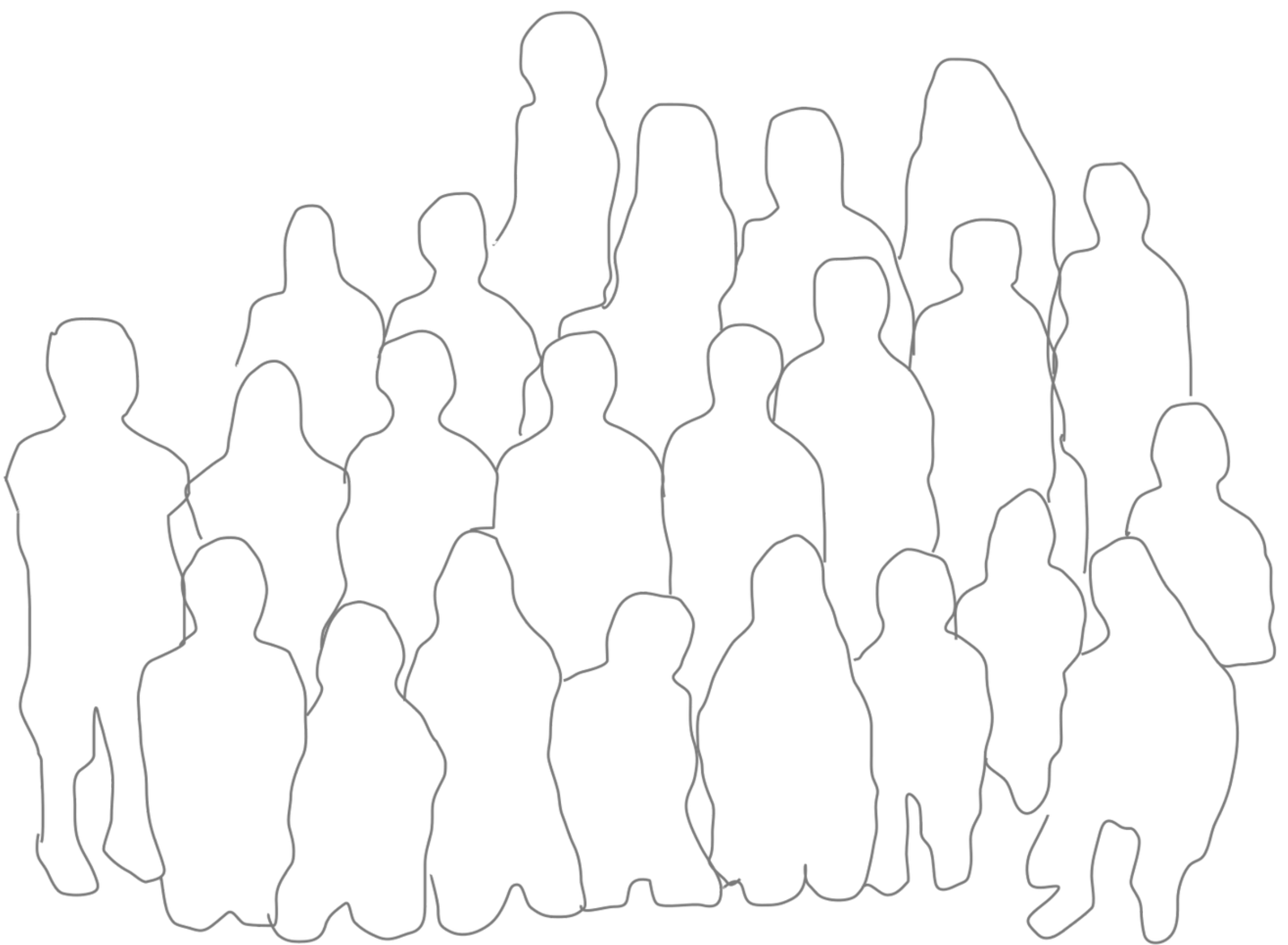


CHURCH

MEMBERSHIP INFO



WHY BOTHER WITH CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

This is a question we are frequently asked as Pastors.

Some people feel that because they grew up in a church, they are automatically members of that church. Others feel that it's too inclusive, or too exclusive, or that it hampers their freedom to go or be wherever they feel they should be, while others feel that it's like "big brother" keeping watch over them just so that their tithes are paid.

Others feel that it is too secular – It's like signing up to be part of a tennis or bowling club. Some feel that it's too traditional or too ritualistic to become a formal member of a local church. Their belief often stems from an understanding that they are part of the universal church of God, meaning – because they are believers, they are already part of God's kingdom. But that is only half the meaning of being part of God's kingdom.

Perhaps you haven't given any real thought to why you should become a member of a local church. So, why be a church member? Why not just be able to go and participate as and when you feel like it?

Well, when we use the word member we are using it in context with passages from scripture (Neh. 9:38 OT, 1 Cor. 12-14 NT) that imply that "member" is somebody who, whether by a signature or a word of commitment or promise, says, "I'm committed to a people, a people who hear the word of God preached, a people who perform the ordinances that Jesus gave to his church (baptism and the Lord's Supper), and a people who commit to the 'one another' ". This is the covenant nature of the church and of Christian discipleship. It's a commitment that follows strongly God's commands to love each other, exhort each other, admonish each other and hold each other accountable, and those you cannot do as one who looks in from the outside.

If you say, " I believe the New Testament says, 'Be a part of a community' and part of that is giving yourself to ministering there and receiving ministry there, advancing the cause of the gospel there and upholding the name of Jesus there but then resisting putting your name on the line for that, is probably not a biblical conviction. It's probably a Western thinking independent, give-me-elbow-room, don't-get-in-my-face-too-often conviction, which is not biblical at all.

WHY BOTHER WITH CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

So, The reason we use the word “member” is because Paul uses it in 1 Corinthians 12-14 when he is referring to the church as a body of believers and he uses the analogy of a body to describe how we all fit into and play our part in the body as a whole. The local church—not just the global church—is a body. The reason we know it's local and not just global is because, while in Ephesians 1 and Colossians Paul talks about Christ as the head of the body, in 1 Corinthians 12 he's talking about a head with eyes and ears that are members of the body.

So the body analogy has one global meaning, and it has one local meaning. There's global membership in the body universal, and there's local membership in the body where I'm a finger or an eye or an ear or a foot. And everybody is a member.

So, the word "member" in 1 Corinthians 12-14 means you're part of a local organism, and you, the finger or eye, ear or foot belongs. It should care about what happens to the eye, and the eye what happens to the finger. And it should function in a way that has some organic coherence to it. It's very hard to do what the Bible calls a church to do unless it knows who the members are and who aren't.

WHY CHURCH MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

- 1** In joining a church you make visible your commitment to Christ and his people. It's one way to raise the flag of faith as you commit before God and others that you are part of this local body of believers. It's here that God expects you to be involved, nurture others and grow in and live out your faith. The majority of Paul's letters were written to a local body of believers (only a few were to individuals and those were Pastors). We see the same thing in Revelation as Jesus speaks to individual congregations in places like Smyrna, Sardis, and Laodicea. The New Testament knows no Christians floating around in "just me and Jesus" land. Believers belong to churches.
- 2** Making a commitment makes a powerful statement in a low-commitment culture. Many outside clubs (soccer, hockey, book club etc..) require more of their members than our church does. We unfortunately try force the church to be like our consumer culture where everything is tailored to meet our needs and satisfy our references. When those needs are not met, we can always move on to the next product, or job, or spouse. Joining a church in such an environment makes a counter-cultural statement which says "I am committed to this group of people and they are committed to me. I am here to give, more than get."
- 3** Membership states in a formal way, "I am part of something bigger than myself. I am not just running to my own drum beat but one that God is beating out .

WHY CHURCH MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

4 Membership keeps us accountable. When we join a church, we are offering ourselves to one another to be encouraged, rebuked, corrected, and served. We are placing ourselves under leaders and submitting to their authority (Heb. 13:7). It is a mark of growing in Godliness. Prov. 27:17 says “Iron sharpens Iron. You can’t be sharpened when you are continually on your own, veering away from body involvement nor can your gifts be appropriately used in order to edify (build up), exhort (encourage), and comfort the church.

Mark Dever, in his book *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, writes,

“Church membership is our opportunity to grasp hold of each other in responsibility and love. By identifying ourselves with a particular church, we let the pastors and other members of that local church know that we intend to be committed in attendance, giving, prayer, and service. We allow fellow believers to have great expectations of us in these areas, and we make it known that we are the responsibility of this local church. We assure the church of our commitment to Christ in serving with them, and we call for their commitment to serve and encourage as well.”

5 Membership will help the pastor/s and elders be more faithful shepherds. Hebrews 13:7 says, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority.” They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. This is hard enough to do on any given day but more difficult when the church or pastors don’t know who is really a part of this flock.

6 Joining the church gives you an opportunity to make promises before God of making your faith in him relevant and potential as you engage in the church and its other members and from there, as you are fed and encouraged to go out and be the salt and light in your world and community. At SWBC when you become a member you make promises to pray, give, serve, attend worship, accept the spiritual guidance of the church, obey its teachings, and seek the things that make for unity, purity, and peace. These things are not taken lightly. They are promises before God and before your fellow saints in the Lord and we must hold each other to them. By not doing this you do miss out on great spiritual benefit, for you, your leaders, and the whole church.

CONCLUSION

Its often very sad to see believers drifting from one church to another with no real purpose or intention of using their gifts and exercising their spiritual fruit within that local body. Christ was wholly committed to us in that he left his place in heaven and came to be part of us here on earth and he gave everything of himself – even his own life, so that we can emulate his sacrificial and binding love to one another in a prayerful, exhorting and committed way.

BAPTIST PRINCIPLES

1 DIRECT LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

By this we understand that Christ exercises His authority over the believer and the local Church directly, without delegating it to another.

2 THE CHURCH

The whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The local church, being a manifestation of the universal church, is a community of believers in a particular place where the Word of God is preached and observed. It is fully autonomous and remains so notwithstanding responsibilities it may accept by voluntary association.

3 BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

An act of obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and a sign of personal repentance, faith and regeneration; it consists of the immersion in water into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

4 THE CONGREGATIONAL PRINCIPLE

Each member has the privilege and responsibility to use his/her gifts and abilities to participate fully in the life of the Church. We recognise that God gifts His Church with Overseers (who are called Pastors or Elders) whose primary function is to lead in a spirit of servant hood, to equip and provide spiritual oversight, and Deacons whose primary function is to facilitate the smooth functioning of the Church. This principle further recognises that each member should participate in the appointment of the church's leaders, and that constituted church meeting, subject to the direct Lordship of Christ and the authority of Scripture, is the highest court of authority for the local Church.

5 THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

Each Christian has direct access to God through Christ our High Priest, and shares with Him in His work of reconciliation. This involves intercession, worship, faithful service and bearing witness to Jesus Christ, even to the end of the earth.

BAPTIST PRINCIPLES

6 RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

No individual should be coerced either by the State or by any secular, ecclesiastical or religious group in matters of faith. The right of private conscience is to be respected. For each believer this means the right to interpret the Scriptures responsibly and to act in the light of his conscience.

7 SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

In the providence of God, the two differ in their respective natures and functions. The Church is not to be identified with the State nor is it, in its faith or practice, to be directed or controlled by the State. The State is responsible for administering justice, ensuring an orderly community, and promoting the welfare of its citizens. The Church is responsible for preaching the Gospel and for demonstrating and making known God's will and care for all mankind.

SWBC STORY

2021 marked our 40 year anniversary as a local church!

- Began as a Sunday School by member of Strand Baptist Church.
- Progressed to regular services at Beaumont Primary.

BUILDING GROWTH

The present ground was purchased in 1983.

Originally the sanctuary was in the back hall.

The present sanctuary was dedicated in 1997.

Later extensions have included:

- Main Foyer & Room above the foyer.
- The church offices and upstairs hall.
- Renovation of the back hall and outdoor play area.
- Recent installation of surrounding a fence.
- Garage and stairs to upstairs hall renovation.

PEOPLE GROWTH

What began with a few kids and adults in a garage has grown to a membership of just over 400 members.

With the addition of kids and teens and adherants means that about 800 people who consider SWBC as their spiritual home.

MISSION

We regard ourselves as a vibrant multi-general church that remains committed to our rallying cry of moving “Forward with God”.

MISSION STATEMENT

“To be a fellowship of Christ-followers, growing in the faith and impacting our community”

BAPTIST HISTORY

We are a small expression of a much larger family.

GLOBAL HISTORY

“It’s immediate roots lay in small groups of believers within England which had separated from the State Church during the period of the English Reformation in the 16th Century...it was also shaped by successors of the earlier continental ‘Anabaptist’ movement which had begun in Zurich, with its emphasis upon...baptism of believers.”

(European Baptist Federation Council | Appendix B | September 1992)

Today Baptists form a major denomination within the Protestant Evangelical Stream – regarded as the 4th largest denomination.

The Baptist World Alliance, formed in 1905, joins some 40-60 million Baptists in over 150 countries throughout the world.

Today, for example, there are Baptist Unions in nearly every European country and the Northern and Southern Baptists are well-known in America.

SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY

Baptist families were among a group of 4500 British emigrants that left England for SA in 1820.

- Under the religious leadership of William Miller, the first Baptist church in Grahamstown was established in 1823.

The Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA) was founded in 1877.

- Made up of provincial associations
- Several Theological institutions (E.g. CTBS, BTC & Christ Seminary)
- Hold an annual national assembly representing over 700 congregations.

CHURCH VALUES

1. BIBLE BASED

We believe that God speaks authoritatively through His Word, the Bible, and that people are challenged and built up as God's Word is preached and taught faithfully. This will be the cornerstone of the church's activities.

2. OUTWARD LOOKING

We believe that the Great Commission is central to the Church of Jesus Christ. We will therefore be strongly committed to taking the Gospel to the world through sending and supporting distant missionaries, moving into our local community to serve and evangelise, and supporting the broader church within our community and nation.

(Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 5:30-32. Luke 15)

3. RELEVANT

We believe that the salvation and discipling of people has to be effective in a diverse and changing world. Without changing the central truth of Scripture and the call to relevance, we will strive to present ministry in a way that is creative, evolving, future-looking and ultimately effective.

(1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

4. AUTHENTIC CONDUCT

We believe that God calls Christians to be imitators of Christ and that personal conduct is a powerful form of witness. Therefore we will encourage member and adherents of the church to appreciate the importance of their behaviour and to continually remember the primary call to love. Relationships will always be more important than programmes. Where discipline is required, this will be handled in a firm but gentle manner.

(Ephesians 4:25-32; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

5. EXERCISING OF GIFTS

We believe that God has given each individual specific gifts which can be exercised for the benefit of the church at large. We will encourage all members and adherents to discover their genuine gifts and to exercise them in conjunction with a balanced life and commitment to family. Gifts will be channelled to minister in ways that are holistic, disciplined, focussed on spiritual growth and characterised by enthusiasm and joy.

(1 Corinthians 7:7; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12)

CHURCH VALUES

6. PRAYING FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS

We recognise that the world is a hostile and demanding place. We will therefore strive to create a spiritual and emotional haven for our member and adherents where love, acceptance, encouragement and positive relationships characterise fellowship in the church. We will encourage members to meet together both at corporate service and in small groups to share each other's burdens and resources and to pray for each other and the church. At the core of our meetings will be the commitment to praying for the world, our country, our community, our church, our missionaries and our congregation.

(Acts 2:42-47; Romans 12:9-21)

7. EXCELLENCE

We believe that God is by nature a glorious and excellent being. We will endeavour, therefore, to reflect His majesty in our ministries and activities. Without compromising the overriding command to love, we will encourage our gift-exercising members to seek excellence in their areas of service. We will strive for effective use of time, careful use of our resource and tidy housekeeping of the premises.

(Colossians 3:17; 2 Corinthians 8:7; Proverbs 15:7)

8. COMMITTED TO UNITY

We fully appreciate how fragile human relationships are, even amongst believers. We also recognise that many areas of service have failed because Christians have been unable to work effectively with each other. We, therefore, jealously uphold the concept of unity in the church and exhort believers to settle issues quickly and sincerely. (Ephesians 4:1-6; Psalm 133; Romans 15:7)

9. BALANCED WORSHIP

We recognise that God calls us to relevant and orderly worship and that when we come together as a body we should unite in lifting our praises to Him. As result, we will strive to worship in an inclusive orderly, objective and balanced way. (Psalms 149:1; Hebrews 13:15)

10. DISCIPLESHIP

We recognise that the Christian life is one of spiritual and practical growth that requires instruction and discipline. We will, therefore, provide theological input and practical training to ensure that our members grow in their faith and that the great Christian disciplines are taught and encouraged.

(Philippians 3:12-14; 2 Timothy 2:2)

MINISTRY OVERVIEW

There's a wide scope of opportunity to serve the Lord at SWBC. This is where we will need members to support in the form of time, prayer and financial giving.

SUMMARY

- Missions Department
- Prayer Ministry
- Hospitality
- Media & Livestream
- Maintenance
- Kids Ministry
- Youth and Young Adults
- Schools
- Counselling
- Ladies & Men's Ministries
- Seniors Ministry
- Connect Groups (Bible Studies)
- Worship Department
- Evangelism (e.g Alpha)
- Alpha/Evangelism
- Communication
- Meals of Compassion
- Kombi Duty
- Communion Setup

GIVING TO THE WORK OF THE LORD

1 Introduction

The whole bible addresses the matter of giving in kind or cash. God clearly positions himself as Creator and owner of all things. "I am the Lord, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself...(Isaiah 44:24 NIV). The bible clearly states that "The earth belongs to the Lord and the fullness thereof."

Everything we have, whatever we work with and whatever we receive already belongs to the Lord. We are only entrusted to manage certain aspects of it to one degree or another. In the story of the talents (Matt 25: 14-30), one employee was entrusted with five portions of money, the other with two and the last with one. The successful management of these monies was praised by the Master.

Now the big question – what portion does God allow for us to use and enjoy? The question is not really how much we should give to God.

From the earliest days of the Christian church, they responded in the area of giving. From the day of Pentecost the Christians learnt the principles of giving. This is sketched for us in Acts 2: 43-47. There is no hint of insignificant gifts, but rather of generous giving – almost to the extreme.

2. Tithing – The Basic Unit

The basic principle throughout the Scriptures is that of God claiming that 1/10 of our income or produce belongs to Him. He allows us to retain 9/10's for our own personal living expenses.

The question is asked in Malachi 3:8 "Will a man rob God?" The expected answer is no – we will not rob God; or even another question – "How can a person possibly rob God?" Verse 8 goes on to say that "...Yet you rob Me." But you say "How are we robbing you?" The incredible answer to the people was "You are robbing Me in that you withheld what belongs to Me – your tithes and offerings" (my words). Right at the end of the Old Testament and at the beginning of the New Testament we have this clear statement.

Tithing was practiced before the law of Moses and is, therefore, a creation principle and not a law of Israel. Hebrews 7: 1-10 explains this clearly to us. Tithing was then carried out as a creation principle of God.

GIVING TO THE WORK OF THE LORD

With the advent of the New Testament the creation principle of the tithe continues. Jesus approved of this when He saw the people and the widow putting their tithes into the treasury. 1 Corinthians 9: 4-14 gives an explanation of how giving would take place within the church and the employees of that church would be paid out of that giving.

3. Gifts and Thank Offerings

The bible goes on to show how many people discover that they are so blessed with their 9/10 that, in fact, they have excess. These people give gifts and make offerings of thanks. 2 Corinthians 8: 1-5 is a clear example of this.

Some of these gifts were given to specific needs (1 Corinthians 16: 2-3) and other gifts to people serving the Lord (Philippians 4: 10-17), while others just made their gifts to the work of the Lord through the church of Jesus Christ (Acts 4: 36-37)

4. The Spiritual Gift of Giving

A select group of people in the life of the church enjoy another dimension of giving altogether. After tithes and gifts, they have the means and Holy Spirit inspired desire to give. Romans 12: 8 mentions this person among the spiritual gifts, "...He who contributes, let him give liberally, and he who gives aid, let him do it zealously."

This person becomes a channel from the marketplace or the field of produce to the church of Jesus Christ. Like veins, they feed the church of Jesus with resources and seem to enjoy greater and greater blessing within themselves and in their business ventures.

Barnabas was such a man (Acts 4: 36-37). These people can identify fully with 2 Corinthians 9: 6-13, especially verse 10. "Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness."

GIVING TO THE WORK OF THE LORD

5. Faith Giving

In this situation the person does not calculate percentages or respond to needs, but simply asks God, “What should I give to this cause?” The answers they receive is what they act upon, regardless of whether they understand or have the resources available. The whole of Hebrews 11 illustrates this aspect of giving and service. The key verse is verse 6, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” These people just know that their giving is pleasing to God.

6. Where to Give What and When

The tithe unit is generally linked to its entirety to the house of God. Malachi 3: 10, “Bring the full tithes into the storehouses so that there may be food enough in My house...” In the case of the widow’s mite, all the tithes were being placed in the temple treasury. With Abraham and Melchizedek there was no dividing up of the tithe, but a full tithe was given. There is never an indication in scripture that any tithe is broken up into smaller units for distribution to several places.

Gifts may be given to the house of the Lord, people, special needs, etc. The same applies to the gift of giving and faith giving. But again, thank offerings are nearly always associated with the house of Worship.

Calculations – what is my tithe a tithe of? Of my gross earnings before tax, after tax, my living expenses, etc? The bible gives us the gracious freedom to decide, as we read in 2 Corinthians 9: 6-13. Time will prove to us that God is more faithful to provide and supply all our needs than we ever realised. The principle is laid down in verse 6. “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” This is also one of the very few places in the bible where God invites us to put Him to the test (Malachi 3: 10)

GIVING TO THE WORK OF THE LORD

7. Conclusion

You cannot escape the fact that giving is right there in the heart of the bible. but God is more concerned about the giver than He is about the gift. “But first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.” (2 Corinthians 8: 5)

Giving is also in the heart of God. He gave us the world and then He gave us His son, Jesus Christ. “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

From an article by MH Pohlmann M.A.

Other verses of interest on this subject:

Matthew 6:19-24

Matthew 19:21-24

Mark 10:21-25

Mark 12:41-44

Luke 6:43-45

Luke 19:11-27

Luke 21:1-4

PHILOSOPHY OF WORSHIP

The Purpose of Worship:

The purpose of worship is to glorify and to bring us into a right relationship with God. We do this through expression of adoration, love, thanks, repentance and humility, seeking not to please ourselves, but God

The Form of our Worship Service:

In our services we declare and acknowledge the greatness and glory of God, we celebrate and reflect on the truths of our faith, and we meaningfully experience moving into God's presence. Our worship does not only consist of music and singing; the full range of activities in the service is directed at glorifying God. The activities are:

- Praise and song
- Scripture reading
- Prayer
- Preaching
- Baptism of disciples
- Celebration of communion
- Giving
- Testimony
- Contemplation
- Confession
- Spirit-directed participation

PHILOSOPHY OF WORSHIP

The Principles that Direct all our Worship:

1. Centred on God. We worship with the aim of loving, glorifying and experiencing God.
2. Expecting the powerful presence of God. We do not just direct ourselves toward Him. We earnestly seek His drawing near according to the promise of James 4:8. We believe that in worship God draws near to us in power, and makes Himself known in a way that blesses us, for our good and for the salvation of unbelievers in our midst.
3. Bible based and Bible-saturated. All activities in the services will always conform to the Truths of Scripture. The content of God's Word will be the authority for, and will be woven through all we do as we worship.
4. Head, heart and will: Our worship does not aim to manipulate the emotions, but to engage the wonders of God with the mind; kindle and carry deep, strong, real emotions toward God; commit to obeying His command.
5. Authentic: We renounce superficiality, pretence and frivolity. While being authentically joyful, our worship will be reverent and will be an expression of meaningful and sincere thoughts to God and about God. Music will never dominate at the expense of words.

PHILOSOPHY OF WORSHIP

6. Non-distracting quality: We will try to sing and play and pray and preach in such a way that people's attention will not be diverted from the substance by either poor delivery or excessive virtuosity. We strive for natural beauty in performance. At the same time we will give opportunities for performers to grow in competency.
7. Historic and contemporary music: We will use a seamless blend of what is precious and best from the past and the contemporary. Matt. 13:52 – and He said to them, “Every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”
8. Accessible: The forms of worship will be accessible to most of the congregation. While acknowledging a wide variety of tastes and seeking to be relevant to our times, extremes will be avoided.
9. Unity: Our worship will be such as to unite our church family in praising.

POSITION STATEMENT: HEALING MINISTRY

The following recommendations come from the elders of the church regarding the important ministry of healing. There are many different understandings of this ministry within the body of Christ and even within our local expression of that body. We therefore want to state our position as clearly as possible and give guidelines as to how this ministry is to function in the church.

Responding to illness and especially serious illness is a difficult and highly sensitive issue. When a person and a family are confronted with such a situation there is always shock, uncertainty, even at times fear and of course many questions. The church needs to respond to all of these with care and compassion. It is a difficult road for those who find themselves in this situation, their families and for their church family. We are a community of faith in a loving and personal God. And we want to face life's tough issues together with faith and trust in this God.

The elders therefore state the following:

1] The elders acknowledge and affirm the ministry of prayer for healing as Biblical and an area of ministry that needs to be practiced, developed and grown in. We will pray for the sick, asking and trusting God to bring healing.

2] According to the scriptures this ministry is to be an integral part of the ministry of the pastors and elders [James 5: 14 –15] and we also find that the scriptures teach that God gives to some a special spiritual 'gift of healing' [1 Corinthians 12: 7 – 11].

3] It is God's prerogative to heal or not to heal. There are times when God heals and there are times when from our perspective, He does not heal. [His ways are not our ways nor are His thoughts our thoughts: [1 Corinthians 2: 11f].

POSITION STATEMENT: HEALING MINISTRY

4] It is fundamentally wrong to tell sick people they are healed or will be healed unless: A] There has been a clear and specific word from the Lord that healing will take place and the church has prayed, in faith, as a response to that clear word. B] That all symptoms have cleared up and been medically verified. To instruct people that they are healed when they are obviously still ill and to encourage people to deny or ignore symptoms is cruel and dangerous. [The Lord Jesus Himself sent the lepers He had healed to the priests to confirm that healing had taken place. [Matthew 8:1f]

5] While faith plays a fundamental part in this ministry, faith itself is a gift from God. The power of faith is not in the 'amount or level' of faith but in the object of faith. There is nothing magical about faith. God, as the object of faith makes faith meaningful. No matter how strong faith may be if it is placed in the wrong object it is meaningless. So, healing is not about 'how much faith' but about whom we have faith in. [If you have faith as a mustard seed will say to the mountain move and it will move'.]

6] Ministry to the sick and especially to the terminally sick must be more than simply focusing on healing. The sick person has other issues and needs that need to be addressed. The person needs to be given the opportunity to speak about their fears and their concerns. They need to be able to deal with any 'unfinished business'. They may need to 'make confession' and heal relationships. They need to know that 'even when we pass through the valley of the shadow of death we fear no evil' [Psalm 23]. The church needs to minister to the sick and their family in a holistic manner.

7] Caring for and ministering to the sick and their loved ones is a serious responsibility. We need to grow in our understanding of that responsibility both to be bold in faith and wise in ministry and we 'carry one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.' [Galatians 6:2.]

As a Church we will pray boldly for the sick and we will trust God for healing, as He enables us. Should someone not be healed this is not necessarily the result of a lack of faith or of not praying correctly but part of the mystery and the tension of living in a fallen world where we know in part. When Christ returns He will usher in the Kingdom fully and in that Kingdom there will be no more sickness, weakness, death or any of the other issues we so struggle with. So, our ultimate prayer is 'even so, Lord Jesus, come'.

POSITION STATEMENT: WOMAN IN LEADERSHIP

Introduction

Commitment of intent

Somerset West Baptist Church is a church that is committed to a high view of Scripture, believing that, unless the Bible is God's word to us, we live without any real moral authority. This understanding underpins our approach to all matters regarding faith and doctrine as believers in Jesus Christ and as a church.

With such an understanding we will endeavour to bring an understanding culminating in a positional statement based on the Biblical vision of manhood and womanhood and their respective roles and functions within the body, life, and ministries of the church.

We understand and uphold that maleness and femaleness are essential, not peripheral, to our personhood and thus we view any depreciation of male and female personhood as a great loss to our faith and to the workings of the body of Christ.

Introduction.

In understanding the role of women in Leadership at the Somerset West Baptist Church with special application to Elders we need to go the starting point which defines men and women and their role and function given by God to each.

The Bible teaches in Genesis 1-3 and more specifically 1:26-28 that man and woman were both created equally in God's image. That means that both men and women bear and reflect Gods righteous character as well as mirror rationality, conscience, creativity, relationships, beauty, and everything else we are as human. This makes "man" unique in that as we bear the image of God in us, we then find our identity upwards in God and not downward in the animals or natural creation.

In this special role, man stands between God and above the animals as Gods ruling representative (Gen 1:26) "Then God said. "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. "so, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (NIV).

POSITION STATEMENT: WOMAN IN LEADERSHIP

The single use of the word “man” ha adam moves without comment to the plural pronoun them explaining in meaning that “man” means both male and female. This is seen in vs 28 of chapter 1 where we read “God blessed them and said to them. . . ”

This equates to the fact that no evidence exists that males somehow reflect God’s image more than females. In vs 28 of Chapter 1, God authorises male and female together to carry out their mission to rule the lower creation. So, both male and female display the glory and image of God with equal brilliance (Morrison).

What we find here is firstly a uniqueness and separation. A uniqueness that man is the apex of creation and secondly, they are separate from creation, yet also, unique in their creation as individuals and separate from each other in their creation, meaning that they were of the same composition but uniquely different in gender make up or design. Gen. 2:18 tells us that God created the woman as an ezor kenegdo, which means she is equal in essence to man without being identical in function. (Summit Church). The term ezor kenegdo indicates that the woman was to provide help or be man’s helper who takes away his loneliness and serves God alongside the man. The word helper doesn’t presume lesser authority but indicates the notion of position of complementarity rather than identity. In the context of Genesis 1-3, the woman helped the man by supporting the leadership that he was Given by God to fulfil the command of stewardship by humans over creation. Combined with this is the injunction to have offspring who will, in turn, exercise dominion over the earth for God’s glory.

POSITION STATEMENT: WOMAN IN LEADERSHIP

Thus Genesis 1-3 makes no distinction of man and woman made in the image of God in regard to their composition. Rather Scripture clearly communicates that God highly values and uses the gifts and calling He has given to both man and women. What we do see in Genesis 1:27-28 is that women were also equally given the dominion mandate in the Garden of Eden; to subdue and rule over the earth and both were created to be fruitful and productive. Not just productivity in terms of childbearing, but also in the maximizing of what they each can offer to the world. The woman also has a calling to rule. She does not have less intrinsic value than man. God created both man and woman in His image for the purpose of ruling on earth.

However, what is noticeable from Genesis 2 is that God assigns specific tasks and commands to the Man before the woman is created. This was to tend for and take care of the garden, to name the various species (and eventually the woman whom Adam called Eve) and to not eat from one particular tree. In this, God is giving the man work and authority to do it as well as a moral prerogative to guide his soul as to obey or not obey the word of God in relation to the command to carry out Gods desires and to the specific command over the one tree.

The complementary position is defined more clearly for us in Genesis 3 where the description of the fall takes place. In this we see that the man and woman play very specific roles in the fall. This is mentioned because it shows a reversal of what was set in place by God as the woman and man reverse roles so that she, Eve, becomes the leading spokesperson as both depart from Gods clear commands before they enter into sin (Gen. 3:1, 7). They both complement each other in their reaction and complicity in sinning against God. Scripture indicates that the woman was deceived and not the man – although he bears the guilt (1 Tim. 2:13). The bible portrays the man as primarily accountable for the fall as the Lord comes to him first to give account (Gen 3:9), and the N.T pictures Adam and not Eve as the representative head of fallen humanity (Rom. 5: 17-19; 1 Cor. 15 : 21-22) thus giving man the peculiar responsibility of headship and accountability over Eve as to keeping the commands of the LORD God.

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So, although there is a wonderful complementarian position, Adam is held accountable before God thus enforcing and upholding his role of the function of Headship (Kephale - the role of authority and source of protection, care, love, comfort, provision, support) in the complementarian position. This role is functional rather than positional.

Further to this the woman is created from “bone and flesh” from the side of Adam reinforcing that both are created in the image of God, but the succession of humanity continues after that. Thus, it is out of Adam, that woman is made and from then on, the human race follows. This begins the biblical teaching of Adam as the Federal head of the whole human race (cf Rom. 5:18ff)

Genesis 1-3 portrays men and woman as equal and complementary partners in fulfilling God’s call, mission and purpose for each other, the family, creation and faith. But it is God who brings the woman to the man for her to be named by him, thus acknowledging that she is unique and is like him and part of him. They need each other to be complete (1 Cor. 11:8-13). In naming her “woman”, Adam is exercising the God given authority to do so thus indicating a hierarchy of roles that existed before the fall and not just after it. This authority and headship though do not take away the woman’s unique role and function but enhances the strength of man and woman and their equality before God in their positions and functions.

This doctrine is given by a good God in order that he is glorified in it and humans flourish through it.

Genesis 3 introduces us to the sin that brought brokenness to this world, in our relationship to God and to each other as male and female. In short, the woman was deceived by Satan in the form of a serpent to eat of the forbidden tree and she gave it to Adam to eat of it as well making him then complicit in the sin.

Both respond equally to the sin in realising they are naked and so they hide themselves. When God calls for them in Gen 3:9, it is noticeable that he calls the man first. This indicates man’s primary role of headship and responsibility and accountability over woman for it is to the man Adam that God had given the command to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man bore the primary responsibility for life in the garden and so the responsibility of the sin falls and rests on his shoulders as testified in the N.T in Romans 5:12 “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.”

Both the command to work and care for the garden (2:15) and the prohibition of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:17) are given to Adam directly before the woman was created, thus headship and not domination then was introduced by God on the man pre-fall.

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The fall into sin affected Gods original, perfect order of the sexes.

Genesis 3 shows the Woman usurping Adams Headship by taking over his moral initiative and acting on it herself. Adam who is with Eve steps back from the moral responsibility given to him by God's command and in so doing plunges both into sin and death.

It is interesting to note that although both Adam and Eve fell into sin – Paul in Rom. 5: 12-21 blames Adam and in Genesis 3 God calls to Adam when they are hiding and not to both because God had placed upon Adam the mantle of headship over creation and Eve.

The fall in Genesis 3 sees Satan striking at Adams mantle of headship given by God by inviting Eve to assume responsibility over Adam. When Adam shifts the blame to Eve in 3:12 it is an acknowledgement of guilt in that he did not enact his headship responsibility that he had been given.

The result of this is sin and God issues two decrees:

Firstly, in vs 16 of chapter 3 the curse on Eve is that she will suffer in child-bearing and suffer in marriage conflict. Eve will now have the desire for her husband (Hebrew for desire (teshuqah) This is negative in context coupled with the word to rule (mashal). An example of the same word is seen in Genesis 4:7 where God warns Cain "Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

The point of this is to show that after the fall the woman's desire now is no longer to be alongside as a helper but the overarching desire will be to rule over her husband and the husband in turn now is to master her or to rule over her. Fruchtenbaum elucidates "the woman chose to act independently of the man, and now she will have a desire to rule and possess him thus disputing the headship of the husband. "

Secondly: 3: 17-19 indicates that the curse on Adam focuses on what God called him to do and so Adams work in the fields are hampered by thorns and thistles and in that his labour is now difficult and toilsome by the sweat of his brow.

These two decrees indicate that although male and female were both made in the image of God, they were distinct in their position and function.

This tendency to control and rule over the man and the man to master or rule over her is now the new norm due to the fall. When God speaks to Adam in 3:17 "because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree" we see that Adam had defied God's command in 2:17 and sinned against him by listening to the advice of his wife instead of discussing it in light of Gods command and thus abandoned his headship.

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The righting of this takes place in the understanding of the original purpose and intent of the relationship of the man and woman in their marriage and in their respective functions as spoken by God in Genesis 1-2 before the fall.

The result of this sin is that God decrees death to Adam, but we do know that Eve also died too. This is fundamental as a N.T. concept. Adam dies as the federal head over mankind, representing the way all mankind will go because he is the head. But it is only in the last Adam- Jesus Christ- the head of the church that death is conquered for all humanity who trust in Him as Lord and Saviour.

Although Christ under the New Covenant has made it possible for our sin to be eradicated by his death and resurrection and that we all, Man and woman, Jew and gentile are all one in Christ due to our salvation (there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free – we can all be saved. Gal. 3:28), yet our salvation did not eradicate the authority given to man in his headship over his wife and family as indicated in passages such as Eph. 5:21-33 and Col. 3:18-19.

The New Testament spoken by Jesus and Paul clearly points the husband and wife back to Gods original intent pre fall. Male headship seen as loving, caring, nurturing, protecting, guiding and upholding Gods word over and with the wife (not domination) is thus a pre fall command from God which is usurped and distorted by Satan and sin but can be restored in line to Gods will in and through the New Covenant made possible in Christ.

Women in the Old and New Testaments.

The dignity and significance of woman is constantly taught in the bible. There are countless examples of narratives, history and poetry that refer to woman, include woman or highlight the role that woman or a wife or sister played in the life of Pre and post Israel as a nation. The Various laws that were introduced from Exodus through Deuteronomy, just as in other neighbouring cultures to Israel, were normally written in the masculine, for example “if a man steals an ox or a sheep..., if a man borrows an animal. . . (Ex. 22:1-4). The laws of Israel sometimes applied to men only or to woman only (as the menstrual laws), some applied to men and woman equally, sometimes unequally.

Overall, women were better off under the laws of Moses than they would have been in other nations, but we must remember that even when these laws were in force, they did not describe the ideal society as Jesus pointed out that the law of divorce was a concession that God allowed because the people were sinful (Matt. 19:8).

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The laws then were intended to enhance, protect, and bring all of Israel, men, women, and children into a realised relationship with God as intended by Him.

Yet, the laws did not preclude woman in using their giftings, to take initiative, to help the nation and to be positive role models. Rahab, with all her faults, was a positive role model in terms of her willingness to act out in faith of God (Heb.11:31; Jas. 2:25). We think of the courageous life of Sarah (Gen. 12-23), the faith of Rahab (Josh. 2), the perseverance of Hannah (1 Sam. 1-2), the devotion of Ruth (Ruth 1-4), Esther's bravery, Abigail's rebuke of David and many more examples.

Deborah became a judge and led Israel. She was a prophetess thus having a religious role as well as her civic role. We know of Ruth and Naomi, Hannah – a woman of faith and prayer, the widow of Zarephath, Jezebel an influential civil and religious leader, albeit for evil.

We must understand from these various characters that God has no reservations about making his will known to woman, nor does he pronounce them as unreliable messengers. What does stand out though is that in many instances women like Deborah and Jael were living indictments of the weakness of Barak and other men of Israel who were unwilling to be the courageous leaders that God called them to be. These were exceptions because the differentiation of roles for men and women in ministry is rooted not in women's incompetence to receive or transmit truth, but in the primary responsibility of men in God's order to lead and teach. We also need to keep in mind that God granting special concessions does not endorse that the person is the ideal model or precept to follow in all ages.

When we come to the New Testament, we see that Jesus placed a high value on woman as he treated them with dignity and respected and he elevated them in a world where they were often mistreated, yet in doing that he recognised and upheld role distinctions for men and woman. During the 1C Roman and Jewish world well documented cases show that woman were frequently regarded as second-class citizens, but these do not and should not be taken as endorsement of the above by God and his word. Jesus' regard of women was so much different to that of his contemporaries and those who were "keepers and teachers of the Law" that it was often regarded as revolutionary.

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Jesus valued and recognised the intrinsic value of women as persons equal to that of men (Matt. 19:4). Jesus recognised them not just because they were women but that they were human beings made in the image of God. He spoke directly to woman in public (Jhn. 4:27) which was unusual for a Jewish man to do. He spoke freely to women of bad repute (Jhn. 4, Jhn 8) like the Samaritan woman or the woman caught in adultery. Jesus spoke to widows, healed women (Luke 8, 11, 13).

Jesus often used women or the world of women as examples in his teachings and women also featured prominently in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus allowed women to minister to him and for him and taught them theological truths (Matt. 12: 42; Luke. 11:31; Luke 4:26; Luke 18; Luke 10: 38ff) and his ministry was financed by several women of means (Luke 8: 1-3).

At the most crucial time in the life of Christ and in world history at his crucifixion and resurrection God chose to use both men and women to bring about the unravelling of the message of salvation, hope and love. The first though to take this good news out were the women who came to the garden on resurrection morning, and they take the message back to Jesus's appointed leaders. They were the first to share the gospel, again highlighting that the duty and privilege of witnessing for Christ is open to all believers, not just men.

The early church

Even after Jesus' ascension and the beginning of the early church we see that the intention that Jesus sets out to esteem and look after woman was applied. This was applied in Acts 6 when a problem arose in the early church with the neglect of certain women believers who were in the church. If women were of no concern or seen lesser than men in the early church – as it was in the Jewish culture at that time – it would have been evident in the Apostles giving no attention at all to these women. This carries forward Christ's high view and value he gives to woman.

Jesus valued women and recognised the intrinsic equality of men and women but by breaking cultural norms Jesus showed worth and dignity to women as persons.

As a result, women responded warmly to Jesus and his ministry and today all modern women can find the same rich fulfilment in serving Christ as the women did of the Old and New Testaments.

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Equality is not only celebrated by Jesus, but by Paul as evidenced in his writings. His great statement in Galatians 3:28 “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” shows us that in terms of people and in context to the surrounding verses, our salvation in Jesus Christ makes us equal in faith before our Lord. The problem with this verse is that it is often used incorrectly to show equality in gender, race and class outside of justification by faith. That is not what this verse is dealing with, yet, in the same manner it does point out that justification by faith in Christ does not mean that those Jews, Greeks, men and woman, slave or free have lost their physical differences, cultural differences, leadership and headship and biblical identity in the process nor does it imply that God, through the New Covenant has overthrown the created order of different male and female roles or societal roles.

All men and women are equal in worth and in salvation before God, but it doesn't mean equal in function. Equality and identity should not be confused. We are different from each other, and we complement each other in our distinct sexuality, psychological make-up as well as our physiological differences.

J. H Yoder (the Politics of Jesus, pg. 177) writes: “Equality of worth is not identity of role.”

The extreme of this could then be taken to mean then that society, culture or men then determine the role then of each gender. In a sense, that has happened, but that is, from a biblical viewpoint, due to the fall and the outworking of Genesis 3: 14-24.

There is nothing in scripture to suggest that women cannot pursue their own career (Prov 31) or earn their own living or that a married women must do all the shopping, cooking, cleaning etc while the husband remains a non-contributing beneficiary.

We also see that the New Testament makes it plain that Christians, men, and woman alike have been given spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:7-11) and that they are to be used by men and woman to minister in and to the body of Christ (1Peter 4:10). The question is, does the N.T. place any restrictions on the ministry of woman in these gifts.

POSITION STATEMENT: WOMAN IN LEADERSHIP

Paul never restricts women in using their gifts in the church, but he does lay out that all the gifts, when exercised in the gathering of the saints, in a corporate way, are to be done in a fit and proper order. Women were allowed to pray and prophecy (1 Cor. 11) but were to do so under the headship of the appointed Elders of the church, however, the mutual dependence of males and females does not mean that they must behave in identical ways or go beyond their divinely mandated roles and responsibilities.

Having a spiritual gift is not a warrant to use it however we please. The Gifts are given to us by the Holy Spirit, yet they are regulated by the Holy Scriptures given to us by God.

In summary, the Old and New Testaments both give the biblical view that women are not subordinate to men nor over men but alongside men, are equal in worth and faith before God yet both each retain their specific differences. The unfolding of male chauvinism and feminism is then a reaction to either side when they have not considered the biblical precedents set out by God. Genesis 1 relates masculinity and femininity to God's image, while Genesis 2 shows their relation to each other in terms of the role of authority and headship and helper as attributed by God. Gen. 1 defines equality of the sexes; Gen. 2 clarifies equality as not identical. It is the equal but different which has been altered and sullied by the fall and in turn marred the uniqueness of male and female and their positions and function.

Both men and women receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be used in the church, but scripture regulates their use.

It is into this last statement that we find some of the gifts would be viewed and regulated in the church by Gods overall Divine decree over men and woman and their position and function. That is men should bear the primary responsibility for leadership and teaching in the church.

By this it is meant that there is recognition that there are levels and kinds of leadership for which women may and often should take leadership. There are kinds of teaching, administration, organisation, ministry, influence and initiative that wives should take at home and within the church.

Male headship at home and Eldership in the church means that men bear the responsibility for the overall pattern of life (as discussed earlier).

Headship does not prescribe the details of who does what activity precisely as indicated in Gen. 3:9 where God called Adam to account first for what occurred. This does not mean that Eve bore no responsibility for sin, but it is because it is the man who bore primary responsibility for life in the garden. It is to these biblical concepts underlined by the pre fall creational order that the Apostle Paul inserts biblical Headship and defines it as masculine. (Eph. 5:23).

POSITION STATEMENT: WOMAN IN LEADERSHIP

Headship.

Biblical headship has already been discussed in part while dealing with “The fall into sin affected Gods original, perfect order of the sexes.” To remain biblically consistent in regard to the discussion around men and women in our modern-day context in the life of the church we cannot ignore the Divine imperatives given in Genesis 1-3. Raymond C Ortland Jr. puts it “as Genesis 1-3 go, so goes the whole Biblical debate.” (Recovering Biblical manhood and Womanhood. A response to Evangelical Feminism. Pg. 95). Thus, Paul’s allusion to headship in Ephesians 5, Colossians 3, 1 Peter 3, Titus 2 and 1 Tim 3 and Jesus giving himself as the Model of headship to the church in 1 Corinthians 11 are not New Testament introductions but find their very foundation in Genesis 1-3 and that in turn finds its thread throughout the whole of Scripture.

It is important to understand then that the antithesis of biblical male headship is male domination where the man asserts his will over the woman’s will, heedless of her spiritual equality, her rights and her values and needs. This is not consistent with Gods view of headship. But, due to sin and our sinful nature the opposite is hard at work populated and evangelised through incorrect teaching and doctrine.

What is important to note from Genesis 2 is that that the headship role given to the man was not a result of the fall or sin that resulted from the fall, but Man was accountable and responsible before the fall. It is the fall that initiates the change “Because you listened to your wife... (3:17). This reversal introduced by the usurper, Satan, overthrew the entire created order of God and of Genesis 2 and consequently God addresses Adam and not Eve with the final indictment regarding the disobedience and sin that occurred. This indicates that the final authority and headship over Eve in their relationship was Adam. Notice that God in vs 17 says that it is because of Adam that the ground is cursed, he doesn’t hold both responsible. Another aspect is that God pronounces the death penalty on Adam and not on Eve, but because Adam, in Gods eyes is the spiritual head over Eve, as it goes with Adam, so it will go with Eve.

There is no account in pre fall Genesis that the headship of Adam was oppressive and dominating. In fact, throughout scripture what is advocated is that of a selfless male headship where man undertakes to serve his wife and family by providing leadership that would glorify God and benefit them both. Thus, headship calls the man to lay down his desires and even his life for his wife and family.

POSITION STATEMENT: WOMAN IN LEADERSHIP

Jesus understood and recognised role distinctions for Men and women. When Jesus chooses only men as his Apostles, he underscores the role of headship. Although many would call this into question citing cultural bias, we must remember that Jesus was never bound by cultural bias nor adverse to breaking social customs - he did this many times, yet never bent to social or cultural pressure which contravened the word of God.

The commands and statutes of God's word are the plumbline to which Jesus, every apostle and every believer holds themselves accountable to regardless of shifting culture or generational changes.

In Ephesians 5 : 21-33 and Colossians 3: 18-19 where Paul asks wives to submit to their husbands as their head as the church submits to Christ as her Head and in the same breath, he asks the husband to love his wife as Christ loved the church. The comparison here is that Paul is comparing the marital relationship to that of Christ and the church. The Bible calls the husband to be the head in a Christian Marriage (Ephesians 5). It is the husband who is to esteem, love, and sacrificially nurture his wife and his household. When he leads in this fashion, he is following the example of how Christ loved (agape—self-sacrificing) His church.

In doing this Paul shows the role each has – submission and headship, the attitude that each should fulfil his or her role – love, respect and the analogy of marriage to the relationship of Christ and the church (which is a carry-over of Israel and God from the O.T.)

Paul asks the wife to submit to the husband as to the Lord. The Greek – hupotasso in regards to wives and husbands, but here more specifically to wives is a voluntary yielding in love – a disposition of yielding herself to her husband - as she does the same thing before God and in vs 23 Paul qualifies this by stating “for..” because . . . The husband is the head (kephale) of the wife.

In 1 Corinthians 11:1 ff – Paul explicitly relates the headship of a man over a woman to that of Christ over every man and of God over Christ and, as said previously, Paul basis this on Genesis 2:21-24 to demonstrate that God had established man as the head over woman (and by implication as the federal head over mankind) by his own divine sanction.

POSITION STATEMENT: WOMAN IN LEADERSHIP

It is very important to note that the biblical teaching about headship in the family (Husband/wife, parents/ children) forms the fabric and background for what happens in the church. If role differences exist in the family, they then exist in the church as well based on the model of worship given by God to the Israelites and by Jesus to the church. Indeed, in 1 Tim. 3:15 Paul compares the church to Gods household. As God has assigned husbands a particular responsibility as leaders of their homes, it would make sense that he continues this in the church, for God and Jesus saw no separation of ministry and family. These two spheres interpenetrate each other on all levels.

Leadership and servanthood are held in balance in scripture. In Luke 22:26 Jesus says: “the one who rules is like the one who serves. “Servanthood never cancels out leadership, which is seen in Jesus himself who was no less of a leader of his disciples and church when he was on his knees washing their feet. Servanthood never cancels out leadership.

Headship or head (Kephale) as spoken of in Eph. 5:23, 1 Cor.11:2-16 and in Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18, 2:10 referring to Christ as the head or where it is used of men means “source / authority” indicates that the husbands, like Christ towards the church as the authority and to be the source to nourish and care for their wives in the broadest sense possible. This in turn is to be reflected in the church in various ways, just as Christ is reflected in the church.

Though highly valued and given new dignity in Christ, women were not chosen by Jesus to be in the role of the Apostles or of the Priests nor that of Elders. This is traced right through the Old and New Testaments. Woman gave to Christ, served him, fellowshiped with him, accompanied him, learned from him, prayed and testified of him, prophesied in him, evangelised and taught yet no woman was called, commissioned or named as an Apostle, Priest or Elder.

The Thread of Headship in scripture.

The bible teaches us that God is our Father and we – male and female believers are his children (Matt. 6:9, Gal. 4: 1-7). This biblical affirmation draws the analogy of the human family to that of the church as family and it's in this form that the inferences of the respective roles of men and woman within the church are taken. “While there is vast flexibility and diversity within godly marriages, God’s creation and redemption expectation is that the husband will take a leadership initiative within the marriage relationship in order for the two together to fulfil their domestic, ecclesial, and missional destiny in Christ.” (Dr. Robert Yarbrough)

POSITION STATEMENT: WOMAN IN LEADERSHIP

Theologically, any suggestion that women are inferior to men cuts across the bible's insistence that the sexes are of equal worth (Gen. 1:27, Gal. 3:8). What we do see is that the headship conferred upon men and specifically the husband /father is that of taking on themselves the responsibility of serving leadership in their marriages, which is a reflection of the church (Bride and Groom). A blending of love and authority is a feature of all good relationships that the bible describes – including the Godhead (1 Cor. 11:3)

1 Timothy 3:15 identifies God's church as a household and it is paralleled with a family household. The male-female partnership that the apostle Paul spoke about in the marriage relationship is extended to the house of God. God establishes a pattern to be followed with common principles that could be learned from. He does not have an entire set of different principles for personal families and his corporate family as they gather to worship.

God provides an analogy between a godly husband's leadership role in the marriage and a godly man's leadership role in His church. 1 Tim. 3 provides the guidelines for a godly husband, (3:2) he is to be a husband of one wife and provide her with a well-managed home (in other words he is to be a proven manager of his home). His success in the management of his own home reveals how well he might manage the household of God. Both deacons and elders, in 1 Timothy, are required to manifest a godly life of leadership at home prior to leading in God's house.

A wife who enjoys her husband's selfless acts of love and undying commitment to her through acts of obedience to Jesus Christ has an equal commitment to submit to her husband's leadership as unto the Lord. All of this remains God's ideas communicated clearly in Scripture. God speaks through Peter identifying gender difference that leads to a household of love and order (1 Peter 3:1-7) and men are cautioned to respect and honour this difference as they live with their wives.

The idea of submission in roles is characteristic of God's order as 1 Corinthians 11:3 says, "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." Distinct roles are part of God's order to glorify Himself. The Godhead provides a beautiful picture of distinct roles yet different functions. The apostle Paul identifies equality in Christ Jesus as it relates to dignity and worth (Gal. 3:28). However, equality in worth and dignity do not translate into strict equivalency of function and role in God's church.

The biblical connection between family and church strongly suggests that the headship of the husband at home leads naturally to and is inferred by Paul as applied to the church as God's household thus the qualified man as indicated in 1 Tim 3 are to be appointed as overseers/elders in the church.

POSITION STATEMENT: WOMAN IN LEADERSHIP

Elders

1 Timothy 3:1-13 clearly indicates that there are two primary offices in the NT: Elder and Deacon.

Headship in the church setting finds itself within certain words used within scripture. The English word “elder” is the translation of the Greek presbuteros, from which we get “Presbyter” and “Presbyterian”. The word “bishop” comes from the Greek episkopos, from which we get the word “Episcopal” and “Episcopalian”. “Elder” and “Bishop” are interchangeable in the New Testament.

According to the New Testament, elders are responsible for the primary leadership and oversight of a church. Elders lead the church [1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:1–2], teach and preach the Word [1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9], protect the church from false teachers [Acts 20:17, 28–31], exhort and admonish the saints in sound doctrine [1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 3:13–17; Titus 1:9], visit the sick and pray [James 5:14; Acts 6:4], and judge doctrinal issues [Acts 15:6]. In biblical terminology, elders shepherd, oversee, lead, and care for the local church.

The Greek word (poimen) translated “pastor” is used only once in the NT in Ephesians 4:11 and it’s a functional description of the role of elder stressing the care and feeding of the church as God’s flock, just as “bishop/overseer” is a functional description of the role of elder stressing the governing or oversight of the church. The related verb form (poimaino) has the meaning “to shepherd” or “to feed” with the idea of nurturing and sustaining the flock of God. When the following verses Ephesians 4:11, 1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17 Titus 1:9, Acts 20:28, and 1 Peter 5:1-2 are put together to understand the counsel of God’s word, it underscores the understanding that elders exercised pastoral responsibilities as spiritual overseers of the flock, to determine church policy (Acts 15:22), ordain others (1 Tim: 4:4), lead, teach and preach (1 Tim.5:17; cf. 1 Thess. 5:12, 1 Tim 3:2), exhorting and refuting false doctrines (Titus 1:9) and act as shepherds setting the example for all (1 Pet. 5:1-3). These responsibilities put elders at the core of the N.T. church’s work.

Teaching then is the authoritative expounding of God’s word under the authority of God to his people and his word is binding and calls on his saints to submit to it. Teaching is the transmission of apostolic teachings given by God to the church by means of the Spirit of God whereas prophecies differ as they may have errors and thus need to be evaluated.

According to these scriptures, the people responsible for the shepherding of the church are the Elders or overseers of the Church. As stated already, the N.T. uses the terms ‘elder’ and ‘overseer’ interchangeably (Acts 20: 17-28 demonstrates this).

POSITION STATEMENT: WOMAN IN LEADERSHIP

The bible never addresses specifically “pastors” because it usually refers to the pastoral leaders of the church as ‘elders’. There is a distinction in the terminology in terms of office and function. Elders/ overseers is the church office while pastor describes the function/ gifting of these leaders. So it is possible to have pastors who are not elders and elders who are not pastors. Whether or not one might function in a pastoral capacity without holding the office of elder is another matter. Thus, it infers that whereas all elders are to be able to teach, not all teachers are elders. Although being “able to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:9) is clearly a requirement for all elders, it is entirely conceivable that one may be gifted to teach but not qualify for the office of elder.

Teaching and authority over men.

The bible does not teach that woman can never have authority over man. Scripture allows women to have civil authority over men, and over male children, male teenagers and possibly others. But what is brought out here is the pattern of biblical governance amongst a gathered community of saints (believers). What is also to be noted is that Paul is not calling for complete silence from women but for a quiet receptivity and a submission to authority (kephale).

In the pastoral epistles, teaching, when its applied in an authoritative way over congregation or gathering of the saints where men and woman are in sitting, always has a restrictive sense in that it is the important function of an elder (1 Tim. 3:2).

The above section falls then in line with 1 Timothy 2:12 dealing with teaching and Biblical Authority over Men.

Two important notes must be made when considering the role of women elders or pastors who teach and rule the house of God. Paul gives two cautions: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.”

Some may view teaching and exercising authority as two independent functions, and some would interpret them as one in the same. Either way the message by Paul is that when a woman teaches over men that she is exercising spiritual authority.

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This passage would preclude her from teaching over men in the house of God. Although Paul's use of the word *authenteo* (authority) is rarely used in Scripture, the connotation is one who stands positionally over another in a teaching manner. Scripture does not suggest that a woman does not have the gift of teaching. On the contrary, many women have teaching skills that supersede the teaching skills of many men. However, the apostle Paul is stating that God's expectation is that in His household of a congregational setting a woman does not enjoy the privilege to teach over men as it demonstrates spiritual authority, that which he has charged godly men to embrace.

Where this is lacking, is a deep and sad lack of spiritual maturity in the Household of God and an absence of Godly men who take their faith in God seriously and who apply the word of God into their own life first and then to the church as a whole.

We believe that this office of Elder is therefore restricted to men.

According to scripture, the qualifications for the office of Elder that are found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 give a clear indication that the Elder must be "the husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:6) and "must manage his own household well, with all dignity seeing that his children obey him with proper respect, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?" (1 Tim. 3:4-5).

The continuous reference to the pronoun "He" in the 1 Tim 3 and Titus portions referring to Elders underscores the intention that the elder is to be male.

In his design, God has reserved the office of elder to one particular gender, and that is qualified men who fall under the guidelines in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1 and 1 Peter 5:1-5.

Scripture from the Old Testament indicates that the primary role that was limited to certain men was that of the priest (Leviticus 21). In the New Testament, the role limited to certain men is that of the pastor-elder (1 Timothy 2:12-3:1). We no longer abide by the Old Testament system of worship, but follow the leadership example of the New Testament under the New Covenant reserving the title of "pastor" or "elder" for those men that meet the qualifications of Scripture, and so, convinced of the scriptural direction in this area the office of elder is the only office in the church that is reserved for men.

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We believe that Paul's requirements for elders preclude women from serving in that role. Scripture provides no examples of women who served the church in this capacity, and the consensus from church history corroborates this perspective. More pointedly, the Apostle Paul forbids women from teaching with the authority of an elder and exercising spiritual authority over men in the church (1 Timothy 2:12).

To be clear, women should be exercising all of the same spiritual gifts as men, including teaching—explaining the truth of Scripture—and preaching—proclaiming the truth of Scripture (cf. Acts 2:17–18; Colossians 3:16; 1 Peter 4:10–11), yet scripture is also prescriptive in what can and cannot be done, and in the area of the office of an Elder, scripture restricts it to men. Paul makes no reference to social or cultural situations here but heads straight to the command given by God in Genesis 2 therefore the reason to reject this teaching based on cultural norms or societal changes is not justified, as the root of its instruction is based in God's creational order pertaining to all of time and events.

It must be noted that almost the whole of the NT is written to specific circumstances – correcting certain false teachings, answering specific questions, seeking to unify church factions, giving instructions on liturgy etc., but this does not necessarily mean that what was written only applies to those times or circumstances. Many doctrines are developed and fleshed out that have their beginning in the O.T. and weave their way through the N.T. but the specific nature of these various circumstances does not limit the applicability of the foundational biblical doctrines and teachings that Paul, or any other New Testament writer elucidates on.

So, for instance, greeting one another with a Holy Kiss (1 Cor. 16:20) was a cultural norm (and in many places still is) and although it's mandated in scripture, the essence behind it is that we are to greet one another in appropriate ways and let the greeting be genuine. (Paul and Peter make plain to stress that the ordinary kiss should be made holy by the Christian church. The lesson for us is to make your greeting – which is not uniquely Christian, make it holy by Including God in your hearts and in your thoughts when you greet one another with this ordinary, culturally common greeting.)

So, the lesson we can learn here is: Whatever means of expressing greetings we use, let them be genuine.

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This is how passages that can easily be passed off as a cultural norm are to be applicable in a more doctrinal, ethical form to us today. But, when the underlying norm is based in divine sanction that encompasses both testaments, it needs to be heeded as so and not changed to make it a cultural or situational practice.

The question is sometimes phrased as “women in ministry,” but we should note that we have always had women in ministry. That is, we have always had women who served in the church, in a variety of roles, and we’ve had women who were leaders of groups within the church (although their role as leader was not always acknowledged with a specific title).

Not all women are suited for leadership, just as not all men are, but the bible is clear on the aspect of headship. Headship is reserved for men and not woman as it is a functional role with the biblical responsibilities.

In 1 Timothy 2:12, the Apostle Paul commands that a woman is forbidden to “teach or to exercise authority over a man” in the church. Since Paul bases his command in the created order (1 Timothy 2:13–14), we cannot dismiss his limitation as a command specific to one particular cultural setting. In 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul is addressing two distinct ideas—teaching and exercising authority. “Exercising authority” relates rather clearly to the office of elder, as the broader context of 1 Timothy 2:8–3:13 makes clear and the kind of teaching Paul is referring to is where the woman taking on the authority of an elder teaches men in the congregation as well.

It is clear from scripture that Paul’s prohibition on teaching is not total, since women are equipped to teach in God’s covenant community and are gifted with spiritual gifts as well as example; Miriam, Deborah, Priscilla. Scripture commends women who taught audiences of both men and women. In another of his letters, Paul commands the congregation to admonish and teach one another, and these “one another” commands are given without gender distinction (Ephesians 5:19–20, Colossians 3:16).

Scripture informs us that women prayed and prophesied in the early church (Acts 2:17; 1 Corinthians 11:3–16), and it is likely that during these prayers and prophecies, the men listening learned about God and Scripture. This doesn’t violate Paul’s injunction in 1 Timothy 2:12. In other words, explaining Scripture and exhorting others to believe it and obey it in a church context does not, in itself, violate Paul’s prohibition on women teaching in the church.

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The context of Paul's statement shows that the kind of teaching Paul forbids to women in the church is the teaching that most naturally accords with the office of elder. Women are not permitted to teach as elders or with the authority accorded to the elders of the church, whether that authority is explicitly stated or merely implied.

This of course does not preclude women from leadership. There are many examples in the Old and New Testaments that indicate women in leadership positions within the nation of Israel and within the early church. Leadership is taken up in our understanding of what a Deacon is; their position and function.

Deacon/ess

The scriptures in 1 Timothy 3:11 that follow the qualifications for men to be deacons 1 Timothy 3: 8-10 indicate that Paul uses the term *gunaikas* which is the Greek for woman or wives. Both are called to likewise – meaning like the qualifications given to men as deacons, must be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.” The understanding here is that Paul is speaking to woman deacons because of the word likewise suggesting the qualifications for men deacons also apply to women deacons.

If Paul was only referring to the wives of deacons, he would have used “women of deacons.” By leaving the term woman without any qualifier he is thus referring to all women in general.

Evidence tht women functioned as deacons is also found in the person of Phoebe in Romans 16:1 where Paul says that she was “a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae.”

Here we see tht she is acknowledged in an official capacity in the church and thus taking charge of what the term deacon (servant/helper) means to lead and taking charge as a leader of many.

It is at this level of recognised leadership within the church that deacons/ness take charge and lead in various ministries, services, care, and support. The purpose of leadership is to help God's people growing maturity so that we become more like Christ. Serving as a deacon is practical in nature leaving the spiritual oversight to the Elders.

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At SWBC over the recent two to four years, there has been a distinct shift in separating the roles of Elders and Deacons to conform more to the Biblical understanding that Elders have spiritual oversight and shepherding over the church while deacons take on the practical leadership of various ministries, finances, benevolence, compassion, maintenance, training, music, communion etc etc. Of course, the two should interact and liaise over the overall health and wellbeing and growth of the church, but there has been an active move to remove the “deacons” tasks from Elders and Elders from deacons.

What ministries or leadership areas in the church can women be involved in?

We recognize that women offer value to the church that men, by themselves, never can. The focus of Scripture, after all, is not on what women cannot do, but on what they can, and must, do. In fact, Paul tells us that all the members of the body are needed (1 Cor. 12:14-21). And he tells us that “the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we think less honourable we invest with the greater honour.”

From our understanding of scripture, the prohibiting verses are very few in number in regard to those allowing for women in ministry and leadership roles. Verses such as 1 Timothy 2:12, where Paul prohibits a woman from teaching or having governing authority over the whole congregation would rank as one of the prohibiting since it is evident from the context that Paul is talking about the assembled congregation in this passage (1 Tim. 2:8-10; 3:15), as he gives principles that apply to the entire congregation (1 Tim. 3:1-16).

Another area would be that of the official position as a recognised Elder/ Overseer/Shepherd (1 Tim. 3: 1-7, Titus 1 :6-9, 1 Peter 5 :1-3).

On the other hand, scriptures such as Acts 18:26, where, in a less formal setting apart from an assembled congregation, Priscilla and Aquila were talking to Apollos explain scripture more accurately in their home “they took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately.”

This situation is like a small group Bible study in which both men and women are participating and, in that way, “teaching” one another. Titus 2:4 which tells the older women to “train the younger women to love their husbands and children...” would be another form of teaching either in a church setting or at home.

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Moreover, teaching children which is the priority role of both husband and wife, mothers and fathers could be included.

Other areas such as performing a baptism or leading a prayer group, chairing a committee, heading up and leading various serving ministries, caring and compassionate ministries, counselling, Director of Christian Education or Superintendent of the Sunday School, music department, choir, lecturing, pastoral positions on the pastoral staff make up of a church but limiting it to pastoral rather than eldership, missions – or apostolic endeavours, evangelism, visitation, hospitality, maintenance or housekeeping, feeding schemes, child care, deacon, administrative assistant to a staff or pastors, church treasurer, church secretary, member of advisory council to regional governing authority.

Heading up creative or dramatic arts in a church, reading Scripture aloud on Sunday morning, praying, prophesying in a congregational setting (according to 1 Cor. 11:5 and 14:29, where this is not understood as having authority equal to Scripture or Bible teaching), Christian Education director, helping to serve the Lord's Supper giving announcements at the Sunday morning service, taking the offering, giving a personal testimony in church, giving a prayer request in church, being a member of a "prayer team" that will pray for people individually after the service.

These lists can carry on suffice to say there abounds many opportunities for involvement and leadership in a church congregational setting where women and men can be involved in using their spiritual giftings as given within our understanding of scripture.

(When do children become adults, and when does teaching boys become teaching men? We recognise this will vary from society to society and from culture to culture. It may even vary from subculture to sub-culture within our own country.

In our own culture, the litmus would be when children matriculate from high school, move away from home, and begin to support themselves, then surely, they are no longer under the instruction of their mothers at home, but are functioning as adults.)

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In summary.

According to Paul, the fundamental principles regarding the structures of the human family are to be applied to the church as God's household and that embraces the structure of leadership as well. This does not negate the distinctive roles of men and women but upholds them which inevitably results from the practice of Christian love and obedience within the body of Christ.

The role of leadership in the church is tied to many factors. Word usage is one of them where Elder, deacon, Pastor, overseer, teacher when used in their biblical setting, context and hermeneutical interpretation give us a wide spectrum of where people can lead, preach, teach as men and women in the church. This is not limiting women in their full redemptive freedom, but rather it is defining, in our view, biblical headship of authority in spiritual oversight. This is highlighted by biblical teaching that both mothers and fathers are to exercise leadership in the nurture, training, discipline and teaching of their children (Exod 20:12; Lev 19:3; Deut 6:6-9, 21:18-21; Prov 1:8; Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:20; 2 Tim 1:5)

When Paul insists that women should remain silent in the congregation he does not say she cannot learn, nor does he say she cannot take that learning and teach. In other words, we do not understand him to mean an absolute prohibition of all teaching by woman, but because the setting of this passage is for the church assembly or congregation, he cautions against her teaching – or having authority over men in the congregational setting. Women are called to take their learning and apply it to other women (Titus 2:3-4) , or in a broader sense to instruct, explain by the ministry of edification (teaching, singing, praying, reading scripture, prophesying Col 3:16) both men and women in various settings. The object of “silence” falls into the sphere of authority where it is one of governing or ruling exercised under God by some Christians over others.

This is ascribed to the elder/s who according to (1 Tim 2: 11-14; 3: 1-5, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-3) are to be men ; thus by its very definition the governing authority as ascribed to the elder/s would exclude a woman of becoming an elder thus too, the position in a local church of elder/overseer/pastor/teacher over the congregation would, in our understanding of the scriptural injunctions quoted above prohibit women to do so .

As said already – this is not bound by a cultural preference but is based on the creational order which Paul alludes to. The outworking of this is to preserve male headship and leadership that is consistent with the creation account and the biblical thread through scripture.

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The Bible's teaching may be controversial but it's not self-contradictory. Paul doesn't forbid women from praying and prophesying in the assembly. This teaching reflects Paul's very practical concern for women who minister in churches and how they might do so in a way that honours headship. That very same concern should mark every congregation—even ours.

There are many doctrines that are essential to Christian faith—for example, the church must teach that there is only one God, and that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Yet there are many other doctrines that are not essential to our faith but are practical guidelines or policies for our church and these may differ from culture to culture, or from one time in history to another. We want to get them right, but we must also understand they are not essential to what it means to be a Christian. We believe that eldership of women is one of those doctrines. It is a policy matter. People do not need to leave the church if they think we are wrong about the millennium, nor do they need to leave if they think we are wrong about women's role in the church.

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CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

AS PER OUR SWBC CONSTITUTION:

CLAUSE 5: MEMBERSHIP

The membership shall consist of:

5.1 Those whose names are in the Church register of members at the time of the adoption of this constitution.

5.2 Those who have given evidence of their personal salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have confessed that faith in baptism by immersion, have accepted this constitution and who have been admitted to membership in terms of Clause 6.1.

CLAUSE 6: ADMISSION OF MEMBERS

6.1 After attending a new member's orientation class, application for church membership shall be made in writing to the Eldership or the Secretary, whom in turn shall submit the application to the Executive for consideration. Applicants need to be those who have given evidence of their personal salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have confessed that faith in baptism by immersion, have accepted this Constitution. If approved by the Executive, their names shall be placed on the Church notice board, included in the church bulletin and announced at all services for two consecutive weeks following which, if there have been no formal and motivated objections in writing to the Executive from the members, their membership shall be approved.

6.2 In the event that the application in 6.1 is approved the applicant shall be welcomed by the members of the church at a church service and be given a church Membership certificate, signed by a pastor and the Church secretary, which is evidence of Membership of the SWBC.

