

Men and Women under God

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Introduction

The roles of women and men in the church and the family is a highly charged topic. Many books have been written and many have produced arguments one way or the other. In western society, it is often considered to be a no brainer - of course women should have the same roles as men. We are often told that women are as good as men at everything, and only a dinosaur would say otherwise. It is also claimed that to say that men and women are different is to promote abuse.

But then, we are also often told that women are better than men at many things, so are they the same, or different?

However, the question we need to answer, is not what does our society say, but what does God tell us to do? We may have strong feelings on this subject, but we need to let our feelings be informed and corrected by God. What are his loving and good instructions to us?

God has spoken to us in his Spirit inspired word, the Bible, so we need to take our views from there.

In the Bible relationships between the sexes are covered in a number of places, in a variety of ways. This set of studies is aimed to work through the verses that are most relevant or come up most often in discussion on the issue and try to come to a conclusion as to what the Bible says to us on this important but controversial topic.

As a convenient arrangement of the material, the study generally follows the Biblical order. Obviously, a brief overview like this cannot hope to cover in great detail every objection that may be raised on one side or the other, but it aims to briefly deal with the main arguments as we go through each passage.

The material is divided up into 7 studies, each of which should be able to be covered in a single session if the leader remains focused. It will help to realise that many questions that come up will eventually be covered in later studies, and are best kept till then.

In the Leader's Notes, I have given brief outlines of an answer to each question asked, where those answers can be derived directly from the text.

In the Appendix there is a very brief list of material that may be helpful for those who want to look into the topic in more detail.

1 The Scriptures and Creation

1.1 *The Scriptures*

In this series, we are going to be looking at what the Bible says on this issue. It is good to first work out what type of document the Bible is, and to what extent we can rely on it. Much of the heat generated on this topic is because ultimately people have different views of the Bible.

Read: 2 Peter 1:16-21

Q1 Are the Scriptures cleverly devised stories?

Q2 How close was Peter's knowledge of Jesus?

Q3 How does Peter describe the "prophetic message", that we also have, in verse 19?

Q4 Is Scripture the prophet's own interpretation of things?

Q5 Whose interpretation is it then?

Read: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Q6 To what degree is Scripture God breathed (inspired)? (verse 16)

Q7 What is Scripture useful for? (verses 15-17)

We see that the Bible was written by human agents, but what they wrote was inspired by the Holy Spirit, it is not their own interpretation, and is completely reliable. This means that books and letters contained in the Bible, though initially written for the original audience, are also God's words for us, written by God to instruct us today. Though it may aid our study, we do not need an in depth understanding of the original situation in order to understand God's instructions to us.

1.2 *Godly Headship*

In this series we are going to be talking about headship quite a bit. In order to set in our minds what this looks like, it is good to go to our chief and perfect example – Jesus.

Read: Philippians 2:5-8

Q8 Who is Jesus by nature or form?

Q9 What nature or form did he take on instead?

Q10 How far did he go in his service?

Q11 What does Christlike headship look like?

Jesus modelled servant leadership, giving himself up totally for those whom he served. He did not lord it over others, or abuse them, or do anything to hurt them, but instead he was willing to submit even to the excruciating death of crucifixion for them.

This is the form of leadership or headship that is modelled for us by Jesus, and it is the form of leadership that Christian leaders are to copy, whether in the church or home (Ephesians 5:25-33). We should keep this in mind as we work through the following material.

Clearly, this means that abuse or violence has no part in headship, what is modelled by Jesus is exactly the opposite.

1.3 *Creation*

1.3.1 *Image of God*

The first place we turn to is the creation. How did God create the world to operate, back before the Fall, back when it was all still "very good" (Genesis 1:31)?

Note: In these verses, the word variously translated as man, mankind or humankind is "adam" in Hebrew. This is the generic term for mankind, but is later also used as Adam's name, as he is the father of all mankind.

Read: Genesis 1:26-28

Q12 Who is made "in the image of God"?

Being made in the image of God has been seen to mean many things. Some of what it means would include:

1. It was not a physical likeness — but the human body was an appropriate physical vessel for Jesus to use
2. It was a mental likeness — we have the mental capacity to communicate with God and to be creative in our own way
3. It was a moral likeness — we are capable of being holy, capable of knowing right and wrong and being responsible for our decisions
4. It was a social likeness — we are created to be relational, both with each other and with God

Q13 Who is to have dominion (to rule over) creation?

Q14 Who is to be fruitful?

We see that both male and female are made in the image of God. Together they are to have dominion over the creation, to subdue and fill it.

1.3.2 Creation Order

Note: This is not a second creation story, instead it is zooming in on the sixth day and giving us a more detailed account of what happened on that day.

Read: Genesis 2:4-9, 15-24

Q15 Who is made first? Adam or Eve?

We need to figure out whether this is significant, to do that, we can look at whether Paul considers it is.

Don't worry about the particular argument being put forward by Paul - we will deal with that in a later study, just look at Paul's reason for coming to his conclusion.

Read: 1 Timothy 2:11-13

Q16 Does Paul consider that the order of creation is significant?

Paul considers it highly significant that Adam was created first.

1.3.3 Naming

Q17 Going back to Genesis 2:15-17, when and to whom did God give his instructions for living in the garden?

Q18 Who gave the names to all the animals and when? What implications can you draw from Adam naming the animals?

Adam giving the names to the animals shows his headship over the animals, consistent with mankind being given dominion over creation in Genesis 1:28

Q19 Who gave Eve her name? Can you draw any implications from this? Also see Genesis 3:20

The fact that Adam names Eve does seem to imply some sort of headship over her.

1.3.4 Creation of Eve

Q20 Why does God create Eve (Genesis 2:18)?

Q21 How does God create Eve? What does that imply for Adam? What implications can you draw from this?

This verse implies some sort of difference in roles. Woman was created to be man's helper. This word "helper" is used of God (e.g. Psalm 54:4, Hosea 13:9), so it is not degrading in any way! Note that this was BEFORE the fall, while everything was still "very good".

We need to figure out whether this reason for creating woman is significant, to do that, we can look at whether Paul considers it is.

Again, don't worry about the particular argument being put forward by Paul – we will deal with that in a later study, just look at Paul's reason for coming to his conclusion.

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:3-12

Q22 Does Paul consider the purpose that Eve was created for to be significant?

Q23 What can we conclude from this about how men and women were designed to relate?

Paul uses the fact that Eve was made for man, as his helper, to demonstrate that there is an hierarchy of headship – Christ is the head of man, and man is the head of woman. We will look into this further in a later study.

Looking at the detailed creation story in Genesis 2, we see that at the time when God had created the world, when everything was still "very good", there was an order to the relationship between man and woman. Man was in a headship role and woman was created to be his helper as they both worked to achieve the tasks that God had given them to do.

We have seen that the man and woman had different roles, but they were equal. They were equally created in God's image, equally capable of a relationship with God and with each other.

God says that it is not good for man to be alone, but that doesn't mean that we cannot be fulfilled as a single person. It means that men, generally, need women in order to fulfil the task they both were given at creation.

1.4 To Finish

Q24 What can we conclude from this study as to how men and women were designed to relate?

2 The Fall

We now turn to what we can tell about their relationship as things went sour.

When God created the world it was described as "very good" (Genesis 1:31), but sadly, things didn't stay that way. Adam and Eve decided to rebel against God. In looking at this account, we can learn further details about their relationship, both before and after they suffered the effects of their disobedience.

2.1 *Order of Culpability*

Read: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

Q1 What was Adam told he should not do in the garden?

Adam was told this before Eve was created out of his side. Presumably he (or God) later told Eve all that God had told him.

Q2 Who does the serpent target when seeking to undermine their relationship with God?

Q3 Where was Adam during this process? (See verse 6)

Q4 What does this imply about who is responsible for what happened?

We don't know how long Adam had been "with her" (verse 6). He may have been there the whole time, or he may have just joined her, but either way, he went along with her in their rebellion against God, expressed by eating the fruit.

Read: Genesis 3:8-19

Q5 Who does God first talk to and hold accountable for their action?

Q6 Why do you think he did that?

Q7 Who does Adam blame for his mistake?

Q8 Who does Eve blame?

Q9 When confronted with our own sin, is this what we do today?

Adam and Eve have now "fallen", they are acting out their sinful selfish attitudes, so Adam blames Eve and God for putting her there, rather than admitting his own sin, and Eve blames the serpent. We all still tend to do this today, and so God has to continually call on us to admit our own sin before God.

Here we see that God holds Adam to account for what they did as a couple, he is the head, and so should have either intervened or not gone along with Eve's sinful action.

2.2 Woman Deceived

Q10 What does Eve say the serpent did to her? (Genesis 3:13)

We need to figure out whether this is significant, to do that, we can look at whether Paul considers it is.

Again, don't worry about the particular argument being put forward by Paul - we will deal with that in a later study, just look at Paul's reason for coming to his conclusion.

Read: 1 Timothy 2:11-15

Q11 Does Paul think that the fact that Eve was deceived is important?

Paul also refers to Eve being deceived in 2 Corinthians 11:3, but this is addressed to all his Corinthian hearers, fearing that they, both male and female, might be deceived, so is not relevant to our present discussion.

We see that the Bible tells us of the differences between men and women, and that this is significant.

2.3 Relations Marred

Adam and Eve are now suffering the fruit of their rebellion against God and his loving instructions. We now look at what effect this has on their relationship.

Read: Genesis 3:16

Q12 What are we told about how Adam and Eve will now relate?

Cain and Abel were Adam and Eve's sons. Cain was angry when Abel's offering to God was accepted and his was not.

Read: Genesis 4:6-7

Q13 Are there any similarities between verses 3:16 and 4:7?

Q14 Does this help you understand what God is saying to Eve in 3:16?

Some say that this verse means that Eve will have an over dependence on Adam, and there may be some truth in this. However, the parallel in Genesis 4:7 indicates that her desire may be to work against his role as her head, just as sin works against Cain. This may express itself in a woman being bossy, controlling or manipulative.

For Adam's part, rather than being a loving sacrificial head, he will want to rule over Eve. This is the worldly view of leadership.

2.4 To Finish

Q15 What have you learnt so far about the way that men and women are designed to interrelate?

Q16 What relationships are you in where this might be relevant?

Q17 What could you do to improve those relationships?

3 Mt Sinai to Jesus

3.1 *At Mt Sinai*

When God brought the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt, he had the unique opportunity to set up a new community, with rules that followed his ideals. He had a clean slate. We read about the rules in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. God wanted his people to be different from the nations around them, so he didn't simply follow the normal standards of the society of that day.

Nehemiah lived about 600BC, around 1000 years after Moses' day.

Read: Nehemiah 9:13

Q1 What was Nehemiah's opinion of the rules that were set up under Moses?

So what did that society look like? We will briefly look at three passages to get a picture.

Read: Exodus 15:19-21

Q2 What role was given to Miriam? What does she do?

Jethro, Moses' father in law then came and looked at what Moses was doing and made some suggestions.

Read: Exodus 18:24-26

Q3 Who were to be judges?

They then went to the foot of Mt Sinai, where God gave Moses instructions on how to set up this new society, and its priesthood.

Read: Exodus 40:12-15

Q4 Who were to be the priests

After 40 years of wandering, the Israelites finally reached the edge of the Promised Land, and Moses reminded them of what he had done.

Read: Deuteronomy 4:5-8

Q5 How are the new laws described, and how are the surrounding nations expected to react?

These verses show that the Lord gave Israel the laws as a witness to the nations as to how wonderful the Lord is. This includes the male leadership that he designed into it. God would not have set up his own nation like that and yet left a major flaw in it.

We see that in this new, good, society that God set up, men are designated to be judges and priests, but women also have an important and valued role in that society, one role being that of a prophet.

We will look later at what being a prophet involves.

3.2 Women as Prophets

3.2.1 Deborah

One of the objections that is commonly raised to male headship is the example of women who are in obvious leadership positions. One of the women often mentioned is Deborah. Deborah lived during the time of the Judges, before Israel had a king.

Read: Judges 4:1-10; 23-24

Note: It can be difficult to figure out what is going on here, so we must be careful not to put too much weight on this passage, but only use it in conjunction with other passages. It is a good principle when reading the Bible, to always let easy to understand passages help us to understand harder to understand passages, and not to base our theology on the hard ones.

Q6 How is Deborah described?

Q7 Was she good at what she did? Did God use her gifts?

Q8 Why was Barak rebuked by Deborah in verse 9?

Q9 What conclusions can you draw from this incident about the roles of men and women?

Deborah was used by God to lead the people and she was an effective leader. Barak was rebuked, and dishonoured, because he wouldn't lead the army, but wanted Deborah to go with him. This best seems to make sense if we see that Barak was supposed to fulfil his

role as a man, but wanted a woman to help him. In response, God ensured that it was a woman who killed the Canaanite commander to shame Barak, who should have done this task.

It seems that when men won't do their job, God will use women instead, and they can be very effective.

3.2.2 Huldah

Huldah is a not so well known prophet. Under Godly King Josiah, a neglected Book of the Law (possibly Deuteronomy) had been found.

Read: 2 Kings 22:8-20

Q10 Who did Hilkiah visit in order to “inquire of the Lord”?

Not long after this, the Babylonians invaded Judah and took the leaders and many of the people into exile.

Q11 Did Huldah’s prophecy come true? Was she a true prophet of God?

Again we see God using a woman as his prophet.

3.3 Strong Women

We can get a good view of the role of women in Old Testament times, and the types of things they got involved in, through the description of a woman that we have in Proverbs 31.

This is obviously a picture of an ideal woman, which no one could hope to live up to, but we can still learn from her.

Note: Gates were the centre of civic and economic life in an Israelite city, where the leading men gathered.

Read: Proverbs 31:10-31

Q12 What do we learn about ancient women here?

The picture we have here of an ancient woman can go against many of our expectations. She is industrious, makes decisions and is involved in commerce outside the home. She cares for her family and the poor. She is more concerned with her relationship with God than her outward beauty. In short, this woman is a strong, active, independent, capable and Godly figure. She sets a high bar for women of today who might try to emulate her!

3.4 Jesus

As we look at this topic, it is of course critical that we investigate Jesus' attitude to women. First off, it is instructive to look at the way he interacted with the expectations of the people of the day.

The Pharisees were religious leaders among the Jews who generally didn't like what he said. The Herodians were not so worried about religion but more concerned with political power and keeping on the good side of their overlords the Romans. In this reading, they think they have come up with a question that will cause Jesus to offend either one group or the other.

Read: Matthew 22:15-22

Q13 In verse 16, what is their assessment of Jesus attitude to the norms of the day?

Jesus' answer in fact doesn't please either group, but also doesn't give them any grounds to condemn him.

We see in this incident, and elsewhere that Jesus is not worried about the attitudes of the people, even his enemies acknowledge that. Instead, he has come to turn them back to God and to challenge their expectations.

3.4.1 Jesus and women

We can now turn to Jesus and his interactions with women.

Note: Many first century Jews felt that women were intellectually inferior and incapable of studying the Bible.

3.4.1.1 **Mary and Martha**

Read: Luke 10:38-42

Q14 What does Martha think Mary should be doing when Jesus is visiting them?

Q15 What does Jesus think that Mary should be doing?

Jesus' attitude to Mary is that she can sit at his feet and learn just like the other disciples.

3.4.1.2 **Woman at the well**

Read: John 4:7-10, 27-30, 39-42

Q16 Why was the woman surprised? (verse 9)

Q17 Why are the disciples surprised? (verse 27)

Q18 What was the effect of the woman talking to the towns people?

Q19 What was the ultimate effect of the woman's drawing the people to Jesus?

Jesus interacts with the woman in a culturally unexpected way, drinking from her cup and talking to her about spiritual things. She in her turn is an effective evangelist, convincing some by her own testimony, and bringing others to Jesus where many others believed.

3.4.1.3 *Mary at the tomb*

Jesus has been crucified and the disciples are in disarray. On the first day of the week, Mary and some of the other women went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. In Jesus day, women were considered to be unreliable witnesses.

Read: John 20:10-18

Q20 What was Mary's role in the announcement that Jesus had risen from the dead?

Jesus had a counter culturally high view of women, treating them with great respect and, despite the cultural norms, he considered them worthy of receiving teaching and being able to interact intelligently on theological issues. He used them as effective evangelists and they were also the first witnesses to his resurrection.

3.4.2 Choosing Disciples

Read: Matthew 9:9-13

Q21 What profession did Matthew follow?

Q22 What was the opinion of the Pharisees of such people?

Q23 Was Jesus worried about people's opinions or cultural norms?

Read: Matthew 10:1-4

Q24 Who does Jesus choose as his disciples, later called apostles?

We have seen previously that Jesus wasn't concerned about the norms of the day, and as we see here, he was happy to do things like choose tax collectors as disciples. Given this background, it seems unlikely that he would choose men and not women as his future leaders on the basis of cultural norms. Jesus must have chosen men because it was right to put only men in leadership positions among his followers.

3.5 To Finish

Q25 What have you learnt from this study about how women are viewed in the Bible?

Q26 How has this changed your view of what roles women should be involved in?

4 Roles in the family

4.1 *Ephesians*

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul tells the Ephesians that they should be wise in how they live as God's holy people. In this context he gives some instructions concerning various relationships.

Read: Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1, 4, 5, 9

In verse 21, we are told that we should "submit to one another", and then in verses 5:25-6:9. Paul gives us examples of what submission looks like.

Q1 In these examples, do we see two people submitting to one another as equals, or one person submitting to another person because of their different roles?

We see that in verse 21, Paul is not saying that all Christians should submit to all other Christians. He is saying that someone who is in a subordinate role should submit to those who are in a leadership role. He then proceeds to give examples of that: wives submitting to husbands; children to parents; and slaves to masters.

Q2 The relationship between a husband and a wife is compared to what other relationship in these verses?

These verses give us a wonderful parallel between the relationship between a man and his wife, and Jesus and his church. Paul marvels in verses 29-32 that the church becomes "one flesh" with Jesus, in the same way that a husband and wife become "one flesh". The earthly marriage is a symbol for us of the reality of the heavenly marriage, and that heavenly marriage gives us the perfect example of how husbands and wives should relate.

Q3 In verses 22 to 33, who is to submit to who?

Q4 In what situations should a wife submit to her husband (verse 24)?

Q5 How is a husband to relate to his wife in verse 25?

Q6 What example is the husband to follow in his headship?

Q7 How far did Jesus go in his servant leadership of the church?

Q8 How far should a husband go in his servant leadership of his wife?

These verses give us a wonderful model for wives and husbands to follow: as the church submits to Jesus, so wives should submit to their husbands; and as Jesus sacrificed himself for his church, looking out for her needs before his own, so a husband is to sacrifice himself for his wife.

4.2 *Colossians*

One principle of good Bible reading is to see whether our understanding of one passage is backed up by other portions of Scripture.

Read: Colossians 3:17-19

Q9 Does this passage support or modify the understanding you gained from Ephesians 5?

4.3 *1 Peter*

Unlike the letters to the churches at Ephesus and Colossae which were written by Paul, this letter is written by the Apostle Peter. It is good to see whether it is only Paul who promotes the particular view of relationships within marriage that we have just read about.

Read: 1 Peter 3:1-7

Q10 Does this passage support or modify the understanding you gained from Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3?

Q11 Should Christian women only submit to their husbands if they are Christians?

Q12 Why should they do this?

Q13 What example does Sarah give women of today (verse 6)?

Q14 How should husbands treat their wives (verse 7)?

Q15 Why does Peter give them this instruction – what might be the result if they do not follow what Peter says?

Peter's model for family relations is the same as Paul's. Some try to portray Paul as a "woman hater", but we see that Peter is of the same mind.

The model of relationships that we have seen are what was originally intended for Adam and Eve. However, as we saw when we looked at Genesis 3, we find it impossible to follow these instructions because of our sinfulness. Genesis 3:16b tells us that women will not want to submit to their husbands, and husbands will not want to practice servant leadership of their wives, but will instead want to rule over them.

In spite of our sinfulness, this is still the model that Christian husbands and wives should seek to follow in their relationships.

This will be completely misunderstood by the society around us who have few good role models. However, as we follow God's ways, we will show the wisdom of God to the people around us. As we saw in Study 2, this will be in the same way that his laws given to Israel at Mount Sinai through Moses were supposed to show God's wisdom to the surrounding nations.

In these passages, we see that it is up to wives to voluntarily submit to their husbands, and for husbands to sacrifice themselves for their wives. There is no compulsion here. There is no justification for a husband to attempt to make his wife submit to him.

4.4 1 Corinthians

In this section of Paul's letter to the church at Corinth, Paul is answering questions that they have asked him in a letter he has received.

Read: 1 Corinthians 7:1-16

Q16 In verses 3-6, should married couples have sex?

Q17 How should it be determined how often they should have sex and who should decide?

Q18 Who's sexual needs should the husband be concentrating on?

Q19 Who's sexual needs should the wife be concentrating on?

Q20 In verse 10-16, who may decide whether to divorce?

Q21 What is the overriding consideration in deciding whether to separate (verse 16)?

Paul says that sexual relationships are by mutual agreement as an act of mutual service, and he goes on to talk to both wives and husbands about divorce in very egalitarian terms. This was unheard of in Jewish society in that time. Christians should not seek to separate from their non-Christian spouses as they may be able to play a part in them becoming Christians, and also for the sake of their children (verse 14).

In this study, we have seen that in the Biblical view of marriage, wives should submit to their husbands and husbands should sacrificially serve their wives, modeling their relationship on that between Jesus and the sanctified church.

We also see that Paul is counter cultural in his instructions concerning sex in marriage and divorce. Paul sees that sex in marriage is good and that the husband and the wife are to look after the needs of their partners before their own needs.

We have been given a very broad principle here. How this will work out in practice in a marriage will depend on the husband and wife and their own situation, gifts and abilities.

4.5 To Finish

Q22 How do you think that Paul's view of how relationships should work in marriage would be described in the secular media?

Q23 Why do you think that God ordained that the marriage relationship should work this way?

Q24 Are you convinced that this is the right way for husbands and wives to relate?

Q25 If you are married, how does your marriage measure up against God's standards?

God is the one who designed and created us. He knew what he was doing when the Holy Spirit inspired Paul and Peter to write on this topic. God's ways are designed for human flourishing, but it can be difficult for us, as sinful people, to live out his ways in practice.

Thankfully we can continually bring our failings to God, asking for his forgiveness in Christ, and asking for him to help us better follow his ways in the future.

5 Roles in the Church 1

5.1 *Prophets and Teachers*

In looking at roles in the church we first need to look at some of those roles and work out what they are from a Biblical perspective.

Much confusion is caused by our lack of understanding of prophecy, what it is, what it is not, and how Old Testament prophecy relates to prophecy in New Testament times.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul is writing to a church that had got roles and gifts all muddled up.

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

Q1 What roles or gifts does Paul tell us have been appointed by God

Q2 For Paul, is prophecy the same as teaching?

In this section, Moses is telling the people what will they should do as they enter the Promised Land.

Read: Deuteronomy 18:17-22

Q3 What should happen to a false prophet?

Q4 How can they tell whether a prophet is speaking words from the Lord?

In the Old Testament, many people are referred to as prophets, and various forms of communication are referred to as prophecy, not all of it fore-telling the future.

Moses sees that God will raise up prophets who will replace him. These prophets are to be treated with great care, they are to be listened to and obeyed. There are great consequences if this does not happen, both for disobedient hearers (verse 19) and for false prophets (verse 20).

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:29-32

Q5 How many prophecies should be heard?

Q6 When a prophet speaks, what should "others" do?

Q7 If another person has a revelation (prophecy), what should the first prophet do?

Paul uses the terms prophecy and revelation interchangeably.

Q8 Is this different to how we saw prophecies were to be treated in Deuteronomy?

In this situation, prophecies are to be under control, to be limited in time and number, and are to be weighed on the spot. This is very different to prophecies in Old Testament times.

A number of the Old Testament prophets were inspired by God to give us the Scriptures. In contrast, the New Testament was delivered to us through the Apostles and their mouthpieces (2 Peter 3:2). Now that the time of the Apostles has ended, there is no longer a need for Scripture writing (Hebrews 1:1-2), and so the role of prophets is greatly reduced.

So, what does New Testament style prophecy involve?

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:3-5, 24-26, 31

Q9 What do the words of the prophet achieve in verse 3?

Q10 Who does the prophet edify (build up) in verse 4?

Q11 What happens to an unbeliever as a result of hearing prophecy in verse 24?

Q12 What will be the result for the unbeliever in verse 25?

Q13 How does Paul summarise what prophecy achieves in verse 31?

We have seen that prophesy is given by God to strengthen, encourage and build up the church. It will convict unbelievers of sin and result in them worshiping God.

It does not necessarily involve fore telling, but it is a revelation, or we might say an insight that God has given to the prophet.

We saw earlier that teaching is different to prophesying. So we now turn to asking what teaching involves.

Read: Titus 2:1-15

Q14 What does Paul tell Titus about his teaching in these verses?

Read: 2 Timothy 4:2

Q15 What does Paul tell Timothy his preaching and teaching (instruction) should include?

Paul sees teaching as including correction and rebuke, along with encouragement.

From the way he uses the terms in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, we can see that Paul uses the terms message or word of knowledge and teaching interchangeably. Presumably this is related to knowledge of the Scriptures and the Gospel.

So how does prophesy differ from teaching?

We have seen that they have many things in common, for instance, both involve encouragement. However, teaching uniquely involves correction and rebuking and it includes the passing on of sound doctrine. It requires a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures and the Gospel.

5.2 Who may prophecy and where?

Given this knowledge of the terms, we need to find out whether there is any difference between men and women in how they are to practice these gifts in a Godly fashion.

In this passage, Luke is telling us of his journey with Paul to Jerusalem.

Read: Acts 21:7-9

Q16 Who are described as prophets here?

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:4-5

Q17 Who are described as doing what here, and where are they doing it?

As we have seen in the Old Testament, there isn't any restriction for women to be prophets in the New Testament and they may do so in the church context. We also see that there is no restriction on them praying in that context either.

5.3 *Who may teach whom?*

Having looked at prophesy, we now turn to teaching. In these passages, Paul is telling his helpers, Titus and Timothy, what they should do in their ministry and setting up of churches.

Read: Titus 2:3-5

Q18 Who should teach who here?

Read: 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15

Q19 Who taught Timothy as a child and are commended for it?

Read: 1 Timothy 2:11-14

Q20 Who should a woman not teach or have authority over?

Q21 In what manner should a woman learn?

Women should not seek to work against the man's role of teaching, but instead they should be act in a way that indicates their acceptance of it.

Q22 What reason is given in verse 13?

Q23 What reason is given in verse 14?

The first reason given by Paul is based on the way that God created men and women to relate to each other. As we saw in our first study, this was before they sinned, while the creation could still be described as “very good” (Genesis 1:31).

The second reason relates to differences in the way Eve and Adam related to Satan and his deception.

Neither of these reasons are cultural in nature, and so are applicable for all time.

As we have seen before, this is profoundly counter cultural. Our society screams at us that women are just as good as men in everything, so they should be able to do everything a man does. The question here is not about women’s ability. If Paul meant that women are incapable of teaching, then he wouldn’t have instructed women to teach other women and children and he wouldn’t have commended Lois and Eunice. The question here is about the order that God has designed into how men and women should relate.

We see in this study that in the Christian context, women are encouraged to pray and prophecy in mixed groups, and to teach other women and children. However they shouldn't teach men or have authority over them. If men are to lead their wives in the home, then this makes sense – what happens in church should be consistent with that.

5.4 To Finish

Q24 Who does the prophesying in your church? Does it happen?

Q25 Who does the teaching in your church? Does it include correction and rebuke?

Q26 Does your church need encouragement or correction and rebuke on this issue?

6 Roles in the Church 2

The words used in the original Greek for men and women *ανηρ* (*aner*) and *γυνε* (*gune*) can mean either a man or a husband, and either a woman or a wife. What is meant has to be determined by context, which can be a source of confusion.

For this reason, some versions refer to a husband and wife in this passage, others to a man and woman. This problem will also occur in other passages in this study.

6.1 Headship

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Q1 Who is the head of Christ (verse 3)?

To look at this concept in more detail, read 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. This says that Jesus is eternally subject to the Father.

Q2 Who is the head of man (verse 3)?

Q3 Who is the head of woman (verse 3)?

Q4 What is a woman doing if she does not cover her head when praying?

Q5 What is the purpose of the woman's head covering (verse 10)?

Q6 Does a head covering have this symbolism in our society?

Q7 Is there some other symbolism relating to the differences of men and women used in our society that it might be good to preserve?

In this passage, Paul tells us that there is an order in the relationship between man and woman as there is in the Trinity. This order is still relevant because it is the way men and women were created to relate to each other (verses 8-9), as we saw in Study 1.

This order should continue to be expressed in culturally applicable ways.

6.2 Church Leadership Roles

We are now going to look at the leadership roles in the churches that Paul and his helpers planted. These may or may not have any correspondence to the leadership roles in your church, even if the same terms are used.

Read: Philippians 1:1

Q8 What roles does Paul identify in the church at Philippi?

We will now look at these roles in more detail.

6.2.1 Overseers / Elders

Paul seems to use the term *overseer* interchangeably with the term *elder*. However, this isn't always the way these terms are used in practice.

The term *overseer* has been traditionally translated as *bishop*. In Greek it is the word *episcopos*, from which we get the English word *episcopal* and the *Episcopalian* system of church government that emphasises the role of *Bishops*.

The word *elder* in Greek is *presbuteros*, from which we get the English word *Presbyter* and the Presbyterian system of church government that emphasises the role of *Elders*.

In Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus he gives them instructions on how to set up the churches they had planted.

Read: 1 Timothy 3:1-7

Q9 What must he be able to do, as opposed to what he is to be like, in verse 2?

Q10 What other role does he have in the church in verses 4 and 5?

Read: 1 Timothy 2:12

Q11 What is a woman not permitted to do in a church?

Q12 Given your answers to Q9 and Q11, does the role of overseer appear to be reserved for only one sex?

Read: 1 Timothy 5:17

Paul, having used the word *overseer* earlier in the letter now swaps *elder*.

Q13 What tasks do the elders perform?

Read: Titus 1:5-9

Paul uses the term *elder* in verse 5 and *overseer* in verse 7. He seems to be using them interchangeably, emphasising that they need to be blameless, above reproach.

Q14 Does the role of elder appear to be reserved for only one sex?

Q15 What task does he perform in verse 7?

Q16 What tasks does he perform in verse 9?

We have seen that an overseer or elder must be a man of exemplary character who is able to manage the church. They must also be able to preach, teach and rebuke.

6.2.2 Deacons

This reading is from when Jesus had recently returned to heaven and the Apostles were trying to figure out how best to run the church in Jerusalem.

Read: Acts 6:1-6

Q17 How did the twelve Apostles decide to solve their problem?

Q18 What did that allow the Apostles to concentrate on?

These seven men are seen to be the first *deacons*. The word's origin is someone who gets their "hands dirty". They are people who do the practical service to allow the Apostles (and later Elders / Overseers) to concentrate on their particular role. Often this word is simply translated as *servant* and in other ways, so it may not be obvious where it occurs in your Bible version.

Read: Romans 16:1-2

Q19 How is Phoebe described?

This may indicate that women can be deacons. Our next reading may add to our understanding of this question.

Read: 1 Timothy 3:8-13

Q20 What are the qualifications for a deacon (verses 8-10, 12)?

Note: There has been much discussion on how to interpret verse 11. The question is whether Paul is referring to the wives of deacons, or is referring to women who are deacons (deaconesses). Your bible may have notes giving the alternative reading. It seems strange that Paul would specify the requirements for the wives of deacons, but not the wives of elders, so in context, and coupled with Romans 16:1-2 we have just read, it seems highly likely he is talking about women who are deacons.

Q21 What are the qualifications for a woman deacon (verse 11)?

In these readings, we have seen that men should be elders / overseers, with the role of managing the church and preaching, teaching and rebuking. This is consistent with the role of the teacher that we saw in the previous study. We have also seen that it is highly likely that women can join men in being deacons – getting their hands dirty in service. This helps to ensure that the (exclusively male) elders can concentrate on their roles (as we saw in Acts 6).

The question arises of where Paul, Titus and Timothy fit into all this. It may be that they are fulfilling the role that some denominations refer to as bishops (e.g. see 1 Timothy 5:19-21 where they are publicly reproofing elders and Titus 1:5 and Acts 14:23 where they appoint elders).

6.3 *Weighing Prophecy*

The interpretation of the passage we are about to study is often disputed, but we can learn some definite lessons from it.

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:26-38

Q22 In verse 28, what is the tongue speaker to do if there is no interpreter present?

Q23 In verse 30, what is a prophet to do if a revelation comes to another prophet?

Q24 What are women to do in verse 34 to 35.

What Paul says to women is no different to what he says to other groups depending on the circumstances. When appropriate, all should remain silent and let the those whose position it is to speak do so. This is so that all may be done in an orderly fashion (verse 33).

Q25 In verse 29, what are the “others” to do when a prophet speaks?

One commonly held view of verses 34 to 35 are that they are written in this context of weighing prophecy. We have seen in a previous study that Paul does not forbid women prophesying in the church, but he may be forbidding them being involved in the weighing of prophecy. These verses may also simply be referring to women teaching, which is consistent with what we have seen previously.

Whatever the answer, we can say that there are some situations where women should be quiet in church where men do not have that restriction.

6.4 *To Finish*

Q26 Are the appropriate cultural distinctions between men and women maintained in your church? If so, how?

Q27 Are women in your church assuming the role of elders / overseers?

Q28 Are women in your church fulfilling the role of deacons, either formally or informally?

Q29 If a married woman was an elder or overseer in a church, how would that aid or hinder their relationship? Take into account Paul and Peter's instructions on how husbands and wives should relate that we looked at in Study 4.

7 How should men and women then live?

7.1 *Significant People*

This study looks at various passages that deal with the ministry of men and women that have not been looked at previously.

Read: Romans 16:3-15

Note: In verse 7, Andronicus and Junia are likely to be a married couple (Andronicus being a man's name and Junia being a woman's name). It has been suggested that Junia is being described as an Apostle here, but it is most likely that Paul is meaning that this couple is well known to, and valued by, the Apostles.

Q1 Identify each of the people mentioned here and the role they have played in the life of the church and in Paul's life.

Q2 How does Paul view the women in this list?

Q3 Does this give you some ideas of how you might be able to serve, as a single person, or as a couple for those who are married?

Paul lists various women, men and couples here. All are highly valued by Paul, and he sees them having had a major role in the spread of the gospel.

7.2 *Lifting Hands*

Read: 1 Timothy 2:8

Q4 What are men exhorted to do?

Read: 1 Timothy 2:9-10

Q5 What are women exhorted to do?

7.3 *Notes to a Young Elder*

Read: 1 Timothy 5:1-2

Timothy is a younger man, but he is also an elder. His special role of rebuking older men would be reserved for those who have a similar role in the church.

Q6 How should men treat other men?

Q7 How should men treat older women?

Q8 How should men treat younger women?

In this next passage, it seems likely that there was a list of widows who were being provided for by the church, as we saw in Acts 6.

Read: 1 Timothy 5:3-16

Q9 What should widows be doing (verses 3-8)?

Q10 What does Paul expect older widows would have been doing in the past (verses 9-10)?

Q11 What does Paul suggest younger widows should do (verses 11-15)?

Q12 What should women do about widows in their families (verse 16)?

7.4 What teaching to receive

Read: Titus 2:1-6

Q13 What should older men do (verse 2)?

Q14 What should older women do (verses 3-5)?

Q15 What should younger women do (verses 4-5)?

Q16 What should younger men do (verse 6)?

7.5 Wives and husbands

Read: 1 Peter 3:1-7

Q17 What should wives do (verses 1-6)?

Q18 What should they do if their husbands are not believers?

Q19 How should husbands treat their wives (verse 7)?

Read: Numbers 30:9-15

Q20 How might these instructions work themselves out in a marriage today?

7.6 All Equal

Read: Galatians 3:26-29

Q21 Who are children of God, Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise?

Q22 Do earthly roles, gender or ancestry make any difference to this?

This passage is often quoted to support the idea that men and women should be treated identically. As far as their relationship with the Father through the Son, they are identical, but we have also seen that they have different roles in the family and the church. This does not affect their standing before Christ.

7.7 To Finish

Q23 If young men should treat young women as sisters, where does dating fit into how they should relate to each other?

Q24 What do you think of the view of women presented in the Bible?

Q25 Do men and women have a different status or value before God?

Leader's Notes

These notes give brief answers to most of the questions that deal directly with what we can learn from the scriptures.

1 The Scriptures and Creation

1.1 The Scriptures

According to Peter, the accounts that he and his associates gave of Jesus were by eyewitnesses, and are completely reliable. He also tells us that the prophecies in Scripture are not the result of a prophet's own interpretation, but they were speaking from God.

Timothy tells us that all Scripture is breathed out (inspired) by God. It can lead us to salvation and make us thoroughly equipped for all manner of ministry.

1.2 Godly Headship

Jesus is our perfect model of headship. Being God, he took on the form of a human servant, even being willing to die on a cross for those whom he was leading. Christlike headship means a total giving of oneself in the service of others.

1.3 Creation

1.3.1 Image of God

Mankind, both male and female, are made in God's image. Together they are to have dominion over creation, and are to be fruitful.

1.3.2 Creation Order

Adam was made first, Paul considers this highly significant.

1.3.3 Naming

The instructions were given to Adam before Eve was created. Adam named the animals before she was created. Adam is showing his dominion over the animals. Adam gave Eve her name.

1.3.4 Creation of Eve

God creates Eve because no animal was a suitable helper for Adam. She was made out of Adam's side. She is Adam's equal, made of the same stuff as Adam. Paul considers the purpose for which Eve was created to be significant. We can conclude that man is the head of woman and that is basic to how we were created.

2 The Fall

2.1 *Order of culpability*

Adam was told that he should not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent targeted Eve, but it seems that Adam was “with her”. This implies that Eve initially, but ultimately, both of them, are responsible for what happened.

God first talks to Adam and hold him accountable for their action. This was because he was Eve's head, and was ultimately responsible for their decisions as a couple. Adam in turn blames both God and Eve for his mistake. Eve then blames the serpent. When confronted with our own sin today, we are exactly the same, we follow in Adam and Eve's footsteps and blame other people.

2.2 *Woman deceived*

Eve says that the serpent deceived her. Paul considers this to be significant.

2.3 *Relations marred*

Eve's desire will be for Adam and he will rule over her.

The same words "desire" and "rule" (or master) are used in this verse. This may help us to understand what is going on here.

3 Mt Sinai to Jesus

3.1.1 At Mt Sinai

Nehemiah considered the rules to be good.

Miriam is a prophet, so this is a role that women can have. She leads them in singing praises to God.

Men were to be appointed as judges. Men were to be appointed as priests and then their sons following on.

The laws are seen to be good and righteous. The other nations will see the Israelites as being wise and understanding

3.2 *Women as Prophets*

3.2.1 Deborah

Deborah is described as a prophet who was leading Israel. Barak rebuked by Deborah in verse 9 because he wouldn't lead the Israelite army on his own, he wanted Deborah to go with him.

3.2.2 Huldah

Hilkiah visited Huldah the prophet. Huldah's prophecy came true and so we see that she was a true prophet of God.

3.3 *Strong Women*

Ancient women are pictured here as being strong and very capable.

3.4 *Jesus*

The disciples of the Pharisees recognise that Jesus was not worried about what people say, he just spoke the truth.

3.4.1 Jesus and women

3.4.1.1 *Mary and Martha*

Martha thinks that Mary should be helping her with the preparations. However, Jesus says that Mary should be learning from Jesus.

3.4.1.2 *Woman at the well*

The woman was surprised because Jesus was talking to her, even though she was a Samaritan and a woman. The woman's account caused the townspeople to come out and find out more about Jesus. The ultimate effect was that many became believers.

3.4.1.3 *Mary at the tomb*

Mary was given the role of being the first to announce to the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead.

3.4.2 Choosing Disciples

Matthew was a tax collector. The Pharisees saw them as sinners, people that religious people did not associate with. Jesus wasn't worried about people's opinions or cultural norms.

Jesus chose 12 men as his disciples.

4 Roles in the family

4.1 *Ephesians*

We do not see two people submitting to one another as equals, we see one person submitting to another person because of their different roles.

The relationship between a husband and a wife is compared to the relationship between Jesus and the church.

A wife is to submit to her husband and respect him in everything. A husband is to love his wife and give himself up for her, using the example of Jesus who gave himself up for the church.

4.2 *Colossians*

This supports our conclusions from Ephesians 5.

4.3 *1 Peter*

Peter's letter supports our conclusions gained from those of Paul. Christian women should still submit to non-Christian husbands.

They should do this so that their unbelieving husbands might turn to Christ.

Sarah obeyed her husband Abraham as her master.

Husbands should treat their wives considerately and treat them with respect, as equal heirs, so that their prayers may not be hindered.

4.4 *1 Corinthians*

Married couples should not abstain from sex. They should decide together how often they should have sex. The husband should be concentrating on his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should be concentrating on her husband's sexual needs.

Both husband and the wife are in the position to decide about whether to divorce, but the overriding consideration in deciding whether to separate is the children's relationship with God, and the possible salvation of an unbelieving spouse.

5 Roles in the Church 1

5.1 *Prophets and Teachers*

Paul tells us that Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, Miracle Workers etc. have been appointed by God. For Paul, prophecy is not the same as teaching.

We are told in Deuteronomy that false prophets should be put to death. They could tell whether a prophet is speaking words from the Lord by whether their predictions came true.

Two or three prophecies should be heard and the "others" should weigh what is said. If another person has a revelation (prophecy), the first prophet should stop speaking.

This is different to how we see prophecies being treated in the Old Testament.

New Testament style prophecy involves strengthening, encouraging and comfort. It builds up the church. An unbeliever will be convicted of sin (reproved), and brought under judgement (called to account) and will thus fall down and worship God.

In summary, prophecy will result in people being instructed and encouraged.

Paul tells Titus that his teaching should be in accord with sound doctrine, and it will include encouragement and rebuke. He tells Timothy that his preaching and teaching (instruction) should include correcting, rebuking and encouraging.

5.2 Who may prophecy and where?

Four women are described as prophets. In Corinth, both men and women are praying and prophesying in the church gathering.

5.3 Who may teach whom?

Older women should teach younger women. Lois and Eunice, his grandmother and mother, taught Timothy as a child and are commended for it.

A woman not teach or have authority over a man, they should learn in quietness and full submission.

The reason given is because Adam was formed first and because Eve was deceived and Adam was not.

6 Roles in the Church 2

6.1 Headship

God the Father is the head of Christ. Jesus is the head of man and man is the head of woman.

A woman is bringing dishonour her to her head, possibly her husband, if she does not cover her head when praying. The head is a symbol that the woman is under authority. It does not have this symbolism in western society.

6.2 Church Leadership Roles

Paul identify the roles of overseers and deacons in the church at Philippi.

6.2.1 Overseers / Elders

The overseer must be able to teach and manage or take care of the church.

A woman is not permitted to teach or have authority.

The role of overseer is reserved for men only.

An elder should be directing the affairs of, or ruling the church, preaching and teaching.

The role of elder is reserved for men only. An elder should be managing God's household, being God's steward and doing God's work. Additionally, he should encourage by sound doctrine, or give instruction and rebuke those who oppose it.

6.2.2 Deacons

The Apostles appointed seven men to look after the distribution of food. This allowed the Apostles to concentrate on prayer and the ministry of the word (preaching and teaching).

Phoebe is described as a deacon or a servant, depending on the translation.

A deacon should be of high moral character. This is also true of a woman deacon.

6.3 *Weighing Prophecy*

The tongue speaker should be silent or keep quiet if there is no interpreter present. A prophet should be silent or stop if a revelation comes to another prophet.

Women are to be silent and to be in submission. The “others” should weigh what is said.

7 How should men and women then live?

7.1 *Significant People*

Paul views the women in this list very positively, they have had a major and valuable role in the church and his life.

7.2 *Lifting Hands*

Men exhorted to pray without getting into disputes. Women are exhorted to dress modestly, concentrating on their deeds, not their dress.

7.3 *Notes to a Young Elder*

Men treat other men as brothers, they should treat older women as mothers and younger women as sisters and with absolute purity.

Widows should be caring for their families. An older widow would have been serving her husband, family and those in need.

Younger widows should marry and look after their children and their households.

Women should continue to look after the widows in their families.

7.4 *What teaching to receive*

Older man should be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

Older women should be reverent in the way they live, not be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but teach what is good. Urging the younger women to love their husbands and children, be self-controlled and pure, be busy at home, be kind, and be subject to their husbands.

Younger men should be self-controlled, doing what is good, showing integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech.

7.5 Wives and husbands

Wives should submit themselves to their own husbands. Live lives of purity and reverence. Having a beauty that is not from outward adornment, but from the inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit. Follow Sarah's example. They should do this whether their husbands are believers or not.

Husbands should be considerate to their wives and treat them with respect, as fellow heirs.

Husbands and wives need to work together to figure out how decision making is to be done as a couple. One possibility is that there are certain areas where it is agreed that decisions can be made without reference to the other, and other areas where decisions should be considered provisional until reference is made to the other.

7.6 All Equal

All who are baptised into Christ are children of God, Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

Earthly roles, gender or ancestry do not make any difference to this.

Resources

God's Good Design - What the Bible really says about Men and Women by Claire Smith. Published by Matthias Media. 255 Pages. 2019.

This is an excellent book that looks into a number of key Bible verses in detail, but is still quite readable. Now in its second edition.

Available from: <https://matthiasmedia.com.au/products/gods-good-design>

Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood - A Response to Evangelical Feminism edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Published by Crossway Books. 566 Pages. 2006.

This is a very detailed accounting of all sorts of issues surrounding this topic. For the serious student, but useful as a resource for others.

You can download a pdf for free at: <https://cbmw.org/topics/complementarianism/recovering-biblical-manhood-womanhood/>

Complementarianism: A Moment of Reckoning (9Marks Journal) by Jonathan Leeman, Albert Mohler, Rosaria Butterfield, Tom Schreiner, Alex Strauch, Kevin DeYoung, Michael Lawrence, Greg Turner, Andy Johnson, Bobby Jamieson. Published by 9Marks. 138 Pages. 2019.

Available at: <https://www.9marks.org/journal/complementarianism-a-moment-of-reckoning/>

You can download an ebook for free, or read it on line.

This is a detailed look at current issues in the debate.

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