also at fault for leaving undone what he should have done, intentionally or unintentionally leaving it for his wife to do. The home will be better coordinated when each fulfills his or her role.

Male Leadership Concerning One's Children

"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Mothers (and grandmothers, too) play an indispensable role in childrearing (2 Timothy 1:5). In the home, a wife and mother has chiefly domestic duties (1 Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:1-5). This area of godly service especially includes for a mother the care for and guidance of young children. A mother has no more important duty before God than the proper care of her family. Nevertheless, God holds the father ultimately responsible for rearing his children. "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (Colossians 3:21).

If the father does not exercise himself with the authority invested in him by God through the Scriptures, children will assert themselves. If they have to, children will raise themselves, and it is not a pretty sight. Neither did God intend for mothers to raise their children without the children's father. Some fathers are physically present, and yet, they are absent spiritually and socially from positive interaction and guidance of their own offspring.

Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21 just noted is the New Testament abbreviation of the parental responsibility, especially belonging to fathers, to indoctrinate their children with the Word of God. Notice Deuteronomy 6:1-2, 4-8.

Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, **you and your son and your grandson**, all the days of your life... Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them **when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up**. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Not under Judaism and not under Christianity either dare a father neglect acquainting his children with God's Word at all times. Christian fathers should not leave the religious education of their children solely to their wives. It is also shirking a father's duties to expect the church to take the full responsibility of informing one's children about Christian doctrine and Christian living. At best, children only experience Bible class and worship a few hours weekly,

but parents have their children hours daily. Given the adverse effect of the world on our offspring, parents need to seize every opportunity for positive reinforcement with the Bible.

Conclusion

The roles in religion and in the home that God established from the dawn of man's earthly pilgrimage are still in force. The inspired apostle Paul clearly taught that these roles God assigned men and women from creation onward were yet effective under Christianity. No passage elsewhere in the New Testament nullifies these God-ordained roles for men and women. No one has the authority to countermand God in this (or any other) matter on which he has legislated in the Bible (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19).

The fact that many males may not rise to the occasion to be the husbands and fathers in the home that they should be is a sad commentary on men, but that human failure does not, for instance, make a wife into a husband or make a mother into a father. The home needs both male and female roles to be the coordinated home that God designed it to be.

Men and women differ physiologically, but they are of equal worth respecting salvation (Galatians 3:27-29). Nevertheless, God gave differing but complementary roles to men and women. Mindful of those differing roles, while the woman is to submit to the man, the man has added responsibilities toward the woman. The God-authored physiological differences between the sexes also correspond to the respective roles that God assigned each sex. The man generally enjoys greater strength while the woman in her supportive role is usually not quite as strong physically.

Women demonstrate equal academic capabilities with men. Emotionally, women typically differ from men. Between the two sexes, their combined emotional characteristics furnish the home. Both sexes have the same capacity to excel morally, though often women outshine many of their male counterparts. There are many women who are spiritual giants and who make the home and the church more of what God wants them to be. However, neither men

nor women are spiritual giants when they disdain God's respective roles for men and women.

Excepting God the Father, everyone is subordinate to someone else (1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Hebrews 2:8). "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3).

It cannot be denied that the Bible also **plainly teaches** that women are subject to men (1 Timothy 2:12; 1 Corinthians 11:3). Further, Scripture abundantly denotes that wives are required to be subordinate to their own husbands (Ephesians 5:22-25; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:5-6), even if their husbands are not Christians (1 Peter 3:1).

The role of women in the church or in the home is only controversial to those who exhibit diminished respect for the authority of God and His Holy Word! Christians who reject the subordinate role of women despise "**sound doctrine**" (Titus 2:1, 4-5) and **blaspheme the Word of God** (Titus 2:5)! Men who fail to or neglect to take upon themselves the role God has bestowed upon them also despise "sound doctrine" and blaspheme the Word of God.

The inspired Word of God gives several reasons for the subordination of women: (1) "For Adam was first formed, then Eve" (1 Timothy 2:13), (2) woman, not man, was deceived by Satan (1 Timothy 2:14), (3) woman was created *from* man (1 Corinthians 11:8) and (4) woman was created *for* man (1 Corinthians 11:9). Yet, a woman's salvation and worth are not tied to a man (Galatians 3:28). Still, the Gospel does not dissolve physical distinctions between races, political or economic status, or sexes.

Disagreement is not with me, but with God Himself when someone proposes to change the respective roles of men and women that God initially instituted in the Garden of Eden. Doubtless, we can see the futility of arguing with God. Please defer any displeasure with such messages to the mailer – God.

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The Role
of Women:

In the Church
In the Home
Work to Do

Bonnie Rushmore

Role of Women in the Church

Definition of Terms

When discussing “the role of women,” there are three words that typically upset those who desire to change biblical teaching on the woman’s role. So, before turning to the Bible, we must understand the definitions for these words – subjection, submission, role – as used when discussing God’s desire for the “role of women.” When women and men understand how these words are used in the biblical framework of the role of women, controversy will cease, and women’s roles will automatically fall into place – as long as Christians truly desire to please God.

Subjection

The dictionary definition for “subjection” is “1. the act of subjecting. 2. the state or fact of being subjected” (*dictionary.com*). The word “subject” as used in the previous definition is an adjective, meaning, “being under domination, control, or influence” (*dictionary.com*). Basically, the word “subjection” means someone or something has control or influence over you. Every day of our lives, each one of us is subject to someone or something!

Submission

“Submission” is a noun meaning, “1. an act or instance of submitting 2. something submitted; a proposal, argument, etc. 3. the quality or condition of being submissive to another” (*Dictionary.com*). The root word “submit” is a verb meaning, “1. to give over or yield to the power or authority of another (often used reflexively). 2. to subject to some kind of treatment or influence” (*Dictionary.com*).

As you can see, the words “subjection” and “submission” can be used interchangeably since they have essentially the same meaning. To be in subjection or to be in submission is to allow someone to have control and authority over another. Keep this definition in mind as we look at Bible passages that teach the role of women in the church, and later as we study God’s plan for women in the home.

Role

The third word we need to define is “role.” In the context of our study, this word is a noun meaning, “2. proper or customary function: the teacher’s role in society. 3. Sociology. the rights, obligations, and expected behavior patterns associated with a particular social status” (*Dictionary.com*). As we look at the “role of women,” a synonym would be “responsibility of women.” What are the responsibilities of women – what is the expected normal behavior of women as authorized by God in His Holy Writ?

Authoritative Relationships

God designed the role (responsibility) of woman at creation. Adam was first formed then Eve. “For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Timothy 2:13-14). The leadership roles were further defined by God when he stated, “Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Genesis 3:16). Man is to rule over the woman. Woman is to be submissive to the man. This does not mean that men and women are not equal. Men and women are equal in salvation (Galatians 3:28). Nor does being submissive mean women are inferior or weak.

Ephesians 5:22—6:5 discusses relationships and levels of authority.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ. (NKJV)

Wives are to be in subjection to their husbands. This is the same as the church being in subjection to Christ. To have the proper relationship, husbands must love their wives, just as Christ loves the church. Children are to be in subjection to their parents. Parents, fathers in particular, are commanded to treat their children fairly and lovingly teach them the ways of God. Employees are to work for their employers as if they were working for Christ.

Furthermore, all mankind is commanded to submit to the authority of the government under which it resides. Jesus taught, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21). Paul, by inspiration admonished,

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on

themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. (Romans 13:1-7)

God demands that we show respect, honor and submission to the rulers of this land. We must obey the laws of the land in which we live or visit. The only exception to this command is when specific laws of the land are contrary to the laws of God (Acts 5:29).

These passages clearly show that in every aspect of life each of us is commanded to be submissive to someone else. All individuals are subject to the authority of someone else. Children are subject to the authority of their parents. Students are to be submissive to their teachers. Employees are subject to their boss. Citizens must submit to their government's rules and regulations. We understand that someone has to have the final say and authority. Otherwise, we would live in a world of chaos and mass confusion. Why then, do we refuse to accept that someone has final say and authority over us in religion? The above Scriptures clearly teach that wives are required to submit to the leadership of their husbands. The church is subject to Christ, and Christ is submissive to God the Father – as is ALL MANKIND!

Scriptures Discussing Women's Role within the Church

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered

them to you. But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God. Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering. But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.

In this chapter, Paul explained the hierarchal order – that was established at creation – and how it affects relationship roles. The word “head” means, “authority or superior rank.” Women are under the authority of men, men are under the authority of Christ and Christ is under the authority of God. Verses eight and nine explain the reason for this hierarchy role – woman was made **from man** and woman was made **for man** (compare Genesis 2:20-23). As we have already noted, just because one is under the authority of another does not make one inferior to another.

The phrase “because of the angels” indicates the dire consequences of women disobeying God’s mandate that they be in submission to men. When the angels failed to follow God’s hierarchal order, they were cast into darkness and chains (Jude 6). Men, women and the angels are required to follow **all** of God’s commands respectively applicable to them, including His submission/authority regulations. Failure to do so will result in an unhappy eternity!

Once Paul reminded the Corinthians of the hierarchal order, he began his discussion of prayers and prophesying. The Greek word for man is *aner*, meaning, “male” – it is never translated mankind, which would include women. Paul addressed the men about prayers and prophesying. The first definition of the Greek noun for “prophet” is, “signifies the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God...” and the first definition for the Greek verb for “prophesy” is, “to be a prophet, to prophesy, is used (*a*) with the primary meaning of telling forth the Divine counsels...” (Vine).

Don McWhorter made the following observation:

The matter of male leadership and female submission has been plainly and forcefully presented. Paul sets forth a theoretical situation in verses 4 and 5 to illustrate the point. In that culture an uncovered head symbolized dominance while a covered head showed submission. In verse 4 he illustrates the principle of dominance by using an imaginary situation of what a man of that culture would never, even think of doing – stepping forth to lead the assembly with his head covered... Continuing the illustrations, he argues in verse 5 that a woman must not dare do what a man could not even imagine doing... In that society, a woman’s submission was indicated by her covered head. How dare her to abandon her role of submission! She would do that if she presented herself with an uncovered head.

These verses clearly teach that a woman cannot have a leadership role over man and be submissive to him. Such a situation is impossible!

The length of hair discussed in verses 14 and 15 again addresses the authority/submission relation. The custom at the time of this writing was men had short hair and women had long hair. Short hair on men indicated authority while long hair and veils on women indicated submission. If a woman cut her hair or removed the veil, she portrayed to those who saw her that she was no longer submitting to male leadership. While the Bible does not address “how long is long” and how “short is short” in relation to men’s and women’s hair, any child of God desiring to please the Father will consider one’s hair length and style, along with clothing choices and overall daily Christian living in accordance with the culture in which the individual lives or visits. Is the woman with a short, manly hair style portraying an attitude of submission to male leadership?

1 Corinthians 14:34-35

Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

The context of 1 Corinthians 14 is the worship assembly. Beginning with verse 26, Paul discussed the use of tongues (languages) during worship. If there were no interpreter, then the one speaking in a foreign language was instructed to keep silent. When a prophet desired to give a message from God, Paul instructed him to wait his turn. The one speaking should finish his lesson, giving others the opportunity to speak (29-32), thus giving all in attendance an opportunity to learn. The apostle Paul, by inspiration, clearly admonished the Corinthian church to let **one** person speak at a time. We cannot edify (verse 26) if several are speaking at the same time. Verse 40 states, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” Verses 34-35 teach that women are not permitted to utter a word in the public assembly. The context surrounding these two verses specifically includes leading songs and prayers as well as preaching in the presence of men. Further, the apostle affirmed that this principle was likewise taught in **substance** or was the summary **sentiment** of the Old Testament in general. There is not a specific passage to which

the phrase “also saith the law” refers, but the reference is to the comprehensive Old Testament law of God. However, the God-ordained, respective roles of man and woman, from creation throughout the Bible, are not difficult to discern. Essentially, the apostle Paul reminded his readers that the law of God regarding the respective and contrasting roles of men and women had not changed from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

Don McWhorter gives a slightly different explanation of the phrase “as the law also says (verse 34)”:

...it is the law of submission that Paul said was confirmed by “the law.” The command for silence on the part of women in the situation under discussion was an application of the law of submission. Paul’s words are: “They are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.”

Whether Paul was referring to the “comprehensive Old Testament law of God” or more specifically to the “law of submission” is immaterial, since God’s law of submission began in the Garden of Eden at the beginning of time. God’s plan for separate roles for men and women has not changed from creation until now.

Yet, one must remember that women are commanded to sing in worship to God, and this verse does not prohibit them from singing. This passage forbids women from taking a leadership role – placing themselves in a position of authority over men – during the public assembly.

Perhaps the inspired writer knew that some would challenge this discourse regarding men’s and women’s roles within the public assembly. Consider verse 37, “If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.” Paul suggested that those who believe to have divine knowledge should affirm these statements are from Almighty God.

1 Timothy 2:8-12

I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves

in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.

The context of 1 Timothy 2:8-12 pertains to worship and notes the respective roles of men and women regarding its public aspect. In 1 Timothy 2, Paul used three different Greek words when discussing men and women. In verses 8 and 12, he used the word *aner*, meaning “an individual male,” when instructing the men. He used the term *gune* in verses nine and twelve meaning, “a woman; specially, a wife,” when addressing the women. Earlier in the chapter (verses 1, 4-5), the apostle Paul used the word *anthropos*, meaning mankind, when giving the same instructions to both the men and the women.

The Greek word for “silence” is *hesuchia*, meaning, “stillness, i.e. desistance [to cease, as from an action; stop or abstain] from bustle or language: quietness, silence.” The word silence is used twice in this context, both times in relation to the women. They are to learn with quietness, and they are to refrain from teaching and having authority over the men. Clearly, the inspired writer deliberately chose different words to address men and women to show distinct roles and behaviors in worship to God.

In this passage, God commanded men to lead the prayers in worship. No man can give a woman the permission to lead a prayer in the presence of men. Women are commanded not to usurp authority of men. When a woman leads a prayer in the presence of men, she takes control away from the man and gives it to herself.

Jane McWhorter noted:

Woman ...has never been given the right to teach over him [man] in an authoritarian way. The broad principle applies to the situation anywhere that Christians have assembled for spiritual matters, whether it be at a church building, a home, a convention hall, or a lectureship at a Christian college. No

man, not even an elder, can give the woman permission to violate God's law.

However, women are commanded to sing in worship to God (Ephesians 5:19). According to Colossians 3:16, the songs we sing are to teach and admonish one another. Thus, when women sing songs of praise to God, they are teaching men who are also singing praises to God.

Further, a comparison is made between men praying and serving God and how a godly woman acts. A godly woman is known by the way she dresses. She is more concerned with the spiritual dress than the physical dress. When we diligently try to apply godly characteristics to our lives, we will have the best spiritual dress available.

There is no alternative to godly women in the church. Their place of submissive service is critical to the church and invaluable to its growth. They have been blessed with responsibility of continuing "in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety" (1 Timothy 2:15). Support, understanding and praise are due in "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over" (Luke 6:38) for "her price is far above rubies." (Sweeten)

The Bible emphatically declares that women are to be in subjection to men. Women cannot preach, pray, lead singing, serve at the Lord's Table, teach a Bible class or serve in any capacity where they are in authority over men. Any Christian woman desiring to serve her Lord will gladly accept the God-given hierarchal order. She will submit with humility to male leadership in the church and in the home. She will be submissive – not because she has to – but so that she can be a faithful servant of her Lord.

Questions

1. Are there any situations in which a woman can teach a man?

Role of Wives in the Home

We have already discussed the definition of terms “subject,” “submission” and “role.” A clear understanding of these terms is required to comprehend God’s plan for men and women. As a reminder – subject and submission have the same basic meaning, “To be in subjection or to be in submission is to allow someone to have control and authority over another.” The term “role” is synonymous with “responsibility.” So, what has the Bible outlined as the “responsibilities of wives in the home?” I use the term “wives” since a single woman, living by herself, is the head of her home as she is the only individual living there.

Scriptures Discussing Wives’ Role within the Home

Genesis 2:15-25

Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” And the Lord God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And

Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

In the beginning, God created a perfect world. After Adam named all the animals, a helpmeet was not found for him (Genesis 2:20). God created a special companion for Adam from one of Adam’s ribs. God planned from the beginning that man should have a counterpart or mate to help him along the way. It is significant to note that Eve was created from a rib in Adam’s side. She was not created from a bone in his foot to be stepped on or from his head to rule over him, but from his side where he could protect her and she could help him.

Genesis 3:16

To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.”

After Adam and Eve’s sin in the Garden of Eden, God pronounced punishment upon each of them. Adam was told that he would sweat to grow his food among the thorns and thistles, and God banished them from the Garden of Eden.

Eve had additional punishment. She would experience pain while giving birth to her children, and she would answer to the desires of her husband. Adam was to rule over Eve. These punishments carry over to each generation from that time forward as long as the earth remains. All women from that time forward are to be in submission to their husbands.

Ephesians 5:22—6:5

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so

let the wives be to their own husbands in everything... Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ.

The apostle stated that just as Christ is the Head of the church, the husband is the head of the wife. With this relationship, the church must obey Christ and the wife must obey her husband. Paul continued this analogy while correlating the love Christ has for the church with the love a husband should have for his wife. Typically, men care for and nourish their own bodies, and Paul stated that a man who properly loves his wife will treat her as he treats himself. He will nourish and cherish her as he would himself. When a man treats his wife as he should, she will lovingly and willingly follow God's command to be obedient to her husband.

Unfortunately, some men forget to apply these verses to themselves and mistreat their wives, making it difficult for the wife to have the proper reverence for her husband. Nevertheless, a wife is still obligated to obey her husband even if he does not treat her as God has commanded. The only exception to this God-given rule is when the husband demands the wife do something that is contrary to the laws of God (Deuteronomy 13:6-8; Matthew 19:29; 10:37; Acts 5:29). Even though we do not live under the Old Law, the principle has not changed. God will not accept the excuse on the Judgment Day, "I had to obey my husband." Nor will He accept the excuse, "My husband was unreasonable, harsh and cruel (or any other negative characteristic)."

As a wife, woman is more than a mate. She is a partner with her husband in their mutual quest for earthly and heavenly goals, through separate roles. A subordinate and dutiful wife deserves love

and kind treatment from her husband (Colossians 3:19; 1 Peter 3:7). Aquila and Priscilla are a noble Bible example of a husband-wife team worthy of contemporary emulation (Acts 18:24-26; Romans 16:3-5).

Ephesians 5:22—6:5 unmistakably declares that wives are to be in subjection to their husbands. This is the same as the church being in subjection to Christ. To have the proper relationship, husbands must love their wives, just as Christ loves the church. Children are to be in subjection to their parents. Parents, fathers in particular, are commanded to treat their children fairly and lovingly teach them the ways of God. Employees are to work for their employers as if they were working for Christ.

Titus 2:3-5

The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

Titus Chapter Two outlines the characteristics and responsibilities of Christians. Verse one instructs elders, verse 2 teaches older men, verses 3-5 pertain to older women, verses 4-5 concern young women, verse 6 has to do with young men and verse 9 provides instruction to servants (today's application would be to workers). In this context, older women are to admonish the young women to "love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands." The Greek word *sophonizo* translated "admonish" in the NKJV and "teach" in the KJV means, "to make of sound mind, i.e. (figuratively) to discipline or correct." Older women cannot teach these qualities to the younger women if they neither understand nor have the characteristic in their lives.

The cultural marriage practices during the writing of the Book of Titus was arranged marriages. Young men and young women did not have the luxury of choosing their mates; their parents bargained

for a spouse for their child. Knowing this gives one a better understanding as to why the older women were to instruct the young women to love their husbands and to love their children.

Let us take a closer look at the characteristics of Christian women as outlined in these verses.

“love their husbands” – *philandros* “fond of man, i.e. affectionate as a wife.” “Affectionate means showing, indicating, or characterized by affection or love; fondly tender: *an affectionate embrace.*” *A wife is to show a physical attraction and attention to her husband.*

“love their children” – *philoteknos* “fond of one’s children, i.e. maternal.” The love one has for one’s husband and the love one has for one’s children is different. While women should show fondness and affection to both husband and children, the affection toward the husband should have a sexual tone.

“discreet” – *sophron* “safe (sound) in mind, i.e. self-controlled (moderate as to opinion or passion).” Women are to be level headed, controlling and restraining their actions and feelings.

“chaste” – *hagnos* “properly, clean, i.e. (figuratively) innocent, modest, perfect.” The actions of Christian women should always be viewed as innocent and modest, never lewd, coarse, vulgar or inappropriate.

“homemakers” – *oikourgos* or *oikouros* “a stayer at home, i.e. domestically inclined (a ‘good housekeeper’).” It is the responsibility of the wife to maintain the home. The *American Standard Version* of the Bible reads, “workers at home” whereas the *King James Version* has “keepers at home.” Truly, God has given women **work** to do, (1) which they must accept to please him, (2) which mission should be joyfully received, and (3) for which women deserve ample appreciation for their godly labors. Cindy Colley made this observation: “...the simplicity of the phrase ‘keepers at home’ demands our understanding of it. Just as a zookeeper runs or works in a zoo, so a ‘home keeper’ runs or works in the home.”

“obedient to their own husbands” – *hupotasso* “to subordinate; reflexively, to obey.” Women are to obey their husbands. As

we have seen from the previous verses, God's command for women to be submissive to their husbands dates back to creation. When women fail to be submissive to their husbands, they literally defame or speak evil of God.

These are just some of the qualities all women, young and old, should strive to develop in their lives. When one practices these characteristics in one's daily living, the home will be a loving, peaceful haven separate and apart from the evils of this world.

1 Timothy 5:14

Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

The context surrounding this verse deals with the responsibility of caring for widows. The church is instructed to care for older widows with no family to care for them, if they meet certain criteria. The church was not to care for the younger widows, since doing so would allow them to be idle, offering greater areas of temptation to sin. Although this passage is directed to widows, the instruction can be applied to all women.

Younger widows are encouraged to marry. Paul taught that it is acceptable to marry or to remain single (1 Corinthians 7:7-40). In verse 34, Paul stated that the single woman can focus on the work of the Lord, while the married woman will focus on pleasing her husband. Neither the married nor the single woman is condemned.

Women are encouraged to have children. There is a big difference between giving birth to a child and being a mother. Ephesians 6:4 instructs fathers to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Mothers should assist in this instruction. Deuteronomy 11:19 reads, "You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." Biblical teaching is an all-day, everyday occurrence. This teaching is not only in the classroom setting, but it occurs throughout the day during ordinary activities, too. Talk to your child about the God of creation as you walk outside and see the wonders of this world. Talk to your children about godly ways to interact with others when a disagreement between friends arises. Show your children love and kindness by

including them in the preparation and delivery of food to the sick, the bereaved and the shut-ins. The wise man Solomon taught, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). Training is more than teaching – it is putting into practice the truths that are taught in the Bible. We must teach our children Bible knowledge **and** help them to put that knowledge into practice. We cannot train our children to be faithful servants of the Lord if we fail to be faithful servants of the Lord!

Not only must mothers assist fathers in teaching God’s Word to their children, they must assist with the discipline of their children. An undisciplined child has no respect for authority. Children must learn to respect the authority of parents, teachers, the law of the land, the elders and other church leaders, and God. Solomon declared, “He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly” (Proverbs 13:24). “The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (Proverbs 29:15). Proper discipline is both positive and negative, and it must be adjusted according to the age and temperament of the child. Sometimes a stern look is all that is needed to adjust a child’s behavior while at other times or with another child more drastic measures are required. What worked for one child may not work for another. Positive reinforcement for good behavior will go a long way to help a child learn self-control.

Teaching and discipline must begin at birth. Behavior that was acceptable yesterday but is unacceptable today only brings confusion and frustration to the child. It is never too early to begin to train our children in the Lord; that training includes biblical knowledge, practical application of that knowledge and self-discipline!

Paul acknowledged the accomplishments of Lois and Eunice when he told Timothy, “when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also” (2 Timothy 1:5). Timothy’s great faith came from his grandmother and mother. It was their teaching that led him to be a strong, faithful servant of the Lord in his youth.

Women are to guide the home. The *American Standard* translates the word “guide” as “rule.” The *New King James* uses the word

“manage.” The wife is to be in charge of the home. It is her responsibility to see that the family is properly cared for. This verse does not contradict other passages that teach that the husband is the head of the home and that the wife is to be in submission to him. Rather, this verse gives additional information. While the husband is the head of the home, it is the duty of the wife to see to the daily needs of the family. The woman has the right and power to make decisions concerning the responsibility to rule, manage or guide her home! A wise, godly husband will encourage his wife to make the decisions that affect the day to day operations of the home. He will seek the advice of his wife in all matters that affect the family. A wise, godly wife will tend to her duties in the home, consulting her husband before making major decisions. She will be knowledgeable about the affairs of the home and the world so that she can wisely discuss the affairs of the family with her husband. A godly wife **willingly** submits to the decisions of her husband even when she disagrees with him.

1 Peter 3:1-6

Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward — arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel — rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

This is another passage – this time written by the apostle Peter – instructing wives to be subject to their husbands. Peter further instructed that even if a husband is not a Christian, the wife must remain in submission to him. When the wife puts God first in her life, is subject to her husband and acts like a faithful child of God, there

is a greater likelihood that the husband will obey the Gospel. Christian women must be more concerned with what is on the inside than what they are wearing on the outside. The amount of time and money spent on hairstyles, jewelry and clothing can be closely linked to where the heart is. Peter did not condemn wives who dress to make themselves attractive to their husbands. He was making a contrast between those who are more concerned with the outward appearance than with godly behavior. Our clothing should not be the first thing others notice about us. Sometimes, as we strive to exhibit Christ-like qualities while in public, we mistakenly think that no one will notice if we let our behavior slip a little in the home. Never forget that our husbands and our children are always watching! In the context of these verses where the husband is a non-Christian, it is extremely important that our godly behavior is displayed in the home.

Please consider these points with reference to the phrase “as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.”

- She acknowledged Abraham as head of the home and first in her heart.
- She showed that she recognized her place in the home and in the life of Abraham. She found completeness in it.
- She was glad to be a woman, the wife of Abraham, and found joy and happiness in her love for him.
- She showed great love for Abraham.
- She showed gentleness in her heart for Abraham.
- She showed how proud she was of him, and she was happy to be his wife.
- She showed respect and admiration for Abraham.

What do you call your husband? The way you speak to and about your husband shows others your feelings toward him. Can others see the love and respect your husband deserves by your words and actions, or do they see apathy, indifference, disdain or hatred? This would apply not only to husbands, but to all with whom we have a close association (children, parents, friends, etc.).

Duties of Women in the Home

All women should show love and respect to their husbands and to their children. When women have the proper love and respect for their family members, caring for them will be a joy and not a burden.

It is the woman's responsibility to manage and care for the home. A well maintained home will be clean and orderly. However, it will not necessarily be spotless with nothing out of place – it can look “lived in.” However, it should not have weeks' worth of dirt and trash everywhere and tables overflowing with papers, magazines, etc. One should be able to walk through the house without stepping on toys, clothes, etc.

It is the woman's responsibility to assist in rearing the children to be faithful servants of God. Mothers should teach their children to respect older individuals, and children ought to respect their own peers, too. Children should be taught to be responsible for their actions and possessions.

Questions

1. Can a woman, with God's approval, work outside the home?
2. Can a woman, with God's approval, disobey her husband?

Role of Women - Work to Do

We have looked at various verses in the Bible that teach the responsibilities of women and the restrictions God placed on them. Now let us consider what God expects women to do.

God Wants All Women to Be Saved

Mark 16:16

He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

Galatians 3:27-29

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The law of Christianity does not make a distinction between nationalities, stations in life or sex. One nationality is not superior to another. Masters are not greater than servants. Women are not inferior to men. All of mankind is equal in Christ!

2 Timothy 4:1-5

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

In the full context of this passage, the apostle Paul offered words of instruction and encouragement to the young preacher Timothy. In verse 8, Paul encouraged all Christians to remain faithful in order to obtain the heavenly reward. John taught that one must remain faithful even unto death (Revelation 2:10).

God Expects Women to Live Godly Lives

We should follow the examples of these women in the way they lived godly lives.

Godly women need the faith of Sarah. I picture this scenario in my mind. Abraham came home one day and said, “Sarah, God told me we are to leave all this behind and travel to a new land.” Sarah asked, “Where are we going?” To which Abraham replied, “I do not know.” “When will we get there?” asked Sarah. “God did not tell me,” was the reply. Still, Sarah willingly left family and friends behind to travel as nomads with no place to call her own the rest of her life. That takes great faith. Hebrews 11:11 talks of the great faith of Sarah as she conceived when past the age of childbearing.

Godly women need to have the devotion of Ruth. She was devoted to her mother-in-law, Naomi. Naomi and her family moved to Moab because of a famine in their homeland. While living there Naomi’s two sons married. Sometime later Naomi’s husband and both sons died. Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem and to her own people. She encouraged both her daughters-in-law to return to their parents’ houses. Ruth refused and traveled to Bethlehem with Naomi. She helped to provide for Naomi and readily accepted advice from her. Christ came through the lineage of Ruth (Mathew 1:1-17).

Godly women need the courage of Esther. Esther was married to Ahasuerus. A law was passed that her people, the Jews, were to be destroyed. Esther went before the King to plead for them even though she had not been called. If an individual was not summoned by the king and went to him, the king could have the individual killed. Esther saw the salvation of the Jewish people as more important than safeguarding her own life.

Godly women need the good works of Dorcas. Dorcas saw a need. She had the ability to fulfill those needs and did the task at

hand. When she died, the widows wept at her passing and showed Peter the coats she had made (Acts 10:39).

Godly women need the desire to learn that Mary had. She chose the better part (Luke 10:35-42). She willingly listened to Christ when she could have done a good work of helping to provide food for her guests as her sister Martha had done. Many times we fail in this regard. We become more concerned with the here and the now instead of with eternity.

Godly women need the benevolence and hospitality of Lydia. Lydia was a believer of God. Paul found her at the river worshipping God the only way she knew. Paul instructed her and her companions about Christ and salvation. Lydia readily accepted this teaching and obeyed the Gospel. However, she did not stop there. She put her newfound faith into practice by constraining Paul and his companions to abide with her while in Philippi (Acts 16:14-16).

Godly women need the willingness to pass on the Christian faith of Eunice and Lois. As godly women, we need the urgency to teach as Eunice and Lois taught Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5). Here we find a mother and a grandmother who saw the great need of teaching (not just with words, but by example as well). Timothy grew to be a great servant of God and a helper to the apostle Paul. The Greek word for child in 2 Timothy 3:15 can mean from infancy to a young child. These godly women saw the necessity of teaching Timothy from an early age. We need this urgency to teach not just our children or grandchildren but all young children. This can be accomplished through home study and Bible classes.

Godly women need to be helpmeets like Priscilla. Did you know that there is not one mention of Priscilla without Aquila or Aquila without Priscilla in the Bible? Priscilla and Aquila worked together (making tents), they worshipped together, and they served God together (Romans 16:3-4). Priscilla assisted her husband Aquila in teaching Apollos the way of the Lord more perfectly (Acts 18:24-28).

Godly women should strive to be the woman of Proverbs 31. In this chapter, a mother (possibly Bathsheba) instructed her son (possibly Solomon under the name of Lemuel, Proverbs 31:1; 1 Kings 2:13) on the qualities to look for in a wife – if only he had listened to his mother!

This young man was to look for the woman who had mastered the characteristics of:

A wife. “The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil All the days of her life... Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land” (Proverbs 31:11-12, 23). He knows that she will properly manage the home so that the necessities of life are readily available. Those who see him know that he has a good wife taking care of him – his clothes are clean, pressed and in good repair.

A mother. “Her children rise up and call her blessed” (Proverbs 31:28). “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate” (Psalm 127:3-5). Children are a blessing from God, Who requires that we train them in the ways of the Lord. The perfect mother teaches her children with words, but more importantly by her example. The children learn to love and respect their father (and others) by observing their mother as she shows love and respect to him.

A worker. “She also rises while it is yet night, And provides food for her household, And a portion for her maidservants... She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness” (Proverbs 31:15, 27). In the early morning hours this woman sees to the food and clothing for her family as well as for her servants. This woman cheerfully plans her day before the household arises. She is diligent to complete the tasks before her.

A business women. “She is like the merchant ships, She brings her food from afar... She considers a field and buys it; From her profits she plants a vineyard... She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies sashes for the merchants” (Proverbs 31:14, 16, 24). The ideal wife has her priorities in order. Her first thoughts are for the care and concerns of her husband, and the second are her children and their needs. However, she still has time to manage a business. She purchases land, plants a garden, and then she sells the produce. Another business is purchasing fabric, making garments and selling them to stores. In all of her activities she still remembers to serve God by caring for the poor (Proverbs 31:20).

A healthy woman. “She girds herself with strength, And strengthens her arms” (Proverbs 31:17). The ideal woman takes care of her physical body. She exercises, eats properly and gets enough rest. She understands that if she fails to care for her physical body that she will not be able to care for her family.

An attractive woman. “She makes tapestry for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple” (Proverbs 31:22). The ideal woman provides appropriate clothing for herself. She has already provided fine clothing for her husband and for her children, and now she clothes herself. First Timothy 2:9 instructs women to “adorn themselves in modest apparel.” The word “adorn” means to “to put in proper order, i.e. decorate.” We are to wear clothing that decorates our bodies in a pleasing, orderly fashion with modesty in mind. Short skirts, short shorts, low-cut tops, midriff tops that allow exposure of the stomach, tight fitting clothes and see-through clothing are **not** modest.

A considerate woman. “She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness” (Proverbs 31:26). The ideal woman thinks before she speaks and only says things that are kind and considerate of the feelings of others. The words she uses are honest, sincere, never gossip and never hateful no matter how others treat her. She follows the “golden rule” of Matthew 7:12.

A reverential woman. “Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised” (Proverbs 31:30). The ideal woman places God first and foremost in her life! She respects Him and strives to serve Him all the days of her life. She understands the cares of this world are fleeting but that a home in heaven will last for an eternity. The only way to reach that home is by living a life in faithful service to God (Revelation 2:10).

A sacrificial woman. The ideal woman places the needs of her family, her friends, her neighbors and those in need above her own wants and desires. She does this willingly, always thinking of others before herself.

We can see that the “ideal woman” of Proverbs 31 was an extraordinary woman. Now, before you proclaim that she was a super-woman and that you could never accomplish all that she did, remember she is projected as the perfect woman. We know that we will never reach perfection, but we ought daily to strive to improve our

lives in accordance with God's will. That is the message for us today – this is what every woman should work toward.

Lois McCord compared the “ideal woman” of Proverbs 31 to the five-talent man of Matthew 25:14-28.

She is the five-talent woman. God does not make as many five-talent women as he does two-talent and one-talent individuals. But the important thing to remember is that each one of us has a talent or more and we must develop the talents God gave us. We will have to give an account of them at judgment day (Matthew 25:19). Find your talents and develop them, realizing that God blessed you with the ability to do some things that others cannot do, while others can do things that you cannot.

God Commands His Servants to Work in the Kingdom

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going. (Ecclesiastes 9:10)

I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. (John 9:4-5)

Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:37-38)

Do you not say, “There are still four months and then comes the harvest”? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! (John 4:35)

There are many good works Christian women can do. The only limitations are: (1) Women are to be in submission to men in the home and in the church. (2) They cannot place themselves in places

of authority over men in the home and in the church. Every work for the Lord that complies with the God-ordained roles and responsibilities for women is acceptable and encouraged to be completed with the approval of one's elders.

So what Can a Christian Woman Do in Service to her God?

Women can teach in a large number of settings. We teach by example, we teach when we sing songs of praise (Colossians 3:15), we can teach Bible classes to children, we can teach ladies-only Bible classes and we can teach in private settings. As long as women recognize the restrictions God has placed on them, our options are many and limited only by our abilities.

The first and foremost work of a Christian woman, who has a family, is to rear and ground her children in the Word of God. We can do all kinds of wonderful works, but if we fail to teach our children, we have failed. Those who are grandmothers need to realize the importance and influence they can have on teaching their grandchildren. Remember Lois taught Timothy. Many times it is the grandparents who are responsible for the teaching that the grandchildren receive. Aunts and cousins can also assist in this area of teaching. With immorality all around us, our children need all of the encouragement we can give them. Young people need to have opportunities for associating with other Christians. Assist the parents in the realm of entertaining the young people of the congregation by opening your home for an evening of fun and fellowship.

We can teach a ladies' Bible class. Women tend to lean more toward the emotional aspect of a lesson, while men tend to appreciate the intellectual side of the message. As teachers and students, we need to encourage both the emotion and the intellect of a lesson. Ladies-only classes can discuss topics that would be awkward for a man to teach. Also, remember the older ladies are to teach the younger ladies (Titus 2:4).

A good Bible class teacher will help a young student remember basic Bible lessons and principles long after they are grown. Never underestimate the good work of teaching children's Bible classes,

whether it be Wednesday evening, Sunday morning or Vacation Bible School. Women can help teachers by preparing some of the many needed class materials for teachers to use, especially for the younger Bible classes. Possibly your talent is in organizing and maintaining a resource room for teachers. Many teachers would love to have a room available to easily find the appropriate picture or handout for a lesson.

Home Bible studies, whether in your home or someone else's, are an effective tool for teaching non-Christians and for encouraging new converts. If you feel that you cannot teach, ask someone else to do the teaching. For those who feel they cannot teach in a live setting, grading and mailing Bible correspondence courses is a good alternative. If a question is asked, you have time to study and prepare an answer.

Easily understood, biblically sound Bible class material is of great importance and is needed today. I would encourage anyone who has the ability and the interest to write to expand her talents into this area. Women can write Bible-based articles for Gospel magazines and bulletins. If you feel that you do not have the ability to write, you could offer your services as a researcher, typist or proof-reader for those who write.

Bulletin boards are a wonderful teaching tool. A picture with a few words can say a lot without putting someone on the spot. With today's technology, even those who are not artistic can prepare nice, thought-provoking bulletin boards. With a color printer and the abundance of clipart available, you can find a colorful picture for almost anything. Gather ideas from other congregations that you visit, bulletins or religious magazines, books about bulletin boards or simply illustrate a Bible verse. If you feel you cannot do the actual bulletin board, come up with the ideas for a creative friend to finalize and help put it up.

Do you like to be around people? Possibly your talents are well suited for visiting hospitals, nursing homes or shut-ins. New converts, young mothers and weak members could use a friendly face and an encouraging word. If you feel that you would not know what to say, offer to provide the transportation and accompany someone else.

For those who have clerical skills, offer your services as church secretary. Type the bulletin, answer correspondence and keep important papers filed, etc.

Women can organize and maintain a pantry of food and clothing for those in need. Also, we can help to distribute the items.

Women can help maintain the meetinghouse, keep the church building clean, and decorate inside and outside with flowers and appropriate decorations. We can volunteer to wash and keep the baptismal garments in good repair, assist women who are baptized, and prepare communion and keep the communion trays clean.

Get to know the members of your congregation. We do not really know our brothers and sisters in Christ when we only see them at the church building. To find out what people are really like, invite them to your home. Cook an elaborate meal, have sandwiches or just a drink and dessert – whatever is comfortable for you and your guests. Whatever you decide, make them feel welcome.

Invite visiting preachers, missionaries and other church workers into your home. Again, an elaborate meal is not necessary. A place to relax, good fellowship and a cool drink are always appreciated.

Be a listening ear for those in need. Be sure the confidences that are shared with you remain with you. Never tell what was told to you in secret. If you feel someone else needs to know about this particular problem, encourage the individual to go to that person herself. Sometimes just talking to someone about a problem will help to put it in the proper perspective.

Encourage the elders, deacons, preachers and teachers in the good works that they do. Notice the little things and comment on them. If a good lesson has been taught, say so. When a difficult or unpopular decision has been made, tell them you appreciate the stand they took and abide by that decision.

Help your husband to become qualified to be an elder or a deacon. I know of no greater work for the Lord than to lead God's people to their heavenly reward. Remember to be a qualified elder, he must have a qualified wife (1 Timothy 3:1-11).

Faith, devotion, courage and a desire to learn God's Word will help us to grow. With growth we will begin to work for Christ. Benevolence, hospitality and teaching will be the visible result.

There is a song titled, “Send the Light.” Some “Take the Light” while others “Send the Light.” Which are you? A taker or a sender? We all have personal responsibility to lead others to Christ.

There is plenty of work for all. Find your talents, develop them and use them for Christ. Remember God has given us a role to fill. Willingly fill that role, yet be mindful of the restrictions God placed upon us. When we are busy doing all we can, we will not have time or desire to object to those restrictions. There is more work than we can do, so let’s get busy and do God’s work!

Questions

1. What work needs to be done where you worship that a woman can do?
2. Have you found your place in the service of our Lord yet?

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God's Plan of Salvation

Hear God's Word

- “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17 NKJV).

Believe or have faith

- “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

Repent

- “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

Profess belief in Jesus as Lord

- “That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10).

Be immersed (baptized) in water

- “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

Live faithfully

- “...Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

To inquire further regarding God's plan for the redemption of humanity, contact the church of Christ in your community, or contact Louis Rushmore at rushmore@gospelgazette.com. **Let's go to heaven together!**

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