

# Questions About Whether Woman Were Allowed to Pastor After Jesus' Ascension

By Pastor Ed Anderson

When Jesus Christ ascended to heaven in those times was a woman allowed to pastor churches or to preach in churches?

## Answer:

When Jesus Christ ascended to heaven (around 30–33 AD), the culture of the time—both **Jewish and Greco-Roman**—was **deeply patriarchal**, and women were generally not permitted to hold positions of public authority, especially in religious settings like synagogues or pagan temples. However, the **New Testament reveals a revolutionary shift** that Jesus and the early church initiated, elevating the role of women in powerful and significant ways.

Let's break it down:

## 1. Were Women Allowed to Pastor or Preach in the Early Church?

**No: Not in the formal, ordained office of pastor/elder**

- According to **1 Timothy 3** and **Titus 1**, the role of an elder or overseer (what we might now call a “pastor”) was described using **male pronouns** and qualifications like “husband of one wife.”
- There is no **clear New Testament example** of a woman being called an *elder*, *pastor*, or *bishop* in a formal, ongoing office.
- In **1 Corinthians 14:34–35** and **1 Timothy 2:12**, Paul expresses restrictions on women teaching or having authority over men in the gathered church—though scholars debate the cultural vs. universal application of these verses.

**Yes: In preaching, prophesying, and ministering roles**

- **Acts 2:17** (quoting Joel): “*Your sons and daughters will prophesy.*”
- **Acts 21:9** — Philip had four daughters who **prophesied**.
- **Romans 16** — Paul commended many female co-laborers, including:
- **Phoebe** (a deaconess, or servant — *diakonos*)
- **Priscilla**, who helped teach Apollos (Acts 18:26)

- **Junia**, whom Paul calls “outstanding among the apostles” (Rom. 16:7) — though this is debated.

So while **women weren’t ordained as pastors or elders**, they were:

- **Highly active in ministry**
- **Trusted with spiritual gifts**
- **Sometimes led house churches or were prophetic voices**

## 2. Jesus’ Example: Elevating Women

Jesus broke cultural norms by:

- Allowing **Mary of Bethany** to sit at His feet and learn — a rabbinic posture (Luke 10:39)
- Appearing first to **Mary Magdalene** after the resurrection (John 20), and commissioning her to **tell the disciples** — a form of apostolic witness
- Engaging women with theological depth (John 4; Samaritan woman)

These examples laid the groundwork for **women’s increased role in spreading the gospel**, even if they were not installed as pastors.

## 3. Summary: Biblical View of Women in Ministry (First Century)

Role	Men	Women	Notes
Apostles (The Twelve)	✓	✗	Jesus chose 12 male apostles
Prophets	✓	✓	Women prophesied (Acts 2:17; 21:9)
Deacons	✓	✓	Phoebe (Rom. 16:1) called diakonos
Elders / Pastors / Bishops	✓	✗	NT requirements focused on male leadership
Evangelists / Teachers	✓	✓*	Women like Priscilla taught, but debate continues over

			public preaching authority
House Church Leaders	✓	✓	Priscilla, Lydia, Nympha hosted churches in their homes

### Final Thought

In the **New Testament period**, women did **not serve in the office of pastor/elder**, but they **were empowered by the Holy Spirit** to teach, prophesy, evangelize, support church planting, and even disciple men (as Priscilla did with Apollos).

While the office was restricted, the ministry was shared.