

# Why Women Should Not Be Pastors in the Church of God

Our present era has so evolved that there is possibly no position held by a man, that a woman could not now occupy. This is a reality even within Christianity. The church of God however does not conform to this ideology. We teach that the role of pastorship is exclusively male. Understandably, one would ask, why. If men and women are equal, and the bible does teach that, why are our women not allowed to be pastors? This presentation will answer such a question. It will demonstrate men and women's equality, but show that the woman is functionally subordinate to the man and that such a position was a creation ordination. It will also demonstrate that God's people in the old and new testament conformed to this principle and that such a principle transcends time and culture and is therefore still relevant in church organization.

I shall begin my case for the church of God in the book of Genesis. However, before I do so, let me say from the outset that the premise of pro-women ordainers is that the principle of male headship invalidates men and women's equality and is illustrative of male superiority and female inferiority. Like the Bereans, I have examined the scriptures to determine whether these things are so, and brethren it is not so.

Gen. 1:26, 27 are two important verses. They affirm that the man and the woman were created in God's image and likeness, thus denoting their equality in nature. They also affirm that both were to have authority over the earth, but what the verses make significantly clear is the sexual differentiation between the two.

Genesis 2 is a greater indicator of the male headship and female submissive roles. Bacchiochi in his writings “ Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry” states that there are four elements in the narrative of Gen. 2 that suggests the headship role of the man and the helper role of the woman. The first element is the priority of the man’s creation within the Godkind. In scripture, this priority of being firstborn was understood as typifying the leadership role the man was to assume. Paul in Colossians 1:15-18 used this firstborn typology to refer to the headship and authority of Christ. The same Paul, who in 1Timothy 2, stated his reason for not allowing a woman to teach nor usurp authority over the man referred to the fact that Adam was formed first. The use of this firstborn typology to express the headship and authority of Christ suggests that Paul attached the same meaning to Adam being formed first.

The second element Bacchiochi considers is the manner of the woman’s creation out of the man. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 11:8, gives credence to this view. He called on women to respect the headship role of the man because the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. His third element is the creation of the woman to be the man’s helper. Paul’s writings again support Bacchiochi’s view. In 1 Corinthians 11:9, Paul writes that women should respect the headship of the man because the woman was created for the man and not the other way around. Bacchiochi’s final element is the naming of the woman by the man before and after the fall. In the bible, name giving is a sign of authority. God signified his authority over Abraham and Jacob by giving them new names. God gave Adam the responsibility to name all the animals, and in a move that illustrated his authority over the woman, Adam named her both before and after the fall.

I now proceed to examine some circumstances concerning the fall, because pro-women ordainers claim that male headship and female subordination came into existence as a result of the fall and was against God's ideal model of equal partnership. Their supporting text is Genesis 3:16 "... your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you". However, a serious analysis of the punitive measures pronounced on the man and the woman brings out an interesting point. Bacchiochi, quoting George W Knight, points out that Genesis 3 presumes the reality of childbearing in which the woman will now experience the effects of the fall and sin. It presumes the reality of work in which the man will now experience the effects of the fall and sin. And it presumes the reality of male headship and female submission, which will now experience the effects of the fall and sin. So just as childbearing and work, were established before the fall and were corrupted by it, so this relationship existed before the fall and was corrupted by it. The corruption being that the man would take advantage of his God given authority over the woman by being oppressive, hence the words "he shall rule over you".

Leaving the creation story behind, I go a little further into the Old Testament. Pro-women ordainers claim that there were women in the Old Testament in headship positions. They cite as examples three prophetesses, Miriam, Deborah and Huldah. But the prophet or prophetess does not have a headship role. Their role was to communicate messages from God to leaders who were in headship positions. They did not even have the power to ensure that God's instructions were carried out. The priest on the other hand was the spiritual leader of Israel. The priest was appointed to act as the representative of the people to God and the representative of God to the people. It is noteworthy that there are over 700 references to priests in the Old Testament and not one reference to a priestess. Pro-women ordainers say that there were no women priestesses in the Old Testament because there were periods when a

woman was ceremonially unclean. But I refer you to Leviticus 15, where it states that a man is unclean whenever he has a running issue out of his flesh. So, if ceremonial uncleanness disqualifies women from the priesthood, then it should also disqualify men.

I now go into the New Testament to determine if the arguments of pro-women ordainers have a chance of surviving. Well, they say that Jesus has now come so a new priesthood has been unfolded in the new testament, that is, the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2: 5,9-12). They say this idea no longer poses roadblocks to women serving in any ministry. Samuel Koranteng – Pipim, in his writings, “Are Those Things So?”, points out that the priesthood of all believers was not about particular church functions of men and women. Christians were a part of the priesthood because every believer has direct access to God through Christ, without any need for further intermediaries. Furthermore, the principle of the priesthood of all believers was not unique to the New Testament, but was based on an Old Testament concept (Exodus 19:5-6).

Another popular scripture used by pro-women ordainers is Galatians 3:28, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, free or bond, male or female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”. Similarly, this passage was not about church organization, but about salvation in Christ. Essentially, the text is saying irrespective of who the Christian is, he or she is of Abraham’s seed and are therefore heirs according to the promise.

Now, it is critical that we examine Jesus’ ministry and how women participated in it. It is true that in Jesus’ time, women were under-appreciated and underutilized. Even so, there is substantial evidence in scripture of Jesus’ favourable disposition towards

them, which went beyond the socially acceptable standards of that time. Jesus also had a great number of women followers, yet he never chose a woman to be one of his twelve apostles. Pro-women ordainers say this was not done because Jesus did not want such a radical move to impede the progress of his ministry. This reasoning however sounds inane in light of the fact that Jesus fearlessly broke with many rabbinical traditions. Plus had this been his reason, Jesus would have been guilty of insensitivity or false accommodation to the injustice suffered by women in his day. Pro-women ordainers also say if we follow Jesus' example of ordaining no women, then by the same logic gentiles should be excluded from apostleship because Jesus ordained no gentiles. But the reason for no gentile apostles was that the church was all Jewish at its beginning, John 4:22 "salvation is of the Jews". There were no gentile leaders in the church in Christ's day, but there were qualified, spiritual Jewish women and none was chosen to be among his apostles. I put forward therefore that Jesus ordained no female apostle because he understood the importance of God's order and calling and acted in obedience to it.

I will now examine Paul's view of male and female roles in the church. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul discusses headcoverings as a symbol of role distinction men and women were to preserve in the church. Verse 3 states that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. The Greek word for head is kephale, which can be used literally or figuratively. In the passage, head is used figuratively. I contend that the figurative meaning of head in the passage is authority or ruler. Gilbert Bilezekian, in his book "Beyond Sex Roles", has an opposing view. He writes that the best expression of head is derivation or lifesource. But, if we use Mr. Bilezekian's interpretation of head, we would violate a very fundamental principle in scripture. We would be saying that Christ is a derivative Godbeing when the bible states that he is very God and self-existent as the father is.

Undoubtedly then the only possible meaning of head here is authority or ruler. Ephesians 5:22-32 essentially uses head in a similar way to describe the relationship among Christ, husbands and wives. The analysis therefore confirms the man's authority over the woman.

But pro-women ordainers on the rebound would say that in these scriptures, the Greek words for man and woman, *guner* and *aneraner* respectively, when used together, specifically refers to wives and husbands and not men and women in general. They say this means that the authority of the man over the woman is limited to the husband and wife relationship. There are two reasons why we cannot accept this. Firstly, Ephesians 5 refers to wives submission to their husbands, but Paul states in verse 32 that he speaks concerning the church. Secondly, in scripture, the church is seen as an extended spiritual family patterned after the natural family (1 Timothy 3:1-5; Galations 4:5-6; Romans 12:1). Therefore, any reference to the wife and husband relationship can be applied to relationships or roles between men and women within the church.

In a bid to maintain their views, pro-women ordainers claim that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:9-15 are texts that make harsh, belittling statements about women. They claim the views expressed by these texts do not fit into their respective chapters and were inserted by uninspired, judaizing men. They also referred specifically to 1 Corinthians 14:34 where it says women are to be silent in the church, stating that it contradicts 1 Corinthians 11 which reports that women could prophesy. I will show that these things are not so and that both texts support the principle of male headship.

I begin with 1 Corinthians 14. In this chapter, Paul discusses speaking in the assembly. The Greek word for speak is *laleo* which means to utter sounds with the voice or talk. This was not about formal speech, Paul was discussing the useless application of the human voice during services. The narrative of chapter 14 shows that the manner in which speaking was done in the assembly was confusing. The issue Paul was discussing was confusion versus order (verse 33, "... for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace ..."). Now, verse 34 states that women are to be silent in the churches. It is not permissible for them to speak. The Greek word for silent is *sigao*, which means to keep silent by holding one's peace, inferentially, out of respect. Note that the other Greek word for silent, *siopao*, meaning absolutely mute, was not used in this verse. Jack Lane, in his article, "The Role Of Women In The Church" paraphrases verses 34 and 35 in this way, "Let your wives be at peace and in control of themselves in the assembly, for it is not permitted for them to be continuously speaking out and causing a disturbance. They are to be subordinate to their husbands as we are instructed in the scriptures. If they want to learn more about what is being discussed, they should ask their husbands later, for it is totally inappropriate for wives to speak out and disturb the edification process in the assembly". What is evident from these verses is that women were speaking out in a manner that undermined their husband's headship and disturbed the learning process, thus the need for Paul's statements. Significantly, Paul appealed to the law as support for the views he expressed. This is an indication that the principle of headship was not cultural but universal.

I will now look at 1 Timothy 2. The background of the chapter is the beginning of the Jewish wars with Rome in AD 66. Paul wrote to Timothy reminding him that all Christians should pray to the end that the gospel be preached in a peaceful setting. Timothy was to teach men to pray everywhere without wrath or doubting. Women

were to pray also, but in a different manner. They were to do so in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety. Paul's discourse in this chapter was the preaching of the gospel. In verse 11, Paul instructed that women should learn in silence with all subjection. The Greek word for silence is *hesuchia*, meaning tranquility of spirit. The Greek word for subjection is *hupotage*, meaning to place in proper order, that is the natural order God established between husband and wife. So it is within this context that women were to learn the gospel. Verse 12 states that women were not to teach nor usurp authority over the man. In verse 13, the Greek word *gar* meaning because indicates that Paul is giving a reason for this, and that reason was a reference to the man's priority in creation. Now the phrase in verse 15, "notwithstanding, she shall be saved in childbearing", does not mean that women's sole purpose in life is to have children. The words, "in childbearing" are a mistranslation of the Greek and is best translated "through the childbearing" referring to a specific birth. The birth referred to here is the birth of Jesus. Genesis 3:15 corroborates the point. The two texts therefore fit perfectly into their contexts. Paul was not trying to belittle or thrash women but instruct them on appropriate behaviour according to the order that was ordained by God.

Pro-women ordainers would also like us to believe that there were women in the New Testament in headship positions. For the sake of brevity I will look at only one of these women, Junia. Romans 16:7 says "salute Andronicus and Junia, who are of note among the apostles". Samuel Koranteng-Pipim notes that the ending of Junia in the Greek is of a form for both men and women's names. There is uncertainty therefore as to whether Junia was a female. But let us assume Junia was a female. The phrase "among the apostles" is interpreted by the NIV in the sense that Andronicus and Junia were numbered among the apostles, while the KJV interprets it, as their reputations were well known among the apostles. Since either interpretation is



possible in the Greek, further analysis needs to be done. The Greek word for among is *en*. The same Greek word is used in 2 Peter 2:6–8. The text is about Lot dwelling among the wicked of Sodom and Gomorrah. “... For that righteous man dwelling among them...”. Note that Lot dwelt among the wicked, but was not himself wicked. Similarly, Junia was well known among the apostles but was not herself an apostle. We can therefore conclude that Junia was not in a position of headship.

It is conclusive therefore that male headship and female subordination were ordained at creation and was upheld throughout the bible. Both the old and new testaments illustrate that women had held positions of authority, but they were never appointed or ordained to serve in a capacity where they would exercise absolute leadership over God’s people. The view that equality embodies functional subordination is not a ludicrous one. The very concept is actualized in the Godfamily. Jesus stated in John 10:30 that He and the Father are one, denoting their equality, yet the scriptures show that Jesus is functionally subordinate to the Father. John 6:38 says “for I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me”. The fact that Jesus was sent by the Father to carry out his will is an indicator of the Father’s authority over him. 1 Corinthians 15:28 says “and when all things shall be subdued unto the Father, then shall the son (Jesus) also himself be subject to him...”. Likewise men and women are equal but women are functionally subordinate to men.

The church of God has always maintained that the role of pastorship is a God given right belonging to men. We abide by this rule because we see no evidence in the scriptures of women being ordained in roles of absolute leadership. In addition, the crucial symbolism of the man and woman is not lost on us. Christ, the head of the church is the bridegroom. The church, symbolised by the woman is the bride, whom Christ will marry upon his return to the earth. The leader of the church therefore, who is the representative of Christ as the head of the church cannot be accurately

represented by a woman. In closing, let me say that we should never interpret the bible to fit our own desires and agendas but rather let our attitudes and actions fit the revelation of the word of God.