

50 Bible Verses on Leadership

Leadership is big business. Between the books, workshops, conferences, and consultants, so much money is poured into that industry by people who want to become better leaders.

It makes total sense. Leadership is integral to any endeavor. Any time people are gathered around a common goal, it's going to require some level of leadership—even though leadership can follow several different models.

While churches and Christian organizations have a lot to learn from their secular counterparts, it should only be after they get a firm grasp on the biblical view of leadership.

To that end, here are 50 Bible verses on leadership:

1. Delegate to capable leaders

But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, the fifties, and tens.—Exodus 18:21

It doesn't take too long for Moses's father-in-law, Jethro, to see that Moses is in way over his head. The Israelites have been brought out of Egypt, and all of Moses's time is now being spent mediating their squabbles and issues. Jethro's advice is to delegate trustworthy men to even out the burden.

Quality leadership looks for and empowers other leaders. The adage—if you want something done right, you have to do it yourself—is nonsense. You're not a better leader if you're doing it all yourself.

2. Follow the Lord's leading

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.—Psalm 32:8

Walking with God requires an intimate, prayer-filled reliance upon him. Christian leadership is truly impossible if you haven't prioritized fostering a deep spiritual sensitivity.

3. Leaders seek delight in the Lord

Trust in the Lord and do good;

dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

Take delight in the Lord,

and he will give you the desires of your heart.—Psalm 37:3-4

There are so many temptations for leaders. If they're not careful, they'll end up putting their trust in themselves or their strategy. And if they're doing well, they'll take delight in it. It seems that the more successful you are as a leader, the more danger you're in.

Successful or not, a leader's trust and delight should always be in God.

4. Find stability in the stillness

Be still before the Lord

and wait patiently for him;

do not fret when people succeed in their ways,

when they carry out their wicked schemes.—Psalm 37:7

Don't be distracted by others' success, even when they're succeeding in their wickedness. Developing patience, trust, and stillness before God will give you the stability you desire—and he will come through.

5. True leadership is content

Better the little that the righteous have

then the wealth of many wicked;

for the power of the wicked will be broken,

but the Lord upholds the righteous.—Psalm 37:16-17

Godly leadership is grounded in righteousness, and righteousness is its reward. Sometimes it might feel like your leadership skills would be better compensated in another venue, but you must trust that the Lord will honor your work and sacrifice.

6. From the overflow of their hearts, leaders speak

The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom,

and their tongues speak what is just.

The law of their God is in their hearts;

their feet do not slip.—Psalm 37:30-31

Jesus tells us that the things that come out of someone's mouth originate in their heart. (Matt. 15:18) A leader needs to pay attention to the things they say because their words are an indicator of their spiritual condition.

A good leader's words will bring light and life.

7. A leader's integrity comes from within

And David shepherded them with the integrity of heart;

with skillful hands, he led them.—Psalm 78:72

As we saw in verse #6, our words are a strong indicator of our heart's condition. We must pay attention to it because strong leadership will come from the integrity of our hearts.

As we know from David's history, this doesn't mean that we're always perfect. But that we're quick to repent when we realize we're off track.

8. Leaders protect themselves from corruption

Above all else, guard your heart,

for everything you do flows from it.—Proverbs 4:23

We all know the heart is just a blood-pumping muscle. Biblically speaking, the heart represents our emotional, intellectual, and moral center. We need to protect it because, as the Proverb says, everything flows from that center.

Our spiritual condition reveals itself in our actions. A leader understands this and protects their spiritual core at all costs.

9. Leadership is integral to a nation

For lack of guidance a nation falls,

but victory is won through many advisers.—Proverbs 11:14

You can't underestimate the power of leadership. To the writer of Proverbs 11, the nation they were talking about was Israel—God's people.

The church needs guidance, too. Without strong leadership, a church cannot stand. But as the number of legitimate and godly advisers grows, the stronger she gets.

10. Leadership is rooted in righteousness

Kings detest wrongdoing,

for a throne is established through righteousness.—Proverbs 16:12

Leading requires integrity. If you want your leadership to have deep roots which will eventually lead to healthy fruit, you need to weed out a compromise and shortcuts.

11. Leaders are constantly improving

Do you see someone skilled in their work?

They will serve before kings;

they will not serve before officials of low rank.—Proverbs 22:29

If you want to increase your influence, you'll invest in your abilities. The more skilled a leader is, the more they'll find themselves in demand. Leaders grow.

12. Leaders are made in troubled times

If you falter in a time of trouble,

how small is your strength!—Proverbs 24:10

Hopefully, you didn't aspire to leadership to walk an easy path. Leaders are needed when the road gets rockiest and the path is unsure. A leader's metal is truly tested in the toughest moments.

13. Leaders pay special attention to their resources

Be sure you know the condition of your flocks,

give careful attention to your herds;

for riches do not endure forever,

and a crown is not secure for all generations.—Proverbs 27:23-24

Resources don't last forever. Money gets spent, volunteers move on, and facilities and systems break down. The church needs leaders who are keeping track of these resources to make sure they're plentiful—and healthy!

14. Poor leadership is demoralizing

When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice;

when the wicked rule, the people groan.—Proverbs 29:2

Bad leadership is terrible for an organization and demoralizing for the people under it. Poor leadership needs to be dealt with quickly and strongly because if it's allowed to continue, it can undermine everything.

15. Good leadership offers stability

By justice, a king gives a country stability,

but those who are greedy for bribes tear it down.—Proverbs 29:4

An organization finds its security in the strength of its leadership. When it is uncompromisingly focused on doing justice, everything flourishes. When they begin looking for ways they can benefit from their position, things

begin to fall apart.

16. Leaders put their trust in God

***So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;***

I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.—Isaiah 41:10

Leaders find themselves in difficult situations and, if their attention isn't fixed on Jesus, it's easy to get dismayed. Because leaders find themselves under fire so often, they must be constantly growing in their awareness of God's empowering presence.

17. Leaders recognize their limitations

***For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,
declares the Lord.***

***As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways***

and my thoughts than your thoughts.—Isaiah 55:8-9

Face it—you're fallible. You don't have all the answers, even if everyone thinks you do. Another reason we need to be investing in our spiritual sensitivity is that as soon as we start trusting in our wisdom, we're sunk.

18. God establishes leadership

***"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart;***

I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."—Jeremiah 1:5

Sometimes a leader's struggle isn't just about remembering that God is with them. There are times that it's a struggle to believe that you're in the right place. In the thick of it, it's easy to believe that you've made a huge mistake.

It's important to recognize that God has prepared you for leadership. As long as your serving faithfully, you can trust that he's preparing to deliver you.

19. A leader has an intimate relationship with God

'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things

you do not know.’—Jeremiah 33:3

Over and over the Bible is trying to tell us that spiritual awareness leads to greater insight. A strong leader prioritizes spiritual discipline because they know that their connection to God is where they derive their stamina, strength, staying power, and insight. Without that connection to God, you’re just a manager.

20. Leadership is about justice, mercy, and humility

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.—Matthew 7:12

The golden rule isn’t particular to Christianity, but Jesus adds a new wrinkle to it. Instead of it being a prohibition (don’t do to others what you don’t want them to do to you), Jesus instructs us to do for others what we wish they would do for us.

This should mindset should epitomize all of our leadership. After all, it sums up the whole law.

21. Leaders practice humility

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant—Matthew 20:26

This is another strange addition to the world’s leadership lexicon. If you want to be great, you must humble yourself. Christian leadership isn’t about standing above everyone, it’s about serving them.

22. A wise leader is always expecting the master’s return

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.—Matthew 24:45-47

If you ever feel like you need a little motivation and incentive to keep plugging away, remember that the Lord could return at any moment. We don’t want him to find us slacking off.

23. Leadership is all about service

Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”—Mark 10:42-45

When people aspire to leadership, it often stems from a hunger for significance. This is a dangerous reason to seek leadership because once you get it, you're likely to abuse it.

Jesus adds to the idea that whoever wants to be great must be a servant, but he adds a new component. The higher you want to climb, the more of a servant you need to become. If you want to be at the front of the pack, you need to be the slave of all.

24. True leadership recognizes the rule of reciprocity

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.—Luke 12:48

Spiderman says it well, "With much power comes much responsibility." Jesus would agree. The more authority and influence you have the more that's going to be required of you. Every promotion and growth in leadership needs to come with sober reflection.

25. Leaders aren't restricted by their limitations

Jesus replied, "What is impossible with man is possible with God."—Luke 18:27

Don't fall into the trap of avoiding things that are beyond your ability. The sooner you get to a place where you're no longer relying on your strengths, the sooner you're going to see God doing amazing things. As long as you're in your comfort zone, your leadership is compromised.

26. One doesn't grow as a leader by chasing power

But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.—Luke 22:26

We've already seen Jesus comparing leadership to servants and slaves. Here he adds another simile. The greatest should be like the youngest.

In this culture, the youngest is the least important person in the family. They're not getting the attention, the blessing, or the inheritance. Jesus says that if you want to be great in the kingdom, you can't focus on what you're going to get out of the deal.

27. Rightly understanding your place is a prerequisite for leadership

He must become greater; I must become less.—John 3:30

Jesus calls John the Baptist the greatest person that's ever been born. (Matt. 11:11) This attitude had to be the reason why. John wasn't interested in

promoting himself. Even though he starts building up a lot of notoriety, as soon as Jesus comes on the scene, John takes the back seat—eventually losing his life.

Our attitude needs to be similar. Leadership isn't about building a name for ourselves, it's about amplifying Jesus's name.

28. A real leader is the servant of all

“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”—John 13:13-17

One of Jesus's last object lessons was his willingness to wash the disciple's feet during their last meal. This wasn't some empty, symbolic gesture. It was a service that needed to be performed. It was something a servant would typically do.

Jesus isn't asking his followers to humble themselves in grand and figurative ways. He wants us to get on our hands and knees and serve those who follow us.

29. Leadership is about watching over yourself and others

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his blood.—Acts 20:28

As leaders, we have two major jobs: to watch over those under our care and to watch over ourselves. If our attention is only on those we're leading, we're not taking care of our own needs. We need to make sure that we're healthy if we want to adequately lead others.

30. Leaders have confidence in the future

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.—Romans 8:28

Even though Paul isn't speaking to leaders, I can't imagine a more leadership-appropriate message. Church leadership is full of tragedy and triage, one can easily become disheartening. Our perseverance is uniquely tied to our belief that God is already at work alongside us reconciling the most difficult situations to himself.

31. A leader's security is in the Lord

If God is for us, who can be against us?—Romans 8:31

This is the leader's rallying cry. There's always some opposition, and it doesn't just come from without. It's important to remember that if you're truly on God's side, you don't have to be afraid of resistance.

Of course, that doesn't mean that a good leader ignores opposing voices. Hearing objections can be a great way to check your plumb line and make sure that you're on the right track. But once you're certain, move forward.

32. If you lead, do it diligently

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, by the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ, we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy by your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then encourage; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.—Romans 12:3-8

A leader is part of an organizational structure. It's not a more important or more integral role than anyone else plays. It's so important to recognize that a leader isn't above anyone else, but works beside them to meet everyone's goals.

The system operates efficiently when everyone is using the gifts they were given to fulfill their role. Your job as a leader is to equip and empower them to bring more and more of their gifts to bear on their position—and by doing so, you're leading more diligently.

33. Leadership is about stamina

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.—Galatians 6:9

A leader works hard making long-term energy investments that they won't see an immediate return on. It can be draining to be planting seeds with the hope that they'll grow into something majestic. A church or organization doesn't become efficient or productive overnight, so a leader needs to be committed to the journey.

The struggle for leaders who grow weary isn't simply that they give up. It's that they shift toward a more autocratic, authority-driven style of leadership trying to increase the rate of change. And in the end, the structure that they're hoping to fix is completely broken.

34. Leadership equips people to become mature

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.—Ephesians 4:11-13

For the church to become a mature community that expresses the fullness of Christ, everyone has to be pulling together in the same yoke. A church shouldn't have a top-down organizational chart. It should be everyone harmonically working together to ensure that new believers can begin serving as well.

35. Leaders aren't ambitious for their gain

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves—Philippians 2:3

The key to biblical leadership lies in keeping your eyes on the goal. The goal is to worship God by serving others. The only way we're going to be able to do that correctly is if we value them the way Jesus did.

The role of a leader is full of snares: self-aggrandizement, posturing, greediness, empty ambition, etc. The only sure way that we can serve God while avoiding leadership's pitfalls is to value people above ourselves.

36. A leader learns to be content in every situation

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.—Philippians 4:12-13

Too often people quote Philippians 4:13 as if it stands alone. But Paul is setting himself up as an example of contentment in leadership.

We can't look at our current experience to gauge God's pleasure or the effectiveness of our work. Sometimes we will experience comfort and sometimes we will suffer want. The key is to find our contentment in serving well and avoid judging our success by looking at our situation.

37. A leader's hope is in God's faithfulness

The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.—1 Thessalonians 5:24

Is this a leadership-specific verse? No. Is it important that leaders have this reminder in the back of their minds at all times? Absolutely!

When leading gets difficult (and it will) and you want to throw in the towel (which you will), you need to remember when and how you were called to lead, and know that God is going to see you through.

38. What are the expectations of a leader?

Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as to the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders so that he will not fall into disgrace and the devil's trap.—1 Timothy 3:2-7

39. Leadership and self-discipline go hand-in-hand

For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.—1 Timothy 4:8

40. A leader isn't defined by their age

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.—1 Timothy 4:12

41. Leadership doesn't shrink

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.—2 Timothy 1:7

42. Lead by keeping your eyes on the goal

Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.—2 Timothy 2:3-4

43. Leaders don't rest on their laurels

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.—2 Timothy 2:15

44. Leadership stems from the true power

There will be terrible times in the last few days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.—2 Timothy 3:1-5

45. A Church leader manages God's household

Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.—Titus 1:7-9

46. A leader's life is an example

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.—Hebrews 13:7

47. A leader turns to God for wisdom

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.—James 1:5

48. God rewards leaders for their perseverance

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.—James 1:12

49. The more humble a leader becomes, the more God exalts them

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you.—James 4:10

50. Victorious leaders will be rewarded

Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.—Revelation 21:7

POSITION STATEMENT

The Gospel is best displayed in a community of faith when both men and women flourish as they use their uniquely designed and equally important spiritual gifts for the work of God-glorifying ministry.

Males and females share a common humanity and equal worth before God. They are equal (Gen. 1:26-27Open in Logos Bible Software (if available)) and equal in dignity, worth, and importance. Galatians 3:28Open in Logos Bible Software (if available) further delineates male-female equality in Christ's redemptive work. Both are saved by faith, both fully united with Christ, and both fully co-heirs of all of the riches of His kingdom.

In our modern culture, men and women share many of the same roles in the workplace and elsewhere. The church is often criticized because it does not conform to the values of the culture that eliminate distinctions between

the roles of men and women. We look to Scripture, not the culture, for our values, holding fast to a Gospel that is very often counter-cultural. Nevertheless, the witness of the church to the culture has at times been undermined because of the sinful attitudes of Christian men toward the abilities and intellect of women. Such attitudes are disobedient to Scripture's clear teaching that women are equal in dignity before God and are fully co-heirs of grace.

In God's sovereignty, His ordering of creation does not establish sameness between man and woman, but rather one with certain unique roles tied to gender and certain shared roles between the genders, all within the context of their complementing differences. For the church, Scripture teaches that oversight and authoritative teaching are reserved to the office of the elder, and being male is one qualification of being an elder. But this qualification is not about female gifts or their intellect somehow lacking. Rather, God is showing us symmetry between the leadership of the local church and the leadership of a family. It is the same relationship between Christ (the groom) and the church universal (His bride). The leadership of the church, therefore, points to the created order and God's redemptive design.

Therefore, we believe from Scripture that men and women are equally permitted and encouraged to serve in ministry roles throughout Fellowship, with two specific exceptions: 1) authoritative oversight of the local body of believers is reserved to the elders (whom Scripture requires to be men), and 2) ministerial contexts in which men are to exercise spiritual authority over other men. Apart from these exceptions, it is the strong desire of the Elders that both men and women should be equally pursued to use their gifts for the work of ministry to the glory of God.

Application Points

In what leadership and pastoral roles may men and women serve at Fellowship?

Elders

The Bible describes the office of elder as carrying with it the authority of governance over the local body of believers (Acts 15:2Open in Logos Bible Software (if available), 6Open in Logos Bible Software (if available), 23Open in Logos Bible Software (if available); 16:4Open in Logos Bible Software (if available)). Elders are called to exercise that authority in humility and in a spirit of gentleness as ones who are under the authority of the chief shepherd, Jesus Christ, to whom they must give an account one day (Hebrews 13:17Open in Logos Bible Software (if available)). From the description found in 1 Tim 5:17-25Open in Logos Bible Software (if available) and Titus 1:5-9Open in Logos Bible Software (if available), the role of elder is to be filled by qualified men who can be empowered with

the responsibility to govern and teach the body. While women are not Scripturally permitted to become elders, it is also true that typically most men in the local church will not become elders either. Thus, the issue of authoritative leadership in the church is not one of men vs. women, but rather a question of who is qualified and called to be, and set apart as, an elder. Other than the office of the elder, women may (and are often needed to) serve and lead in our bodies.

Ministry & Staff Leadership

One area in our church where women and men serve alongside each other and give administrative leadership is in the oversight of ministries and staff functions. These roles are consistent with the role of “deacon” in the New Testament church, even though Fellowship does not have an official office called “deacon.” The role of a deacon is not to oversee the church¹, but rather to assist the elders in ministry so that the elders may devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-6Open in Logos Bible Software (if available)). We believe from Scripture that men and women are allowed to serve as deacons.²

Many of the types of duties historically performed by deacons in the New Testament are still performed in our church by those who are biblically qualified to be a deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-13Open in Logos Bible Software (if available)). They may be members of staff or lay leaders. Examples of these duties include caring for those in need and providing administrative leadership over ministries, staff, finances, facilities, and events.

These duties may be performed by qualified men or women, subject to the oversight and authority of the elders.

Pastors

Both men and women may serve as pastors at Fellowship, provided they are called and equipped toward that purpose. The role of a pastor is to spiritually shepherd the flock of God (Ephesians 4:11Open in Logos Bible Software (if available)). Most churches in the United States have about 100 members and only one or two pastors who are the leaders of their congregations. However, large churches typically have multiple pastors on staff to effectively shepherd and care for the body. At Fellowship, our pastoral staff work under the day-to-day leadership of our Teaching Pastors. These Teaching Pastors are elders and, because Scripture qualifies for elders, are necessarily male. Depending on the ministerial context, our remaining staff pastors may or may not be elders and maybe men or women.³ Since a pastor exercises spiritual authority over the flock, pastoral leadership of a congregation, ministry, or individual must be in keeping with Scripture’s boundaries concerning women having authority

over men (1 Timothy 2:12Open in Logos Bible Software (if available)). Our pastors who are women will work under the leadership of male pastors whenever the ministerial context calls for exercising spiritual authority over a man.

Small-Group Leaders

Our small group leaders play an essential role as the primary disciple-makers at Fellowship. While small group leaders do not exercise oversight of the church (and therefore are not required to meet the qualification of “elder”), they teach, encourage and admonish those whom they are discipling. Therefore, given the shepherding nature of a small group leader, wisdom, prudence, and the instruction of scripture all call for healthy boundaries in the gender of these leaders. Adolescent and adult small group leaders should be the same gender as the group members. Small groups with male and female members should be led by male and female leaders, with the male leader bearing the primary burden of leadership.

What does Scripture say regarding the roles of men & women teaching?

One of the responsibilities of an elder involves the teaching of sound doctrine and using their authority to hold the body of the church (men and women) accountable in the application of that doctrine to their lives. In 1 Timothy 2:12Open in Logos Bible Software (if available), Paul states that women are not permitted to teach or have authority over a man. What Paul is prohibiting is teaching with authoritative doctrinal instruction, which would include exercising oversight and correction over men and women, even to the point of exercising ex-communication, if the need arises. This role of exercising Biblical authority over the local church through teaching is a role performed by the elders of the church. When an instruction is not coupled with the exercise of authority, then the instructor is not required to be an elder and thus may be either a man or woman, provided that person is gifted and is equipped toward that purpose.

Examples of authoritative teaching to be performed solely by an elder or pastor qualified to teach would include most sermons during a Sunday morning worship service and equipping classes that primarily pertain to teaching church doctrine. Those functions within the church that do not involve the coupling of authority with teaching such as many equipping classes, counseling and prayer ministries, and occasional guest speaking (by those on staff and from outside of Fellowship) may be performed by any person, male or female, whom the elders discern is called to and gifted for that function. Ultimately, all instruction within the church occurs under the oversight of the elders. Accordingly, the elders will take an active role in determining the content of teaching at Fellowship and, when necessary, correct any teaching that is in error (with a spirit of gentleness and humility).

In what roles can men & women serve during the Sunday morning worship service?

Similar to the role of authoritative teaching, it is the role of an elder to exercise oversight of the gathering of the body (i.e., a worship service) to ensure that it proceeds in good order (1 Corinthians 14:40Open in Logos Bible Software (if available)). Under that oversight, and in the context of a modern worship service, we believe that both men and women may serve and lead from the “platform” through singing, playing instruments, in public spoken prayer, the reading of scripture, testimonies, words of encouragement, collecting offerings, serving communion, and public speaking to welcome the church and to communicate information about events happening within the church. While 1 Corinthians 14:33-38Open in Logos Bible Software (if available) would seem to indicate that women are not allowed to speak in a worship service, the context of this passage limits its application to judge the soundness of prophetic statements, a role performed by elders alone in the New Testament church. 1 Corinthians 11:4-5Open in Logos Bible Software (if available) implies an ongoing role for women and men who are not Elders in the worship service. Those aspects of the worship service that involve authoritative pastoral oversight of the gathered body should be performed by a male pastor/elder.

Footnotes

1 The usage of the term “deacon” can be confusing in our modern church context. Some Protestant denominations use the term “deacon” to refer to a group of laity who supervise the pastor and financial affairs of the church. Scripturally speaking, those duties are exercising oversight of the church and are more consistent with the office of the elder, not the deacon. That is why Fellowship uses the title “elder” for the body of men who give oversight to our church. In this paper, the term deacon is used in its New Testament context to refer to the group of men and women who work under the oversight of elders to help them in the daily work of ministry.

2 The issue of whether women may serve as deacons involves a question of interpretation of 1 Timothy 3:11Open in Logos Bible Software (if available). The Greek word “gynaikas” may be translated as wives or women, depending on the context. We believe that the grammatical structure of this passage (Paul using the term “likewise”) points to this verse being a statement of the qualification for women deacons, not wives of deacons. Other conservative, evangelical commentators and churches agree with this interpretation as well, but it is not a universally held position. Additionally, there is significant historical evidence that women served as deacons since the earliest days of the church.

3 Unlike an elder, a “pastor” is not an office in the New Testament church with specific qualifications. Nowhere does scripture specify that pastors must be male. Instead, Scripture makes clear that in the priesthood of all

believers (1 Peter 1:90 pen in Logos Bible Software (if available)), all believers, male and female, have the responsibility to shepherd as they disciple others in the faith.

What the Bible Says About Women in Ministry

Betty Miller November 29, 2011 Bible Answers / Church Issues

Women in Ministry: What the Bible Says

By Betty Miller

What the Bible Says About Women in Ministry

Pastors Bud & Betty Miller on Women in Ministry

Do women have a place in ministry? If so, to what extent? Is there a scriptural basis for a woman to be in any position of authority in the church? What does the Bible say about this issue? To understand God's intentions, we must go back to the very beginning of creation to see His original purpose for both man and woman.

"Male and Female Created He Them"

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created them. Genesis 1:27

Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. Genesis 5:2

It is interesting to note that God called both male and female, "Adam" on the day they were created. Adam means "man." Adam and Eve were created with God-ordained differences from each other, but together they made a full "man," or a complete picture of God Himself. There was perfection in their union. Their differences were not a source of discord or inequality, but a beautiful compliment to each other. Together, God gave them the task of overseeing and ruling His creation

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. Genesis 1:28

Notice that God gave the above commission to them both. There is no hint that there was anything but equal authority between man and woman as they existed in a sinless state. What changed things? In the next few chapters of Genesis, we find that sin entered the heart of Adam and Eve.

The result was a temporary curse placed upon both man and woman, which would affect the whole earth.

And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. 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. And unto Adam, he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and has eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt, thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. Genesis 3:14-19

This curse has affected all aspects of creation, from the ground itself (infested with weeds and thorns) to human relationships. (I say temporary because in Christ this curse is removed, as we shall see later on).

When Eve ate the forbidden fruit and enticed Adam to sin with her, one of the consequences for women was the loss of equality with men, as men were to rule over women, instead of men and women ruling together. She would now be "ruled by her husband." However, when Jesus came as sinless Man and died as the Messiah on the cross for us, all things were restored positionally. In actuality, the restoration of man (men and women) began to take place at that very moment.

Though the complete cleansing of the curse has not yet been manifested on the earth, the day is coming when it will be so. Or to put it another way, all those who receive Jesus as Savior receive restoration as Sons of God, but not all of us walk in that restoration - yet. Through Jesus, the curse upon women has been lifted. Women no longer have to receive pain in childbirth nor are they inferior to men with him ruling over them. Women can now be restored to their original place and plan that God had for all His "sons." Although we do not see all things restored at this time, "legally" in the spiritual realm, they already have been.

Adam was the head of the first race of mankind; and Jesus is the head of the last race, the adopted children of God. God only sees two races - the Adamic race (all natural-born mankind) and His children through Jesus (all those born of the spirit).

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 1

Corinthians 15:21-22

Once we are born into the kingdom of God, we become new creatures in Christ. In the Spirit, we find there is “neither male nor female,” just as there are no race distinctions nor class separations. The Lord looks on the hearts of His new creatures and therefore does not discriminate when He offers His love and privileges. Women are not excluded from any of God’s promises nor callings merely because of their sex.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye is all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28

God’s Masculine and Feminine Traits

As we stated above, the command to have dominion over and subdue the earth was given to both Adam and Eve. They were both to rule and reign over the Lord’s creation. The very act of subduing something requires authority, aggressiveness, and leadership, as well as humility, tenderness, patience, and the ability to respect the intrinsic value of what we are ruling. Most of all, it requires love.

Within God’s nature, we find these same qualities. Both men and women are to become like Him as we are conformed to His image. Since this is true, there are times that under the unction of the Holy Spirit a woman should assert herself boldly. (This assertion, however, should not necessarily be toward others, but rather toward the enemy, Satan!) For men and women to become overcomers they must have this boldness and authority over the devil. God still desires that His people rule and reign with Him. He intends to qualify us for that position, whether we be male or female. “And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:6).

Even though “kings” is a masculine term, this is the ultimate destination He desires for all of His people. The Lord often uses both male and female terms to refer to both sexes. Women are to live in the “hidden man of the heart” (1 Peter 3:4). Both men and women in the church are referred to as “the bride of Christ.” God has both a masculine and feminine nature. The mother heart of Jesus was evident as he prayed over Jerusalem.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Matthew 23:37

Submission is considered to be a feminine trait. However, Jesus submitted to the cross under the direction of the Father. If we walk in the Spirit, we too will possess both the masculine aggressiveness and feminine submissiveness of God.

Both submissiveness and aggressiveness are God-given strengths. Yet, both can be perverted, so that we become submissive and aggressive in the wrong ways, with the wrong attitudes. Because these qualities are so misused and misunderstood by the world, they have become distasteful and despised. If aggression is frowned upon, submission is viewed in an even more negative light in western culture. We equate submission with weakness and lack of spirit. Nothing could be further from the truth. There was never a human being more submitted to God than Jesus Christ- yet never was there one as completely resistant to the system of the world! It took extraordinary submissiveness and aggression for Jesus to overcome the world. For the Christian, whether we are male or female, He is our model. We are to possess His qualities and use them according to the needs around us.

Women As Ministers

How does all of this lead up to women ministers? Perhaps you are thinking that although we have laid a biblical foundation for “neither male nor female” in Christ, certain verses in the New Testament still seem to ban women from ministry positions in the church. Let’s examine these verses for the true interpretation:

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. 1 Corinthians 14:34

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. 1 Timothy 2:11-12

In these verses, Paul cannot be addressing women who were in the ministry, but rather those in the congregation who were out of order. How do we know this? We have many such proofs, many from Paul himself. Here is a partial list of women who were all in influential positions of leadership in the early church.

Pheobe (Romans 16:1-2): This woman was a deaconess of the church in Cenchrea, who was beloved of Paul and many other Christians for the help she gave to them. She filled an important position of leadership. It would be a difficult stretch of the imagination to say that this woman fulfilled her duties without ever speaking in the church!

Priscilla (Acts 18:26): Priscilla and her husband Aquila are often mentioned with great respect by Paul. Together they were pastors of a church in Ephesus and were responsible for teaching the full gospel to Apollos. We are informed that they both taught Apollos, and pastored the church together. Priscilla is sometimes listed ahead of Aquila when their names

come up. This has led some to speculate that of the two, she was the primary teacher and her husband oversaw the ministry. At any rate, we see here a woman in a very prominent position of teaching and pastoring. (Other references to Priscilla and Aquila are Acts 18:2, 18; Romans 16:3, and 1 Corinthians 16:19).

Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2-3): Here we see reference to two women who were "true yokefellow" and who labored with Paul in the advancement of the gospel.

Junia (Romans 16:7): In this verse we see Paul sending greetings to Andronicus and Junia, his "fellow prisoners" who are of note among the apostles. Junia is a woman's name. In some modern translations, an "s" has been added (Junias) because the translators were so sure a woman could not be an apostle, that they assumed a copyist has accidentally dropped the "s." However, the proper male ending would have been "us," not "ias." No church commentator earlier than the Middle Ages questioned that Junia was both a woman and an apostle.

Though there were other women throughout the Bible in positions of leadership, such as prophetesses, evangelists, judges, leaders, etc., the above references should be enough to establish that women were indeed a vital and normal part of church leadership. Paul expected women to speak in the church, or else why would he have given the following directive? It would have been useless to give directions for women who were speaking in the church if they were never allowed to do so.

But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. 1 Corinthians 11:5

Furthermore, if Paul believed that all women should never teach or speak in church, why does he commend many women who did just that?

With all this in mind, what then do we make of the troubling verses that command women to be silent in the churches? First of all, we must interpret those verses in light of what we have just established-that there were women in leadership positions of the church. Paul is not writing to them. He must be addressing another issue entirely - the women who were loud and unruly during the service, causing disorder and confusion.

When he wrote the Corinthians, he was dealing with a church that was very disorderly in its services. Much of the letter was spent correcting excesses and abuses. Some of these pertained to women in particular and some were to the entire church. Paul is not being prejudiced against women when he instructs the Corinthian women to keep silent. In the early church, the seating arrangement was quite different from our modern-day churches. Men were seated on one side of the church while the women and

children were seated on the opposite side. This is still practiced in many cultures today.

The women of Christ's day were generally uneducated and usually, only the men were privileged with an education. Due to this situation, when the church met the women were tempted to shout across the room and ask their husbands the meaning of whatever was being taught. This disturbed the service. Paul was simply saying during the service, "Women, keep your children quiet and you be quiet, and if you have anything to ask your husbands, wait until you get home." Because of the new equality that Christianity brought to women, it could be that some of them were taking their freedom too far, to the point of being obnoxious.

When Paul wrote to Timothy, he gave him a similar directive. Again, it is important to understand the context in which the letter was written. In 1 Timothy, a careful reader becomes aware that many severe heresies and false teachings that were being dealt with. We can conclude here that many of the proponents and victims of the false teachings were women.

Timothy pastored in Ephesus, and it has been suggested that goddess worship might have played a large part in Paul dealing so severely with the women. Ephesus was a primary center of the worship of Diana or Artemis.

The heresies being taught might have suggested that women were authoritative over men and had higher access to spiritual knowledge than men did.

Regardless of the particulars, in both cases, we can see that Paul is dealing with specific incidents in specific churches for very particular reasons.

We must understand that many of Paul's epistles dealt with local problems and his commandments are not meant to be taken as "commandments" across the board for all situations. Rather, we are to seek the Lord for the basic principle that needs to be incorporated in our churches. Because of Old Testament precedents that had already been set, it never occurred to Paul to re-establish the case for women in ministry. Why would he need to?

The early church took it as a matter of course that Jesus would call and ordain anyone He chose—and that settled it! The Bible mentions a prophetess who was in the Temple when Jesus was brought there as a baby. Her name was Anna (Luke 2:25-35), and she was one of two people who recognized Jesus as the Messiah because of her sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.

Paul's writings are sometimes misunderstood today because we do not know all the details that led him to write as he did. We must rely on the Holy Spirit, and the rest of the testimony of Scripture to interpret how we are to apply these things to our everyday lives. Scripture should always be compared with other Scripture and the context taken into consideration.

Even in Paul's day, some tried to twist the meaning of his words.

...His (Paul's) letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do other Scriptures, to their destruction. 2 Peter 3:16

It is a fair conclusion that the testimony of the bulk of Scripture, church history, and God's anointing upon them, all speak plainly for women being able to fulfill all positions of the five-fold offices of apostle, prophet, pastor, evangelist, and teacher.

Ministering Today

It has always been a strange doctrine that will allow women to go to foreign mission fields and teach heathen men, but will not allow the "heathen" men at home to be taught by the same women! It makes absolutely no sense to think that a female who is learned in the Scriptures cannot teach a male who is unlearned. Additionally, it is acceptable for many women to teach Sunday School to children, and for mothers to teach their sons. Where do we draw the line and say to the women that can no longer teach a male once they reach a certain age? This may seem like a ridiculous scenario, yet there are those in the church who teach along these lines.

Those that are dogmatic in excluding women from the ministries of God usually are not walking in the Spirit, as they see women after the flesh (viewing her sex), not after the Spirit (seeing her heart and calling). The Lord admonishes us in His Word that we are not to look at one another about our sex, race, class, or culture, but rather we are to see one another through spiritual eyes.

Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation: To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:16-20

God wants to use any person who will yield to His Spirit, regardless of that person's sex or capabilities. Those who are new creatures in Christ have His capabilities.

Our problem is that we must see there are rules for the fleshly, or earthly man, and there are rules for the spiritual man. Then, we must discern when to apply the appropriate Scripture. We are admonished in 2 Timothy 2:15 to

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

The Five-Fold Ministry

The Lord gave the church gifts of His choosing in the form of men and women who would lead the church into perfection (Ephesians 4:8-12).

It is the Lord who calls men and women to His ministry. He does not call special people, but the call goes out to “whosoever will.” First, we are called to salvation; then as we walk in obedience to Him, He calls for us to be baptized in His Holy Spirit. As we continue to obey and follow Him, He then may choose us to serve Him in a full-time ministry. He chooses people for the ministry out of those who have walked in obedience to His other calls. He desires that all follow, but can only choose those who are obedient. These men and women who have answered the call are set in the ministry by Jesus Himself. Man’s ordination does not qualify them, but the ordination of God does. Men will recognize those who are truly called by Him. They will even recognize women who are called of God as God empowers them with His anointing and power which cannot be denied.

God has used many modern-day women in His service as well as women spoken of in the Bible. Madame Guyon, Catherine Booth, Jessie Penn-Lewis, Aimee Semple McPherson, Corrie Ten Boom, and Kathryn Kuhlman are only a few of the women on the list of great five-fold ministry gifts to the church. What are those gifts and that ministry? “And His gifts were (varied; He appointed and gave men to us,) some to be apostles (special messengers), some prophets (inspired preachers and expounders), some evangelists (preachers of the Gospel, traveling missionaries), some pastors (shepherds of His flock) and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11, Amplified Bible.).

When this Scripture says, “appointed and gave men to us,” it does not mean just the male sex. The same man whom God created at the beginning which included male and female is the one referred to here. These “men” are both male and female and they have a responsibility to bring others into the maturity that they possess.

Ephesians 4 continues, “His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ’s body (the church), [That it might develop] until we all attain oneness in the faith and the comprehension of the full and accurate knowledge of the Son of God; that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood....the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ’s perfection — the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ, and the completeness found in Him” (Ephesians 4:12-13, Amplified Bible.).

The Lord has lofty intentions for His men and women and desires that they

come into perfection and maturity even as Christ walked in that perfection. The Lord sends those whom He chooses to bring about this maturing and perfecting. If we have been raised in a traditional church, the idea of coming into perfection may sound impossible—even heretical! However, it is a Biblical precedent and until we understand it we will not be able to understand God’s full intention for His body. The separation of laity and clergy is not God’s plan for His people. All that is called to salvation are called to a full-time ministry in the Lord. This does not mean that all should leave their secular occupations, but all should devote their lives to the Lord and be as committed and active in witnessing, learning, and growing in God as the leader.

The leadership that God raises is those men and women whom He trains for His work in the kingdom. Women have been limited in traditional churches to certain positions that men would give them, but the Lord is restoring His full five-fold ministry in these last days to prepare the body of Christ for His return.

Further Questions

If Jesus wanted women to minister, how come all His disciples were men? This question is raised from a misunderstanding of the word “disciple.” Jesus had many women disciples. These include Mary and Martha (John 11:1-4, and many other references as well. Mary and Martha, along with their brother Lazarus were among Jesus’ closest friends). In addition, Jesus had many other women followers as well.

And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance. Luke 8:1-3

For the sake of brevity, I will not include other lists of names of women who followed Him. However, the Scripture makes it clear there were many of them.

In another incident, Jesus motions to the crowds that followed him and said, “Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister, and mother” (Matthew 12:49-50).

In John 4:1-42, we see that it is a Samaritan woman who leads a large population of her community to Jesus.

Why didn’t Jesus choose any women to be among His twelve original

apostles? Jesus could not choose women to be among the twelve because it would not be wisdom for men and women to be traveling about together when many of them were single. Also, the twelve apostles fulfilled the “type and shadow” of the twelve patriarchs, so they had to be equal to men (Revelation 21:12, 14). However, this doesn’t mean that he does not anoint women to fill an apostolic role today, as we already established in the case of Junia.

Jesus showed a great deal of respect for women-and children as well. In the culture of Jesus’ day, these were often deemed “lower class” so to speak, and not worth paying serious attention to. However, Jesus repeatedly broke this unspoken rule. Because His actions were so unusual, those closest to Him were often surprised and annoyed.

Woman, Thou Art Loosed!

We pray that this teaching will encourage many women, who might otherwise relegate themselves to the “back burner” to instead step forward into the full calling of God upon their lives. Likewise, we pray that men who have been taught against letting women minister will see the truth of the fullness of God’s plan. No matter who we are in the Lord, we will be held responsible for how we treated others and how we either hindered or helped the cause of Christ on Earth. Those in leadership especially need to heed this warning with reverent fear. Just because we have believed something our whole life, or because our denomination or culture teaches us so, doesn’t mean it is correct. If you have a problem with seeing women in the pulpit or any position of leadership, we pray that you will prayerfully seek the Lord with an open heart on this issue.

In conclusion, let us read the following promise from the prophet Joel. This prophecy was initially fulfilled at Pentecost, and as we draw closer to the end, we can expect to see it fulfilled in even greater measures.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Acts 2:17-21