

The Role of Women in the Church

You have walked into a very complicated subject. I have studied this subject for YEARS at a very great depth and am STILL VERY UNSURE of what the Lord's preferences and wisdom is.

Thus, I ask you to understand that many times I am still "Guessing"

I will be happy to give you some subjects to study that may give you some more thoughts and probably a lot more questions. ☺

As I have studied the subject of Women in the Word of God I am very aware of some **strong questions** that I always ask whenever I study ANY scripture or hear someone else's study of scripture.

They are:

1. Those with an AGENDA are very careful to only point out scriptures that support their Agenda.

Does this person have an AGENDA in their teaching?

Are they truly emotionally willing for the Bible to say that complete opposite and to find out that they are completely wrong.

John 7:17 may be the most important verse in all the Bible for Bible study. It strongly states that a person HAS to be EMOTIONALLY NEUTRAL with NO AGENDA before that person can learn if a teaching is from Jesus or not.

*If anyone chooses to do God's will,
he will find out whether my teaching comes from God
or whether I speak on my own.*

As an example, please note that I Cor. 11 gives instructions about protocol for WHEN WOMEN PROPHECY in church. Thus, when someone points out the key verses in I Cor. 14 about women not speaking in church, a clean hearted person would also point out the verses in I Cor. 11 about women speaking in church. If a person had a clean heart, they would look at both passages equally. They are only three chapters apart. In I Cor. 11 Paul is giving guidelines for WHEN women speak in church.

In addition, a sincere student of God's word would want to know if II John was written to a Woman Pastor. If they had a clean heart, they would use the same standards of interpretation that they used if this book was written to a man.

2. What is the foundational point of this subject in the Word of God?

For instance, if someone wanted me to study strife or anger, I look very carefully at Cain and Abel. This is the rule of first mention in proper Bible study.

If someone wanted me to study the subject of the Law, I would pay close attention to the book of Exodus in relation to the book of Genesis. That is what Paul did in Romans and Galatians.

It is this question that has caused me to search Genesis to learn the more foundational question. The question is not just:

A. What is the role of women in the Church?

or even

B. What is the purpose of women?

the Real question is:

C. What is the purpose of God Creating women and WHY did God give them that purpose?

This study has caused me to spend over 20 years of study in the subject of marriage. Thus, when anyone wants to argue with me about the role of women in the church, I try to politely refuse unless they are willing to study this subject (C) with me first. This is why the first three sermons in the series I taught on marriage were so important to me.

I had hundreds of options of where to START this series. I chose to begin with these three sermons because I wanted to start with the most foundational of all questions.

I would like to ask you to consider going back and re-watching or re-listening to those three sermons on our web site. Watching them from the perspective of the role of women in the church, may help you to hear them in a new perspective. They are a clear study of what God said when he first created women. They cover:

1. The specific words God used in explaining why he created women.
2. The details of the curse in changing men's hearts from wanting to be partners to women to wanting to dominate women. Gen. 3:15
3. The parallel between the roles of women in the Bible and the role of Slaves in the Bible.

3. What is the PURPOSE of this Scripture.

Anyone who wants to do a study of how the Old Testament and the New Testament relate HAS to become very familiar with this subject. The book of Hebrews is the most important book in the Bible to understanding the Old Testament. Hebrews goes into great detail, teaching us that every single verse in the Old Testament had a specific purpose and that we have to FIND the PURPOSE of that verse to understand that verse.

The book of Galatians also teaches this in great depth.

Every scripture has a VERY SPECIFIC PRIMARY PURPOSE. Many scriptures have MULTIPLE SECONDARY purposes.

If you want to see one of the most powerful examples of this in the Word of God, I recommend that you pay especially close attention in Sermon # 3 in the Marriage series, when I talk about all of the verses on Slavery in the New Testament. The important question is WHY are those verses in the Bible.

The answer is actually very simple.

There are hundreds of verses in the New Testament whose PRIMARY MESSAGE is

**DON'T EVER LET
SECONDARY Subjects
DISTRACT
From your life and words
PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL.**

ALL of I Cor. 8-10 and Romans 14 are on this subject exclusively. There are hundreds and hundreds of verses in the New Testament that LOUDLY proclaim this message. By the way, I also have a study on I Cor. 8-10 and Romans 14 called "Legalism, License and Love". It is a study of all the CONTROVERSIAL subjects in the Bible like Drinking, Wearing Bakinis, Watching TV etc. You may want to listen to this series also. In every case, Paul's main message is the words I just wrote:

**DON'T EVER LET
SECONDARY Subjects
DISTRACT
From your life and words
PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL.**

Paul never lost his focus on the lost. Paul never forgot for one second that our greatest purpose on this earth is to bring people to Jesus. Thus, with every SECONDARY SUBJECT, Paul's first question is:

What stance will bring the most people to Jesus.

THAT is **WHY** Paul told Slaves to submit.

There are literally hundreds of examples where Christians are commanded to SUBMIT to a WRONG standard in our society so that nothing in our lives will block the message of the Gospel. OF COURSE, we are NEVER to submit to anything that is SIN. However, if it is NOT SIN, then we are WISE to submit to that WRONG society standard so that NOTHING will block the message of the Gospel in our lives.

The chapters of Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8,9 and 10 are extremely clear and strong chapters. In them Paul warns Christians to be careful to have a CLEAR DIFFERENCE between PRIMARY matters of faith and SECONDARY matters that are NOT essential to faith.

Whether someone thinks that women should never speak in a pulpit or thinks that they have unlimited freedom to speak in a pulpit is NOT an essential doctrine that will keep you out of heaven. Thus, Paul's constant exhortations in these four chapters apply directly to this subject.

Jesus made reference to this same subject when he rebuked the Pharisees for "Straining Gnats but Swallowing Camels".

Let me give a very practical example from today's society.

I counsel every Christian Parent to NEVER Spank your children in public and to always AVOID ANY CONVERSATION with Non-Christians about Spanking.

I DO BELIEVE that Spanking is Biblical when done consistently, with great love and only for acts of rebellion. I spanked my kids and thought it was very effective when done properly. (I have a sermon series on that one also. ☺)

However, NONE of that truth is a reason for a Christian doing FOOLISH things that DISTRACT from the message of the Gospel. Spanking you children in a public place is a foolish thing that may land you in jail. More importantly, your actions have DISTRACTED from the message of the Gospel in your life.

With all of this background, you can probably see that whenever I see a verse in the New Testament on women, my main question is to find the PURPOSE of that verse.

The N. T. Church was VERY RADICAL in the way that they treated women with respect as equals to men. It caused LOTS of people to turn away from the Gospel.

The sad and almost comical possibility is that today many may be violating this HUGELY POWERFUL COMMAND of God's Word.....

**DON'T EVER LET
SECONDARY Subjects
DISTRACT
From your life and words
PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL.**

by their weak study of God's Word. Can you tell from my font size and repetition, how important this truth is to me personally? ☺

Sadly today, many NON-Christians are kept from hearing the Gospel because they are so **turned of** by the stance of Christians toward Women. What a sad thing to see such a SECONDARY subject DISTRACT from the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is NOT a small subject to me. I strongly believe that it is NOT a small subject to God. There are many thousands of instances of NON-Christians refusing to even listen to the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ because they are so turned off by the harsh stance of Christians toward women in ministry. God Forbid. Let us never allow a secondary subject to so greatly distract from the Glorious Gospel.

In specific response to your question about why we have Women Pastors and Women Elders, I want to state again that we are NOT sure or certain that our stance is exactly the Lord's best stance. In controversial secondary subjects such as this, I am not sure that ANYONE can be completely sure that they have eliminated all of the bias from their heart in obedience to John. 7:17.

If I get to heaven and the Lord explains to me that I was wrong in my stance, I will humbly accept the Lord's rebuke and ask for His forgiveness.

However the bottom line for us is two very simple conclusions.

In the area of Pastoral Care, which is the main focus of I Tim. 2, we do not permit women to oversee or counsel men AND we do not permit men to oversee or counsel women.

We ask

- Women to oversee Women
- Men to oversee and counsel Men.
- Couples to minister to Couples.

If we ever need to cross those lines, we use TEAM! For instance, if ever I need to counsel a lady, I ALWAYS have another lady present.

In addition, whenever we have a women speaker in our pulpit, she is standing under my authority and covering as the Senior Pastor. She is NOT operating as an authority over the men in the room. She is operating as an extension of me and my authority as the Senior Pastor. This applies to both men and women who speak and teach at Liberty Church. This is why we are very careful about our standards of those who speak in our pulpit.

That stance seems to eliminate the “Offense” of this secondary subject of 99% of Christians and NON-Christians.

Secondly, since the husband and wife are ONE by God’s command, we like to keep that direction whenever possible. Thus, we never have a husband be recognized as an Elder or Deacon, unless the wife is also recognized as an Elder or Deacon.

I hope, above all, that this brief overview will:

1. Help you draw closer to Jesus.
2. Help you to study God’s word with a clean heart.
3. Help you to keep secondary subjects from Distracting from the message of the Gospel in your life.

I realize at this point that I have not offered you a Biblical exposition of all of the New Testament Scriptures on Women in ministry. My main reason for not presenting this type of study is because Jack Hayford has done a much more thorough job than I ever could.

If you are not familiar with Jack Hayford, he is one of the most respected men in the entire body of Christ. Below is an article about Jack Hayford in Christianity Today magazine that gives a lot of background information. After the Christianity Today article is a Bible Study written by Jack Hayford on the subject of women in ministry.

I need to add that I do NOT agree with everything Jack Hayford says in his studies. However, my not agreeing with everything Jack says does not preclude me from recognizing numerous excellent scripture points he makes.

Thank you for taking the time to read my thoughts and perspective.

Sincerely,

John Fichtner
Senior Pastor,
Liberty Church



The Pentecostal Gold Standard

After 50 years in ministry, Jack Hayford continues to confound stereotypes—all to the good.

by Tim Stafford | posted 7/01/2005 12:21PM

In 1969, 35-year-old Jack Hayford pulled up to a traffic light in front of First Baptist Church of Van Nuys. Like any other pastor in Southern California, he knew of the Baptist congregation. It was growing like a weed, drawing nationwide publicity under the leadership of Pastor Harold Fickett. Hayford's church, a few blocks down Sherman Way, was an aging Foursquare congregation with just 18 members. Two weeks before, Hayford had taken on the church temporarily while serving as dean of students at L.I.F.E. Bible College (now Life Pacific College), an institution of his Pentecostal denomination, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

Parked at the light, Hayford felt a burning sensation on his face, a startlingly physical sense of the church's intimidating presence. Through an inner voice God spoke to him, reprovably: "You could at least begin by looking at the building."

He turned and saw nothing but a modern brick structure. "What now?" Hayford asked.

"I want you to pray for that church," God said. "What I am doing there is so great, there is no way the pastoral staff can keep up with it. Pray for them."

As Hayford began to pray, he felt an overflow of love for Van Nuys Baptist. It seemed to take no effort. Through the days to come, the same sensation came to him every time he passed by a church—any church. "I felt an overwhelming love for the church of Jesus Christ. I realized I had them in pigeonholes."

A few days later, he approached a large Catholic church. Having been raised to take strong exception to Catholic doctrine, he wondered whether he would have the same feelings. He did, and heard another message from God: "Why would I not be happy with a place where every morning the testimony of the blood of my Son is raised from the altar?"

"I didn't hear God say that the Catholics are right about everything," Hayford says now, remembering the experience that changed his ministry. "For that matter, I didn't hear him saying the Baptists are right about everything, nor the Foursquare."

The message was simply that people at those churches cared about God. These were sites dedicated to Jesus' name. And he, Hayford, was supposed to love and pray for them.

Kingdom Bridges

Hayford turned 71 in June. Gravity has pulled his face downwards, his hair has disappeared, and he wears a somber, eagle-beaked visage. Occasionally his wry sense of humor appears without warning, cracking his face into a sudden toothy smile. More often, though, his face falls into solemnity.

According to Steve Strang, publisher of charismatic magazines *Charisma* and *Ministries Today*, Hayford has emerged as Pentecostals' and charismatics' gold standard. "Pastor Jack would fall into a category of statesman almost without peer," Strang says. "His integrity and theological depth are so well known that he can draw together all kinds of factions."

In Southern California, he is known as founding pastor of the Church on the Way, a congregation of 10,000 that he built from that struggling 18-member start in Van Nuys. Its one-time Anglo suburban neighborhood has become gritty Latino turf, but the church has not moved. Hayford has a strongly physical sense of God's work, and he believes that the Church on the Way was called to that very location. Spanish-language services have become the leading edge of the church, averaging 6,000 in weekly attendance.

Having reached an age when it would be reasonable to retire into statesmanship, Hayford has taken on more challenges. Last fall he was elected president of the Foursquare denomination, replacing a predecessor who resigned after the church lost \$15 million in a phony investment scheme. Seven years before that, his predecessor resigned under similar circumstances. Intensely loyal to his denomination, Hayford intends to reinvigorate a discouraged institution.

He only recently completed another emergency assignment, coming out of retirement when Scott Bauer, his son-in-law and successor at Church on the Way, died unexpectedly. Hayford steered the church through that crisis, while continuing his leading role at the seminary and Bible college he founded—King's College and Seminary, ironically located on the former campus of Van Nuys Baptist. In addition, one week of every month he leads the Jack W. Hayford School of Pastoral Nurture, a five-day seminar for pastors at which he speaks for six to eight hours a day on his philosophy of ministry.

Hayford continues to write, teach on radio and TV, and speak all over the world. His latest of some 40 books has just been released: *Manifest Presence: Expecting a Visitation of God's Grace Through Worship (Chosen)*.

Hayford brings Pentecostals together with other evangelicals. He has done this less through grand strategy than by patient outreach, one person at a time. In his public speaking he makes frequent, appreciative references to non-Pentecostal influences, from C. S. Lewis to Richard Foster. He reaches out to other L.A.-area pastors. John MacArthur counts him as a friend despite their many theological differences. Presbyterian pastor and former Senate chaplain Lloyd Ogilvie considers him one of his oldest and dearest prayer partners.

Likewise, there is hardly an evangelical leader Hayford does not know and speak well of. He is reliably involved as a leader in interdenominational activities, from mayoral prayer breakfasts to the recent Los Angeles Billy Graham Crusade (which he co-chaired). A prominent speaker at Promise Keepers rallies, he has been heavily involved in efforts at racial reconciliation.

He does all this without toning down his Pentecostalism one decibel. He is, in fact, aggressive about his beliefs, though he presents them graciously, in a way that explains and persuades. *Leadership* editor Marshall Shelley recalls hearing Hayford at a prayer summit at Multnomah Bible College. Most of the gathered pastors were conservative non-Pentecostals.

"By the time he was done, he had most of those pastors lifting their hands in praise," Shelley says. "He did it by explaining why it was biblical and why it mattered. He made sense. He brought rationality to spiritual expressiveness."

Hayford does not always get the same respectful treatment in return. One reason he is sensitive to racial injustice, he says, is because he experienced parallel mistreatment as a young Pentecostal. Prejudice is fading, he believes, but it still galls him that some bookstores won't stock his books, and that certain radio networks exclude him.

"I made a very distinct choice [to be a full-strength Pentecostal]," he says. "I could have been more reserved, silent on things that were my true conviction, but you don't make

headway against prejudice by compromise."

He can be sharply critical of non-Pentecostal positions, such as what he sees as the temptation of Reformed thinking to fall into fatalism. "Reformed theology has ... ended up creating a monster of theology that dampens the place of our passion and partnership with God."

He is quite willing to critique fellow Pentecostals too, and admits that charismatic televangelists can be extremely imprecise in their theological utterances. He tends to excuse them, though, as well meaning and excitable. If you're choosing up teams, there is no doubt where his sympathies lie. That makes it all the more remarkable how far he extends himself outside of Pentecostal circles.

David Moore, a Ph.D. candidate at Regent University who is writing his thesis on Hayford, notes that Hayford's Lausanne II address, given in Manila, was entitled "Passion for Fullness." In Hayford's vocabulary, "genuine spiritual fullness is bridge building. To be fully Pentecostal means being open to the fullness and breadth of the church. If you have a commitment to building the kingdom of God, you have to be committed to the church beyond the sector you're in." Hayford conveys remarkable graciousness toward those who disagree with him, as well as to those who have fallen from grace. Thus he has invited both John MacArthur and Jim Bakker to preach in his church.

Hayford likes to note the cornerstone of the Angelus Temple, from which founder Aimee Semple McPherson built the Foursquare denomination. It reads, "Dedicated unto the cause of Inter-denominational and World Wide Evangelism." Like McPherson, Hayford works within a church and a denomination, but his eyes look outward.

The Lord's Voice

Hayford tells many stories that feature the Lord's voice. He doesn't hear audible sounds, he says, but receives strong mental impressions, sometimes so clear that he feels he could almost say, "The Lord told me, and I quote." Though always mindful to assert that the ultimate voice of God is found in the Scriptures, he describes guidance aided by vivid mental pictures and dreams. Many of his most pivotal moments came as a result of such experiences.

"I'm not glib about that," he says. "The Lord and I don't have an ongoing conversation. We do have an ongoing relationship." A daily, attentive, childlike relationship with God is at the heart of Pentecostal belief, Hayford thinks, and he wishes it for every Christian.

Not surprisingly, it was divine guidance that first prompted him to take on the pastorate of a tiny, aging congregation in Van Nuys. Hayford had already turned down one of the most prestigious pulpits in the denomination. Young and rising in reputation, he agreed to take a six-month interim in Van Nuys only because he would be free to go to a more significant church when fall rolled around.

He was in the denomination's downtown L.A. offices, conversing with Rolf McPherson, head of Foursquare and son of founder Aimee Semple McPherson, when quite apart from the conversation "there descended on me an awareness that I was to stay at the church. It was not a delightful realization." His first congregational meeting had 16 of the 18 members in attendance. The average age was more than 65. He remembers their faces shining with joy—not because they grasped what he said about his goals in ministry, but because he was young. They saw a young, dynamic pastor, his wife and children, and they felt hope.

Hayford says he had two main pastoral ideas in mind when he began in Van Nuys. One was an emphasis on the ministry of all believers. The pastor's job, described in Ephesians 4:11-

12, was to equip the congregation for ministry, not to do the ministry himself. The second idea was the priority of worship, coming before evangelism and mission in the life of the church.

Neither idea was unique. In northern California, a Bible-church pastor named Ray Stedman was gaining national attention preaching about "body life" using exactly the same passage in Ephesians. Meanwhile the Jesus movement had brought an upsurge in contemporary music that would lead to vastly increased appreciation for worship all over.

Hayford, however, integrated these ideas with a strong, practical, and Pentecostal theology of the kingdom of God. "His motivation is to get theology into people, to get it lived out," says Pastor Jim Tolle, who attended the church in its early days after coming home from Vietnam. (After years heading the church's Hispanic ministry, Tolle has become its senior pastor.)

If Pentecostals are not stereotypically theological thinkers, Hayford breaks the stereotype. "What an outstanding intellectual Jack is," Lloyd Ogilvie notes. "He is a deeply rooted scholar in the biblical tradition."

'Blended' Worship

On a Saturday night, Hayford was praying through his church sanctuary. He likes to do this every Saturday night—to go through the room laying hands on each seat, praying for God's blessing on the people who will sit in them Sunday morning.

It's typical that his view of God's working in the congregation is so physically rooted, right down to the actual seats in the actual room. This is his preparation for Sunday worship: praying over the place.

On this occasion, he was with two other staff members when a college-age member knocked on the door. She had noticed some activity and came over to see whether she could join in. Hayford felt led to direct them into the four corners of the sanctuary, where they raised their hands up and over the space between them, as though extending a canopy. For some time they sang spontaneously before the Lord.

When they were done, they felt deeply moved, for reasons they could not quite explain. The youth pastor, Paul Charter, made a suggestion. "The Lord impressed on me that the reason the experience seemed so profound was that we were standing with angels, blending with them in worship."

Hayford thought no more of it until the next Tuesday, when he attended the early morning men's prayer meeting. He was "feeling tired ... as spiritual as a toad." Despite that, the Lord spoke to him during the meeting. "The angelic creatures I showed Paul are the four living creatures of Revelation 4."

"I'm thinking, 'Of course,'" Hayford says sardonically. "'Where else but in Van Nuys.' I'm thinking, *This is the way kooks start. Entire cults began with less than this.*" Nevertheless he got up on the platform and read to himself the passage from the pulpit Bible—John's vision of ecstatic worship around the throne of God.

Ten days later, Hayford says, in the church parking lot, he suddenly caught a mental picture so vivid that he understood God's message. What he saw was an alignment between the throne of God described by John, and the church he pastored on Sherman Way in Van Nuys. One seemed to blend into the other: vast multitudes of praising creatures in John's vision overlapping with the praising people of the Church on the Way. As Hayford saw it, the entire San Fernando Valley, ten miles wide, became an amphitheater of praise surrounding God's throne.

Reality, as Hayford came to grasp it, is that God works simultaneously in the visible and the invisible, in the physical and the spiritual. The worshiping church stands at the heart of his reign. Thus the church Hayford pastored (and any church, potentially) was more than a gathering of people dedicated to a far-off spiritual kingdom and to somewhat abstract principles. The church at worship became an expression of the power of the kingdom of God, with the literal presence of God in the middle of its sanctuary.

David Moore says Hayford's theology of the kingdom of God is strikingly similar to George Eldon Ladd's. The difference, Moore says, is that "Ladd doesn't make the application. He says a lot of the same things, but he doesn't apply them with the same dynamism."

Hayford's passion is the kingdom of God operating in the here and now, with power, through the church—any church, big or small. Though he grew a megachurch, Hayford cares little for techniques of church growth. His idea of spiritual warfare centers on a worshiping congregation.

That is why classically Pentecostal forms of worship matter. He believes in pushing people out of their comfort zone into the free exercise of congregational singing, of praise, of shouting before the Lord. Such worship liberates people to live out the kingdom of God. Therefore people's self-awareness, their reluctance to let themselves go in praise, is an obstacle pastors must forcefully confront.

"It is infinitely easier," Hayford says, "to cultivate a congregation that will listen to the Word of God than to cultivate a people who will worship God."

He believes lifting hands to God is more than an option, it is a timeless demand suited to our bodies. Music, too, taps in to God's power. Hayford is a musician who has written more than 400 songs, including the well-known "Majesty." He understands congregational singing as a God-mandated form for praise.

While Hayford subscribes to Pentecostal doctrine that tongues is a "sign gift," indicating the baptism of the Spirit, he doesn't think the point can be conclusively proved one way or the other from Scripture. Instead he emphasizes that tongues is a useful gift—useful to the worshiper in prayer, and thus useful to the kingdom of God, which works through praying believers. "I have a passion to move every Christian to the free exercise of tongues," Hayford says, "not as a proof of spirituality but as a privilege for worship and intercession." He thinks the obstacle to speaking in tongues is less theological than personal—people's fear of the unknown. Here too pastoral leadership is needed, he says, because tongues enables God's people to pray effectively even when they don't know how to pray.

Intercessory prayer, like worship, is a hallmark of Hayford's practical theology. Early on he instituted "prayer circles" at morning worship. The congregation breaks into small groups to pray for each other, for their community, and for the world. Prayer circles apprentice people in the service of prayer.

"If you expect them to do it at home," Pastor Jim Tolle says, "you have to walk through it in the service. We practice praying. We live it out in each of our services. And to tell you the truth, it's really not convenient. It's a turnoff for new people, who don't know what to do. It can get old. People can get ritualized in it. But we keep on."

Hayford takes prayer as a heavy responsibility. "If I don't pray for [my wife], Anna, there's a gaping hole of vulnerability." Prayer embraces much more than family and church matters. The fence in front of Hayford's home has 11 pillars, which he uses to remind him of 11 areas of responsibility that demand his prayer. One column is for his city. His vision of the physical-spiritual alignment tells him that the church's location in Los Angeles is no accident. He sees God's people going out from worship to affect every aspect of L.A.—from

its ethnic diversity to its Hollywood glitz. He chokes up describing his "great affection in terms of mission to my city."

The church, he believes, should avoid any hint of political partisanship or Christian self-righteousness. He rejects "triumphalism that only sees triumph in getting exactly what you asked for." "I don't think we're called to silence, but we are called to sensitivity. We're not good at that." He does, however, believe in the church's call to make a difference on Earth, not merely to redeem people for a future in heaven.

'Tell the Truth, Jack'

Hayford was born in Los Angeles and dedicated in a Foursquare church in Long Beach. Most of his childhood, however, was spent in Oakland. His father was a switchman for the Southern Pacific railroad; his mother was a Bible teacher who spoke widely in interdenominational women's classes and in Women's Aglow Fellowship (now Aglow International). Neither parent graduated from high school, but they were outward looking and "a talkative family," says Hayford's wife, Anna. "They had wild discussions."

Hayford admired both his parents, but "he is exactly like his mother," Anna says. Like Jack, his mother "could be very demanding." But she was a compassionate woman, "always championing the cause of someone not so lovable."

"The first time I interviewed [his mother], Delores, I was just taken aback," says David Moore. "I thought, 'I'm meeting Jack Hayford.'" Moore mentions her quick wit, her precision, and her broad awareness.

From his mother, Hayford got his intellectual curiosity (lately he is reading on string theory), and his strong sense of accountability before God. He remembers her saying, "Tell me the truth, Jack, in the presence of Jesus." He never took this as manipulative: The sense was that since Jesus knew the truth, Jack couldn't gain much by concealing it.

For 10 years, until Jack was 14, his father refused to go to church, where his smoking and occasional lapses into drinking would be looked down on. Out of loyalty to her husband, Hayford's mother stayed home too, sending her children off to church without her. "He once beat me up," Hayford says of his father, "and Mother threw herself over me." She protected her 10-year-old cub and warned off her husband in no uncertain terms.

Hayford grew up with a keen religious awareness. "He probably has the healthiest sense of the fear of God of anyone that I've ever met," says Jack Hamilton, his longtime colleague in ministry. In college, Hayford noted the angel Gabriel's words in Luke 1:19: "I am Gabriel, and I stand in the presence of God." In the margins of his Bible, Hayford wrote, "May this always be true of me." He has endeavored to live in that kind of God consciousness. His "fear of the Lord" embraces his obedience to God's daily leading.

For example, Hayford doesn't believe that the Scriptures require teetotalism, but he says that many years ago the Lord impressed on him that he personally ought not to drink wine. Then, "Seventeen years ago, in my kitchen, the Lord spoke to me: 'Chocolate shall be to you as wine.'" Hayford understands that as a private but absolute mandate not to touch chocolate. "I believe that the Lord knows my body, and knows what is good for me. And I fear the Lord. I would not dare disobey. It's about as righteous as that I'm not going to step off the edge of a five-story building."

He studies Scripture with the same spirit. Every day he reads on his knees. It's a physical discipline reminding him that every word addresses him, so he must constantly ask, "What does this have to do with me?"

While Hayford encourages accountability groups and structures, he warns pastors that only

accountability to God can protect them.

"Ultimately it's the only thing that will make me accountable to anyone else—my wife, my congregation, even myself."

Always, not far from his mind is the heavenly assembly, praising God around his throne. The kingdom of God is present in Van Nuys, California, even while creation waits for "the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19). And always somewhere within Hayford's awareness are the words, "Tell me the truth, Jack, in the presence of Jesus."

Tim Stafford is a CT senior writer.

Pastor Jack Hayford
Van Nuys, California

ON THE QUESTION OF A WOMAN'S PLACE IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Galatians 3:28 “...there is neither male nor female,
for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

In view of the way in which the Church was born, and in the view of the personalities the Holy Spirit has used and does use in the ongoing life of the Church, it is amazing that the subject of a woman's place in the leadership ministry of the Church is such a “sticky-wicket.” The present renewal is not far ahead of the limited view which has constricted the thinking of believers in recent history. Even one of the most widely accepted periodicals in the charismatic movement advanced the idea that the only reason women rise to a state of any prominence in the Church today, is because we are still working our way out from a period of lesser revelation among the people of God. The obvious conclusion is twofold: (1) the presence of leading ministries carried by women in the Church today should be tolerated with patience and love, and (2) we shall be perfected to the time when women hold no leadership significance in the Church.

The New Testament scriptures report a phenomenon which, uncluttered by ecclesiasticism, points the way to a uniquely balanced view of women in ministry. Summarized in simple propositions it is this:

1. Men and women are virtually equal in ultimate leadership potential, but they are not equal in ultimate responsibility in God's structure of authority.
2. Man's role as "primary in responsibility" carries with it a twofold duty:
 - a. To walk in such love and understanding as to produce the release of women into whatever office or ministry the Spirit of God brings them to; and
 - b. To walk in such love and wisdom as to induce the submission of women to the oversight of their authority, (including direction, instruction and correction).

At first reading, this may sound no less quenching to a woman's potential development in the Body of Christ than any former system, but the fact is that the New Testament scriptures give evidence for the possibility of a woman holding any office or exercising any ministry in the Church with the exception of the office of an apostle.

Qualifying our discussion

To begin, it should be made clear that we are not even dealing with the questions, "Can a woman have a ministry?" The question is, "To what levels of matured ministry and leadership in the Body of Christ may a woman develop?" Nor are we dealing with the question, "Should every woman become a leader in the Body of Christ?" Obviously, as with the majority of believers in this present age, proportionately few will rise to prominence. But we challenge the humanly instituted restraints on a woman's potential. We

propose that those limitations have come about not on the basis of divine revelation, but as an attempt of man to deal with human failure.

Women in spiritual leadership have bread much confusion. But, brethren, so have men. Women straining against and finally breaking the boundaries of their spiritually assigned authority have been guilty of every doctrinal error, ignorant stumbling and moral violation. And so have men. To plead any case on the basis of female examples of foolishness proves nothing.

In fact, the historical record of the Church's reasoning on this subject is almost humorous for the incongruities which have been allowed. Within the society of multiplied groups of believers – denominations, missions organizations, independent fellowships – women have been allowed almost any area of responsible ministry leadership as long as it met two requirements:

1. As long as the higher offices were being filled at a location outside the national boundaries of the sponsoring group, and
2. as long as the titles or designations for to office were not the same as those employed for men – particularly if the duties were similar to the Ephesian 4 offices.

Only the rapid shrinking of our world through the impact of communication and travel is responsible for forcing many to come to terms with dualism, which has prevailed. It is not a matter of responding to militant feminism, as some sects of liberal taint and in ignorance of the Word have done; but it becomes a matter of discovering what is New Testament Church did do.

It's hard to make that discovery. There is a vast residue of dogmatism on the subject, which forces many good men to maintain a stance, which quenches ministry possibilities for women. And it should be understood that the discovery is not to be sought with an objective in mind that there be a sudden promotion of and placement of women in spiritual leadership. This is no plea for some new “equal opportunity clause” in the corporate policy of the Church of Jesus Christ. It is an expression of that equality the Bible does say women have in ministry possibilities. It is a search of the Word on this subject born of a desire to bring us past the place of “having to explain” why God

raises some women in large ministry or significant leadership. Our explanations aren't necessary. God has ordained this possibility to women, and within the limits proscribed by His Word, there are some who will be given large place in ministry by the hand of Jesus Christ – Lord of his Church.

At this point, one can almost hear the rumble of “Amens” rising from thousands of women whose emotions span the spectrum from “frustrated” to “indignant.” But it behooves each of them to ascertain what spirit prompts their enthusiasm; because rebellion wears many faces, and whatever opportunity New Testament Life affords a woman, an unsubmitted spirit will nullify.

The Word and Women

It is ironic that there needs to be some proof of available ministry leadership for women in the Church (1) which is the result of a woman's virgin-born Son, and (2) which is referred to in its entirety as “the bridge” of that Son. The fact is that man – even redeemed men in the Church – are slow to outgrow the reactionary posture he has been forced to take because of the results “the fall of man” have worked in woman. In Genesis 3:17, as those facets of the sin-curse bearing on woman-kind are being enunciated by God, she is told, “Thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee.” The Hebrew term “teshuqah” translated “desire,” is essentially descriptive of a fallen trait. In essence, “You shall desire to have your husband's place of authority. You shall want his place of leadership over you, but it shall not be. He shall be your authority.” God is not even commenting on whether or not a woman is as good as or as potentially capable as a man. He is simply declaring that under the present conditions to which flesh has come, she shall be under his authority. He prophesies that this shall not be easy for her – “Thy desire shall be unto thy husband ... to take away his rule over you. To assert yourself.”

It is impossible to adequately imagine or to project what the status of man-woman relationship was before the fall. But a powerful concept comes into view when Genesis 5:2 and 3:20 are placed side by side. The summary statement of 5:2 notes that at creation man and woman were not only described as “one,” they were called – that is, named – one name. So total and complete was their partnership and mutuality that the matter of “position” was never in question. Their authority was mutual rather than equal. “Co-equal” may serve as a term, but the closest similarity to the original relationship would be that relationship apparent in the eternal Godhead. It is only the constant misquoting and misunderstanding of the passage in Genesis 2:18 that causes many to misconstrue “help meet” as a creature that is “appropriate” in design and potential as completing partner. It is after the fall that Eve is named, and thereby the woman comes to a separate identity from the man. In a very real way, the naming of Eve is a reflection of the tragic division sin placed between the two. So complete was their union prior to this, one name served to identify them. Now the curse would be manifest in their different standing in terms of authority toward one another. And woman, inherently knowing she was from generation to generation labor against her appointed place under man’s authority.

From that point, the scriptures are always consistent in two matters: (1) man is always responsible and in ultimate authority; (2) women are available to what purposes God may employ then in His redemptive processes – including the holding of leadership roles.

The Two Testaments Speaks

The Old Testament gives us samples adequate to establish the principle, and the New Testament closes no doors on this aspect of God’s dealing with humanity. Women rise to significant leadership, but they are always related to male authority even in their high office. Miriam prophesies, but under Moses’ (her baby brother) authority; Deborah serves as a judge-deliverer to Israel, but in direct relationship to Barak; Esther becomes an instrument of national preservation for God’s people, but even as Queen of Persia, she manifests a

submissive attitude toward her “subject,” Mordicai, who under God is her spiritual authority.

With this, the nature of the historical record of women who held leadership and who abused it (ex. Athaliah, II Kings II and II Chronicles 22) is clearly disapproving if not condemning. The Proverbs repeatedly reprove and disqualify the stubborn, the brawlish and the rebellious woman (ex. Proverbs 9:13; 21:9, 19; 23:27; 25:24; 27:15; 30:21-23). The Word of God clearly maintains: (1) there is no excuse for indulging the desire to seize man’s role, and (2) there is no emancipation from man’s ultimate authority with reference to woman.

Both the Old and New Testaments are unsurprisingly consistent on these points. However, both testaments are also consistent to the point that a woman who is in proper order with reference to man’s authority is not denied exercising what gifts of leadership or ministry God has given her.

The New Testament, in fact, seems to be launched with a kind of statement on the proposition that women are to find a rich place in the system of things being opened up through the Lord Jesus Christ. The genealogy of Matthew 1 is uncharacteristic to the sparse reference to women traditional in most Old Testament genealogies. Four women (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba) are mentioned; and this is doubly striking in its redemptive announcement in view of the fact that three of the four had been tragically tainted by moral failure. But, compounding the significance of their mention, it is evident from study of each of their cases that they were also women who honored the processes of God’s authority and rule through men.

And whatever may be deduced from the way the New Testament record begins, it is profoundly underscored by the report we are given of the way the new Testament Church began. The Pentecostal outpouring fell upon about 120 people which included an indefinite number of women disciples (Acts 1:14, 15; 2:1-4). And the proclamation which Peter delivered by the dynamic of the Holy Spirit, authorized the divinely indiscriminate filling of men and women on the basis of Joel’s prophecy. “All flesh, “ we are told, includes the feminine as

well as the masculine: of six nouns used marking gender, two are feminine. An astounding number of different – and often inconsistent – interpretations abound as to what “prophesying” entails. But by any criteria, it cannot be argued that women are granted less potential than men for ministry development.

How Far Can She Go?

To affirm that the “daughters shall prophesy, “ is one thing, but to move from that toward the prospect of a woman leading in the life of the Church is another. How far in the divinely ordained structure of the Body of Christ can a woman go?

We have already made clear that our examination of scripture is not to discover if a woman may have some kind of ministry. Virtually no one contests that. But the question bears on degree of influence and prominence. Phenomenal duplicity and confusion, if not a certain degree of hypocrisy, are present because of either ignorance or rejection of some rather candid facts in the New Testament. Some male church leaders compromise their own man-taught convictions when confronted by an obviously God-ordained leader in the form of a woman. They cannot deny her significance, but they fear to acknowledge her office. Other men who would never allow a woman in their pulpit, preach the truths which have been unfolded to their ears by a woman’s writing and study. A recognition of what place God does allow can release multitudes from confusion, and allow those women with leadership ministries to cease being freaks of spiritual sideshow. It will also remove some women from a sensed necessity to somehow justify their ministry in the eyes of critics; an unfortunate awkwardness, which results from the attitude prevailing in most quarters of Church life.

Since our study has already established the fact that deaconship is preliminary to any entry of the office ministries listed in Ephesian 4:11; let it be declared on the basis of the Word of God that a woman may be a deacon – or, more properly, a deaconess. Romans 16 begins with Paul’s commendation of “Phebe, our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchre.” The noun translated “servant” is diakonos. Phebe was a deacon. We need not labor this point, since most Church groups and circles of believing witness readily make place for this office as a ministry for a woman. But it is here asserted that the designation of a woman as a deacon, in the light of our study, means the acknowledgement of person’s ministry which is anticipated to rise in its effect and influence on the whole assembly wherein that one moves.

Are there women elders? According to I Timothy 5:2, unquestionably yes. The feminine form of the noun Presbuteros (presbutera) is employed, and it is clear that the mere matter of age is not in view. If that were the case, the Holy Spirit would have employed the noun used in Titus 2:3 (presbutis – elderly woman). But an honest investigation of the terminology used in the early church broadens the bases of the case. Local assemblies were often referred to as “houses,” and the possessive expression “of” someone indicated not so much who owned the building as who was overseer of that segment of the Church universal. Among such examples as, “the house of Stephanas” (I Cor. 16:15) and the “church in his (Nymphas) house” (Col. 4:15), is direct reference to those, which are “of Chloe” (I Cor. 1:11). Translators have supplied “of the house of,” and so preserved the spirit of the Word here. Of course there are those who would snatch at this opportunity to assert it was probably just a group of friends this woman had. But more likely is another proposition.

It is worthy of note that it was this woman who advised Paul of the problems among the believers in Cornith. Isn’t it possible that this very fact is indicative of one of the reasons she had been entrusted with the oversight of a house? Because she knew how to respond to God ordained authority, as evidence by her appealing to Paul’s apostolic office when the stress of the local situation developed, we see at least one trait which qualified her to oversee a house. Whatever irritation it may cause those who have fortified themselves in the position of its supposed impossibility, we affirm that Chloe was a pastor – an under shepherd. And that here office was evidence not only

to her maturity in the faith and proper order in God's requirements for that office, but that she held that office under apostolic appointment and in submission to a man's authority.

Further evidence of women with shepherding ministry can be given on a the basis of John's second epistle. John addresses the "elect land and her children," and gives clear-cut instruction as to who is permitted to teach in her "house." Interpretive attempts to make the "elect lady" the Bride of Christ, or Mary, the mother of Jesus, do not stand firm before a simple and open approach to the text. Leading elders, as presented in the scriptures, have children in faith. John's addressee does too (v.1,4). "Houses" (v.10) are what we today call churches. And moreover, this "elect lady" is extended greeting from her "elect sister" (v. 13), another woman with leadership assignment. Under God-honoring submission to the Apostle John's authority, she had the oversight of her own family of "children" (v. 13)

In Revelation 2:20, Christ rebukes the church at Thyatira for permitting a deceiving spirit to rule that congregation through a woman in error. But the practice of a woman in leadership isn't condemned; permitting error to prevail is. In short, it is evident that the New Testament Church did have some women who answered to the Ephesian 4 office of "pastors." That a conclusive case cannot be made is only the judgment of those who presuppose its impossibility.

The fact is that there are women today – whether recognized by title or not – who serve in a shepherding capacity to many. The size of their congregation or the recognition of their ordination is immaterial to the fact: they do have office. Many circumstances have given rise to a woman's becoming apparent as the vessel assigned oversight of a group for a time.

Such an appointment, a woman carrying whatever type of shepherding pastoral oversight, should meet those Biblical requirements that are discernible in the Word. We can deduce from scripture these things:

1. Her appointment is based on her acknowledgement of that apostolic authority overseeing her. Her ministry as an “elder woman” is “under authority” to a man at another level of leadership in the Body of Christ.
2. Her role of leading/feeding the flock she has been given to will be confirmed in its correctness by the fact that men in that flock mutually recognize and accept the grace of God upon her for this office.

Their acceptance is what removes her possible disqualification for ministry office; were she seizing authority, rather than receiving a gift of ministry. Any woman given ministry office will have already learned the grace of acknowledging God’s order. Men hold ultimate responsibility. And as regards the manifest gift and grace becoming apparent in a woman’s life, men of authority are responsible to God as well as the woman to acknowledge it. Grace and wisdom are no more essential to the granting of ministry office to a woman than to a man. It is simply that we haven’t had as much practice.

A thousand questions may now rise as readers create “case study possibilities.” “What if this ... How about that?” But the intent of this point is not to decide details of marital status, past life, etc. Requirements here are no less than for any man; and it would seem clear that a married woman would not hold this office apart from her husband’s equal involvement. A reexamination of the chapter on the requirements of an elder is presiding office should satisfy most fears which would become manifest on this point. And it is unfortunately true that in tens of thousands of cases, men have been appointed to pastoral office without meeting Biblical requirements for their leadership roll – and only were exempt from more exacting demands and dubious questions because they were men. The standard for ministry leadership office is not being lowered by our coming into line with the New Testament Church on this point; but rather, the acceptance of a woman’s place might just turn out to be an instrument which restores a more careful meeting of the directives of the Word concerning those placed in pastoral charge.

There are two passages, which are generally used to attempt a case against women holding significant ministry role in the Church. Let’s examine

them, since they are quoted so glibly and with such frequency. They are as follows:

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

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church (I Cor. 14:34, 35)

To begin, an examination of the verbs employed do argue for a submissive woman and for one with a quiet and restful spirit. But the word “hesuchia” which occurs twice in I Timothy 2:11, 12 simply does not mean “silent.” The same word occurs in another form in verse 2 of the same passage. Believers are urged to intercede for civil authorities, to the end “that we might lead a quiet and peaceable life” (I Tim.2:2). The idea is clearly one of contented stillness of spirit, undisturbed by strife and discord. In this spirit, the woman is not the “usurp authority,” i.e., not to be domineering (authentew). This verb occurs but this one tie in the entire New Testament. The intent of instruction here is against an overbearing, demeaning control of her spouse. If the idea intended had to do with authority in the divine structure of the church, other terms more consistent with New Testament usage would have been employed.

(SEE INSERT – REVERSE SIDE.)

Now, in the Corinthian passage, the same concept is being conveyed A different verb (sigao) is used for “be silent”, however; a fact worthy of note since inasmuch as another term is employed at this time it might signal a final word on the matter. Had the verb phimao been used (to silence, to muzzle; in effect, to produce muteness) a case for speechless-women-in-the Church might be attempted. But again, the idea of sigao like hesuchia is one of quietness, of tongue control. It is not an absolute issued to forbid speech, but a directive to control it. The same term occurs in verse 28 and 30 of I Corinthians 14, and in this context clearly means not to speak at an inappropriate time.

Women Do Need Instruction

There is no question that the intent of these passages is to curb women who are too ready to talk. The force of the scripture is unquestionably geared to create an atmosphere in which men will rise to manhood, and in which women will learn to trust God to develop that spiritual manliness. Too many congregations suffer from well intended women talking too soon and too much. This is not even a backhanded or facetious commentary in the spirit of the world's mocking stereotype image of a gabby, garrulous, babbling woman, rattling on endlessly with pointless chatter. That could be included in the case where it might apply. But observation of the circumstance in most churches would suggest it is more intended to teach women to control themselves, even when they have something good to add. Let her make room first for one of the men in the group to speak; and then should her turn come by invitation, let her exercise the grace to see that her answer or contribution – perhaps even better than his -- is offered in a spirit that makes it a lovely addition and not an embarrassing correction.

But as necessary as this instruction is for a woman, and as thorough-going as its application ought to be in the life of the Church, it doesn't bear on women with an intent to stifle possibilities which true maturity may bring about her. If women were disallowed a voice in the early church.

...How would we know the evangelist Philip had four daughters that prophesied (Acts 21:9)?

...How shall we correct Priscilla at this late date for her Holy-Spirit-recorded share in Appolos' introduction to a more complete understanding of God's way (Acts 18:26)?

...What shall we do after the corrective teaching of I Corinthians 11:1-12 has been applied to women who prophesy or pray? Having set them in Biblical order shall we then tell them it was only a technicality anyway, since they aren't allowed to speak?

Some reply, "Oh, they can speak alright. But women are only to speak to women. Women are only to teach women, and then they aren't to teach doctrine, but only how to be good wives and to keep their houses well." Of course, there is enough correct in this proposition that one cannot make a

categorical rejection of it. Women are to teach women to be stable believers and to be good wives and mothers (Titus 2:3-5). But there is no directive, which closes the door against any additional ministering of the things of God.

Moses permitted Miriam's prophesying before the hosts of all Israel (Exodus 15). In Josiah's day, Hilkiah the high priest sought out the prophetess Huldah, and he with other leading men of Israel received her words of exhortation (II Kings 22). Joseph and Mary are not considered undiscerning for receiving the word of the Lord by the prophetess Hannah (Luke 2). And these three ministries were given by God and received by men before "the glory that excelleth" (II Cor. 3:10) was revealed. The Lord Jesus Christ has brought "life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Tim. 1:10). He who came that all might have "life, and life more abundantly" (John 10:10) has not called half of his creation to a stunted potential of fruitfulness.

The fact is that thousands of women are ministering to believers of both genders, and their ministries are received openly.

Men of every theological persuasion are willing, at the very least, to grant occasional acknowledgement to some woman whose public ministry is undeniably God-ordained. In these cases, the bias of history and the tradition of men forces such reluctant responses as: "She's the exception that proves the rules;" "I can't explain it – It's just a sovereign work of God;" "I would rather it was a man, but I have to thank God for her ministry;" etc. In the light of the Word of God, wouldn't it appear acceptable to simply say of a woman

...with the gift of an evangelist,
...with the voice of a prophetess,
...with the ministry of a teacher, or
...with the loving patience to exercise pastoral care –
"Praise God for her ministry. Jesus gave her to His Church"

What Control Are Proper?

As one could anticipate the improperly motivated “Amens” of troubled women earlier, it is not difficult to discern that at this point there will be men shuddering with doubt as to what lengths such a concession might bring us. “They’ll take over now. Give them an inch and ...well, it’s just not God’s way!”

What is, then? What is God’s way of placing ministry?

The answer is firmly established in the recorded life of the early Church. All ministry is ordained and/or appointed by apostles. The ultimate oversight of the Church’s life is their domain and responsibility. Further, the requirements of maturity for ministry leadership as incumbent upon a woman as a man. The multiplied graces expected of elders preclude the sudden swelling of public ministry rolls with women clamoring for a place of prominence.

The truth is, most women neither want such ministry or are called to it. Where churches exercise New Testament order in congregational and family life and teaching, the disturbing scene of domineering women controlling the life, thought and destiny of a congregation is impossible. The abounding possibilities for personal ministry, which are open to a believing woman, will be fulfilling for the vast majority of them. But should Christ the Lord, personnel manager of His Church, summon a redeemed woman to a place of gift-office, there are three things we must acknowledge:

1. New Testament precedents makes room for such a minis-try possibility;
2. She shall be expected to fulfill the requirements of New Testament ministry leadership, as well as be in perfect order with reference to her husband (in those cases where she is married); and
3. She shall be submitted to the oversight of a male leader in the Body of Christ.

It is undoubtedly this last principle that explains the fact that there are no cases in the New Testament of a woman apostle. God’s plan, since the curse came upon the race, is that a woman shall be responsible to a man, and a man shall be responsible for a woman. The intent is clearly for protection and preservation of

her life and fulfillment of her potential. When this “covering” ministry of the man becomes a preventative to possibilities, or exempts the woman from becoming all that Jesus might wish to cause her to be, we have missed the spirit of the Word and become bound by the letter of a man-ordained law.

“Neither make nor female...in Christ,” does not deny gender. Nor does it deny the danger of either sex falling short of what spiritual fruitfulness they might attain unto.

It doesn't reverse man's ultimate authority over the woman, nor does it neutralize the woman's required submissiveness toward those men whose authority relates to her life – husband, pastor, or leader in the Body of Christ.

It does not remove the possibility of women being susceptible to deception, or the possibility of men ailing to correct her error in love and with wisdom.

It does not urge the substitution of female for male leadership, nor does it promote a crusade for women to launch forward with a carnal zeal for Church offices.

It does indicate that God is dealing with redeemed human spirits, and that he isn't disqualifying any of them for ministry roles on the basis of what shape their body is.

The Woman Question

(by Randall Parr)

Emancipating women to their
rightful places in ministry could
be a key to unlocking the
church's full potential.

The politically correct beliefs of our society are moving increasingly toward the “unisex” position—that gender is irrelevant and should not be considered a factor in any job qualification. This is forcing the church to take a new look at what the Bible says about women and men in the church.

Two extreme views both use Scriptures to justify their positions. Some commentators glibly quote 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, “Let your women keep silent in the churches,” and 1 Timothy 2:12, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man.”(NKJV) as the end of the discussion. Others, often with equal disregard for other passages, use Galatians 3:28 as their battle cry: “There is...neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Although I would be foolish to assume this article could fully resolve such deep divisions, let me at least offer some simple observations.

1. An increasing number of women are engaging in fruitful public ministries.

While some debate the theology of the matter, many women are already having a great impact. Who among the men in the body of Christ are any better teachers than faithful women such as Marilyn Hickey, Iverna Tompkins, Fuchsia Pickett and Kay Arthur?

Hickey, who is affiliated with the Assemblies of God, made history in April when she conducted what is believed to be the first crusade by a woman in Pakistan, a country that is 96 percent Muslim. Crowds of nearly 20,000 people

attended, and God honored her ministry with an usual number of dramatic miracles: The lame walked, the deaf heard, and the blind received their sight.

Daisy Osborn, who died May 27, was sometimes referred to as “the first lady of evangelism.” She and her husband, T.L., are said to have preached face-to-face to more people than any couple in history, primarily in Third World countries. Daisy was one of several women this century who have preached the gospel and had remarkable healing ministries; others include Aimee Semple McPherson, Kathryn Kuhlman and Frances Hunter.

A large number of women are also in pastoral ministries. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 11.1 percent of the women in the America describe their occupation as “clergy.” The Assemblies of God and United Methodist denominations each have more than 4, 000 women who have ministerial credentials. The African Methodist Episcopal Church estimates that women make up one third of its 129,000 ministries.

A growing trend among charismatic churches is for husbands and wives to serve as co-pastors. For more than 15 years, Jean Coleman has pastored the independent Tabernacle Church in Laurel, Maryland, alongside her husband, Jack. “We are the pastors”, they like to say. Another example is Mack and Brenda Timberlake, who pastor together at Christian Faith Center in Creedmoor, North Carolina.

South Korea’s David Yonggi Cho, pastor of the world’s largest church, credits his use of thousands of female call-group leaders as one factor that has contributed to the church’s remarkable growth. In making his initial decision to use women so extensively in such roles, Cho reasoned that women are often more spiritual than men, they frequently have more time, and they are more willing to visit people in their homes. His hunch as paid off.

If you have ever wondered whether God still used people to give personal words of prophecy and encouragement today, you need to attend one of Cathy Lechner’s meetings. Based in Jacksonville, Florida, Lechner travels around the

country teaching, prophesying and encouraging Christians in a humble and often humorous way. She is one of the many thousands of unsung heroes among women in ministry today.

2. It is absolutely clear that many women in the Bible had prominent ministries.

In addition to women such as Miriam, Deborah, Esther and Huldah in the Old Testament, the pages of the New Testament are filled with women who made tremendous contributions. Following Mary, Jesus' mother we could list women such as Anna the prophetess, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, Priscilla, Phoebe, Chloe, Euodia, Syntyche, Nympha, Junia, Julia and Philip's prophetess daughters-a long roster indeed.

Some of these, such as Joanna and Susanna, could be written off by "let the women be silent advocates as merely players of supporting roles. Others, though, are specifically described as operating in roles analogous to the Ephesians 4:11 and I Timothy 3:1:13 ministries often reserved for men.

- Apostolic ministry: In Romans 16:7 Junia (a female name) is described as "of note among the apostle." Also, Priscilla and her husband seem to have functioned as an apostolic couple who were "fellow workers" with Paul (see Rom 16:3-4).
- Prophetic ministry: Anna in Luke 2:36 and Philip's daughters in Acts 21:8-9 are recognized as having valid prophetic ministries. An increase of such roles for women is foretold by Peter's message at Pentecost: "Your sons and *your daughters* shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17, italics added).
- Evangelistic ministry: Euodia and Syntyche are described by Paul in Philippians 4:2-3 as laboring with him in the gospel. It should not be surprising that women to involved in evangelistic ministries because Mary Magdalene was the first person to and proclaim the risen Savior (see John 20:1-18).
- Pastors and teachers: Though some would claim I Timothy 2:12 prohibits women from serving in pastoral roles over men, there is

no doubt that *at least* they can serve in such roles over the younger women (see Titus 2:3-5).

- As for teaching men, those who take a strict view against this should consider examples such as these: Priscilla apparently felt no qualms about taking the erring Apollos aside and “explaining to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:24-26); Timothy’s grandmother Lois and his mother, Eunice, taught him the Scriptures from childhood (2 Tim. 1:15).
- Deacons: From the example of Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2 and Paul’s outline of the qualifications for church leaders in I Timothy 3:11, there seems little room for doubt that women should be allowed to serve as deacons. Although the common term in the church today is “deaconess,” the Greek word used to describe Phoebe, *diakonos*, is the same word used in I Timothy 3 for male deacons.

3. Though the Bible makes clear that women may be actively involved in ministry, gender differences do exist.

Some women, in their zeal to break loose from the oppressive views that would muzzle them, have gone too far. Desiring to prove that there should be absolutely no gender distinctions, they have grabbed Galatians 3:28 as proof text: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ.”

This is indeed a wonderful and liberating verse; but if we are honest, we will recognize that rather than being a conclusive statement on church government, its scope is primarily our standing as equals in Christ. For example, even though Paul says there is neither Jew nor Greek, in other passages he makes practical distinctions: The gospel is “for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Roman 1:16); and Romans 9-11 contrasts God’s dealings with the Jews and His dealings with the Gentiles.

Likewise, although Paul says that in Christ there is neither slave nor free, that did not stop him from separately addressing the different situations slaves and masters found themselves in (see Eph. 6:5-9). We shouldn’t think it unusual, therefore, that Paul could say there is neither

male nor female, yet still give separate instructions to both genders in his letters.

Men and women are simply not the same, as any honest assessment will conclude. The emancipation of women into God's fullest intentions for them should not erase all distinctions – those distinctions were designed by God Himself. Women cannot make their greatest contribution to the body of Christ by imitating men, but rather by shining with the special qualities that men do not have.

Having said that men and women offer unique attributes is not to imply in any way that one is inferior. In fact, some commentators have pointed out that only after sin entered the world in Genesis 3 was there a need to clarify the role of women as being under the leadership of their husbands.

Although the distinction between male and female is part of God's original creation, there initially was such harmony, oneness and teamwork between the genders that the Lord could consider them both as having the same name: Adam (see Gen. 5:2). Not until they fell into sin did it become necessary to give the woman a separate name: Eve (see Gen. 3:20).

We should be wary of our society's push toward the view that men and women are completely interchangeable, except for differently shaped bodies; yet Jesus indeed points to a day when we will be "like the angels" and gender apparently will not be important. Meanwhile, church history reveals a fascinating principle: In times of revival and spiritual awakening, gender distinctions are minimized; in time of spiritual decline, we are more aware of our differences and come up with regulations to keep everyone in their places.

But what are we to make of the Scriptures that appear to impose severe limitations – even silence – on women in the church?

Many explanations have been set forth to explain I Corinthians 14:34-35, "Let your women keep silent in the churches." Did it only refer to women who created a commotion by asking questions, particularly since the custom was for men and women to sit separately in the meetings?

Could “silent” (*sigao*) be better translated as the concept of “quietness,” not meaning absolute silence but simply that women should not engage in inappropriate chatter or speak out of turn? Does verse 36 imply that Paul was merely repeating a view suggested by the Corinthians rather than endorsing it as his own?

Although we may never be totally sure of the correct interpretation of this difficult passage, one thing is certain: It is *impossible* for it to mean that women must be absolutely silent in church. This is clear from Paul’s statement in I Corinthians 11:5 that women may validly pray and prophesy publicly, and from his inclusive comments in chapters 12 and 14 encouraging *all* believers to share spiritual gifts in the meetings.

A passage that cannot be dismissed so easily is I Timothy 2:12: “And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.” Has this verse been mistranslated, particularly since the word rendered “authority” (*authentain*) is found nowhere else in the New Testament?

Is Paul’s intention only to address particular problems in Ephesus, where Timothy presumably was when he received the letter? Should the verse be taken only as a reflection of the culture of the time and not as a statement of policy meant to continue through all stages of church history?

This controversial passage is studied in detail in a book by Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman* (Baker). They work hard to come to their conclusion that Paul is addressing certain local gnostic heresies, specifically the notion that woman was responsible for the creation of men and, therefore, superior to man. The authors suggest that the real meaning of the verse is to prevent women from teaching that men originated from women.

Others have pointed out that the word translated “man” in I Timothy 2:12 is *aner*, which frequently is translated in other passages as “husband.” The verse could mean, this position urges, that Paul refused to give place to a woman who behaved in a bossy or domineering way toward her husband.

Even if we somehow could erase I Timothy 2:12 from the Bible, other problems remain in proving that the wide latitude of ministry given to women includes the “final frontier”: taking authority as official overseers in the church.

The reason this questions still remains open is that when Paul prescribes the qualifications for church overseers in I Timothy 3:1-13, he seems to assume that these primary leaders will be male. For example, he says they should be “the husband of one wife.”

For deacons, however, verse 11 in the Greek could well be interpreted as a difference to women. Based on this analysis, some would make a distinction between the *episcopate* – the primary overseers of the church, which would include only men – and the *diakonate*, open to all believers without reference to gender.

To this reasoning can be added the observation that no women were among Jesus’ 12 disciples; however, no women were included among the seven servants chosen in Acts 6:1-7 either, the passage traditionally viewed as a description of the church’s first deacons.

Let me say clearly that these are only observations, not dogmatic assertions. As stated earlier , women are given wide latitude in the pages of Scripture, and they should have wide latitude today.

Sincere believers will differ on these issues, and our commitment should be to affirm anyone who genuinely desires to serve Christ, regardless of whether we personally agree with every aspect of how they conduct their ministries.

4. Many Scriptural admonitions to those who would be in ministry apply to both men and women.

One of the saddest and most hypocritical aspects of the debate over women in ministry is the way men have to often preached on the requirement for women to be accountable and “under submission” while the same men utterly ignore similar principles that apply to their own ministries. Here are some notable examples:

- All ministries are warned not to be “lords over those entrusted to you, “ but to lead by example. (see I Peter 5:3).
- We are all to submit to God and humble ourselves under His mighty hand (see James 4:7, I Peter 5:6).
- We all must give an account for our ministries. (see Hebrews 13:17).
- Although we are leaders, we must all be careful that we are not guilty of “insubordination” (see Titus 1:6).
- All ministers must be careful not to neglect their own families (I Timothy 3:4-5, Titus 1:6).
- All those in ministry should heed the character qualities listed as prerequisites to leadership, which include having a good reputation, being self-controlled, controlling our temper, not being quarrelsome or violent, not being addicted to wine or other substances, not being greedy or dishonest and not being conceited (see I Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9).
- All leaders must beware of seeking their own prominence or positions or titles (see Matthew 23:6-12, 3 John 9).
- The bottom line for all greatness and leadership, according to Jesus, is that we be willing to lay our lives down and be servants (see Matthew 20:20-28)

The Spirit of God is certainly grieved when men rail against women in ministry while they themselves are insubordinate and unwilling to be

accountable to any other leaders. God exalts those who humble themselves, regardless of their gender.

Although some women may indeed have contentious attitudes and chips on their shoulders toward men, many others have humble hearts of servants – and there is scarcely any limit to the heights to which God can lift them.

It is time to pull out all the stops and mobilize every member of the body of Christ for ministry. We cannot afford to be without the valuable contribution women can make by their full participation in the kingdom of God.

The Women Speak Out!

Ministries Today recently asked women in variety of ministries to comment on what the Scriptures say about female ministers and to share their personal experiences and practical wisdom. Here is what they told us:

Does the Bible place any limitations on women in ministry?

“Ministry is limited only by call – not by race or gender; however, it does not appear that many women in the Bible or present-day ministry have full-time ministry gifts.” –Marilyn Hickey, *Bible teacher*; based in Denver

“If we are limited, it is because of the attitude of our hearts – not because of our gender.” –Ernestine Reems, *pastor*; Oakland, California

“My personal feeling is that the only ceiling on the opportunity for women to minister should be on a board governmental basis, such as the office of bishops.” –Kathie Walters, *itinerant minister*, based in Macon, Georgia

“God is no respecter of persons or genders.” –Brenda Timberlake, *co pastor*, Creedmoor, North Carolina

“ I do not believe that Bible teaches any function as exclusively male or female. But I must make it clear that I recognize that there is a difference between men and women. I do not ascribe to the idea of equality that masculinizes women or feminizes men. God’s blessing seems strongest when His characters is made known by complementing male and female expressions.” –Shirley Arnold, *itinerant minister*, based in Lakeland, Florida

“Women continually come to me asking ‘what can we do in the church?’ My answer is, ‘Anything and everything God calls you to do.’ For too long, historical attitudes, biased translations and two small Scriptures taken out of context have held women in a bondage God never intended for them.” –Corinthia Boone, *founder of Together in Ministry*; Washington DC

“Just because the Scriptures give no examples of women in the role of senior pastor or bishop does not mean the Bible is against it. I don’t believe that point in I Timothy 2:12 was transcultural and timeless. In the Greek text the verb is in the present active tense, which might be a better translated, ‘ I am not *presently* permitting a woman to teach or have authority.’” – Cathy Lechner, *prophetic teacher*; based in Jacksonville, Florida

“From the moment I was saved, I knew who I was in Christ. I did not consider myself as a ‘female.’ I considered myself a believer who has a tremendous message to share.” --Frances Hunter, *evangelist*; based in Kingwood, Texas

Is male leadership in the church preferable, even if it isn't mandatory?

“We must always look at gifts, anointing and character before we look at gender. However, just as it feels ‘right’ when a father leads a home, it generally feels right when a man is pasturing a church. I am not against women leading a church, but there is something inside me that feels better when a man is leading.” – Julie Anderson, *coordinator of the A.D. 2000 United Prayer Track* in England

“There is a difference between a calling to minister and a call to be in the *office* of a minister. All things being equal, I prefer a man in the role of senior pastor. I believe it works better for a congregation, considering such things as intimate counseling situations and cultural objections. However, I believe there are some ‘Deborahs’ who have mastered the art of being more than a gender and can be seen foremost as a minister. They qualify for any role.” –Mona Johnian, *co-pastor*, Woburn, Massachusetts

“Personally, I am willing to hear teaching, preaching, exhortation, prophetic words and all such verbal ministry from women. I’m also willing to be baptized, married or received communion or prayer for healing from a woman. I’m very comfortable with women on staff and as the top management in the Para church organizations.

As for the role of senior pastor, though, I prefer a male. But that’s personal preference. I would never advise someone not to attend a church with a woman pastor if they were comfortable there.” – Linda Riley, *director of Called Together Ministries*, Torrance, California

“I do not believe there are any biblical limitations on the ministry roles a woman can fill: Nevertheless, I personally prefer for women not to fill senior pastor positions. While I do not judge doing so as wrong, I like having the strength of a man in top leadership of the local church. I view the structure of the church as similar to the functional family, which is headed by the husband, not the wife.” – Devi Titus, *pastor’s wife and conference speaker*, Youngstown, Ohio

“Most women function with greater liberty and security when they know they are under the covering of men leading the church. Yet, I have also seen that as women are now being included in leadership teams, they bring a very valuable

contribution and balance. God made us male and female, and both are needed.” – Eileen Wallis, *author and speaker*, England

How important is having the right attitude?

“Everything has to do with attitude. When a woman is striving, competitive and on the defensive, she repels not only men but women. A woman with a wrong spirit will look upon men as the enemy and a competitor. Instead, a woman in ministry must see herself as a co-laborer and a helper. She should not desire to replace a man or to compete with a man, but rather to complement a man. Although I feel that I am equal to men, I am willing to submit myself to their leadership.” – Jean Coleman, *co-pastor*, Laurel, Maryland

“Most problems occur because of self-promotion. The humble will be exalted-regardless of gender!” – Esther Ilnisky, *director of Esther Network International*, Palm Beach, Florida

“I have known women ministers who are as tough as nails and resemble a Wild West gunslinger more than a feminine vessel of the Lord’s anointing. Women ought to minister like women, and not try to be ‘powerful’ like men. I want to minister as a mature, gracious woman.” – Linda Riley

Have you encountered rejection as a woman in ministry?

“The prejudice is not yet fully broken, but the larger number of women ministering has forced greater acceptance. I could relate story after story of being introduced apologetically by pastors who say something like this: ‘If God can use a donkey, He sure can speak through a woman; or, Many of you, like me, don’t care for women preachers; but if you’ll listen to this lady, you’ll discover she has something to say.’” – Iverna Tompkin, *bible teacher*, based in Phoenix

“Women in ministry need to beware of using being a woman as an explanation for all criticism. Good men get criticized, too. Many criticisms are based on reasons other than gender.” – Esther Ilnisky

“I believe the social acceptance of women in ministry has gotten better over the last 10 years, and some of this might be attributed to the women’s liberation movement. It is a shame that church did not take the lead in liberating women by recognizing and calling them to ministry within the church.” –Jean Steffenson, *Reconciliation Coalition*, Castle Rock, Colorado

What is your advice to other women who are considering a vocation in ministry?

“My advice is to be certain you are called, keep focused, don’t try to knock down door and keep the chips of your shoulder,” – Marilyn Hickey

“Reach for responsibility, not authority. Look for ways to serve and serve faithfully.” – Corinthia Boone