Women Pastors and Biblical Authority

What Scriptures Actually Say

Series 1-10

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VerseQuest Ministries




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Women Pastors and Biblical Authority

What the Scriptures Actually Say

A Ten-Part King James Bible Study Series

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Published by VerseQuest Ministries

First Edition — 2026

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Scripture References

All Scripture quotations are taken exclusively from the **King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible**, commonly known as the Authorized Version of 1611.

Scripture references are provided throughout this publication to encourage personal Bible study, careful examination of doctrine, and faithful comparison of Scripture with Scripture.

Statement of Biblical Purpose

This publication is presented as an independent, King James Bible-based examination of women pastors, biblical authority, the qualifications for church leadership, and the ministries Scripture assigns to Christian believers.

Its purpose is to uphold the authority of the written word of God, distinguish pastoral office from other forms of Christian service, and recognize the faithful contributions of women throughout biblical history and the New Testament church.

Doctrinal conclusions are presented for examination in the light of Scripture. Readers are encouraged to follow the instruction of 1 Thessalonians 5:21:

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

Publication and Ministry Information

VerseQuest Ministries

Independent King James Bible Teaching, Exposition, and Dispensational Studies

Dedicated to proclaiming the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, rightly dividing the word of truth, defending sound doctrine, and encouraging believers to study the Scriptures faithfully.

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Introduction — Women Pastors and Biblical Authority — What the Scriptures Actually Say

There are some subjects in Christianity that can empty a room faster than a preacher announcing he intends to collect a second offering, and the question of women pastors is certainly one of them. Mention the subject in the average modern congregation, and before anybody has opened a Bible, somebody is offended, somebody is defensive, somebody is quoting a verse he has never examined in context, and somebody else is preparing a lengthy explanation of why the apostle Paul could not possibly have meant what he plainly wrote. Meanwhile, the King James Bible sits there with its pages open, waiting for somebody to stop arguing long enough to read it. **The question is not whether women are intelligent, capable, courageous, knowledgeable, or useful in the service of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures settled those matters centuries ago. The question is whether Almighty God authorized women to occupy the governing office of pastor over a New Testament congregation.** Those are two entirely different questions, and anybody who insists upon confusing them is not helping the discussion. God established the qualifications for church leadership, and He also recorded the remarkable service of faithful women throughout biblical history. We have no authority to erase either truth merely because the resulting distinction makes somebody uncomfortable.

Before proceeding, something needs to be established so plainly that even the fellow reading with his denominational glasses welded to his nose cannot miss it. **This series is not an attack upon Christian women who faithfully proclaim the gospel, teach their children the Scriptures, encourage believers, defend sound doctrine, distribute Bible studies, or labour in the work of Jesus Christ.** Far from it. Some of the most faithful servants in the Lord's vineyard are women who have never asked for a pastoral title and have no intention of occupying a position Scripture does not assign them. They study their Bibles, witness to lost sinners, help struggling families, encourage discouraged Christians, and stand faithfully for biblical truth while certain men with impressive religious titles can barely be persuaded to open their own Bibles outside of Sunday morning. Anybody who has spent much time in Christian ministry has encountered situations where faithful women carried enormous responsibilities while men who should have been helping apparently developed an extraordinary ability to disappear whenever actual work needed doing. That does not justify overturning biblical order, but it certainly ought to embarrass the men who spend more time defending their supposed authority than fulfilling their responsibilities. **A woman does not need to become a pastor to be a tremendous servant of Jesus Christ, and a man does not become a tremendous servant merely because he possesses the title.**

Our starting point must be the distinction between proclaiming God's truth and exercising pastoral authority. Mark 16:15 records the Lord Jesus Christ commanding, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Acts 8:4 declares that the believers scattered by persecution "went every where preaching the word." Ephesians 4:25 commands believers to speak truth with their neighbours, and Romans 10:17 declares, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The gospel must be proclaimed. Lost sinners must hear that Jesus Christ died for their sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Salvation is by grace through faith, not by works, religious ordinances, church membership, or the approval of an ecclesiastical official. A Christian woman who opens her King James Bible and shows a lost sinner how to be saved is performing a valuable service. She does not need to request permission from a bishop before explaining John 3:16, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:8, or Ephesians 2:8–9. **The authority of the gospel belongs to God, not to the person carrying the message. A messenger does not become a pastor simply because the message is powerful, any more than a mail carrier becomes president because he delivers a letter from the White House.**

But the fact that every believer has opportunities to proclaim God's truth does not mean every believer qualifies to govern a congregation. First Timothy 3:1–2 establishes the distinction: "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach." There is an office, and there are qualifications. Titus 1:5–9 repeats the requirements concerning elders and bishops, while Acts 20:28 identifies overseers responsible for feeding the church of God. First Peter 5:2–3 commands elders to exercise oversight without becoming lords over God's heritage. These passages concern responsibility, authority, doctrine, character, and accountability before the Chief Shepherd. They do not describe a public popularity contest in which the winner receives an ordination certificate and permission to rewrite the requirements. **A church may vote upon the appointment of its officers, but it cannot vote away the qualifications God established for those officers. An impressive theological degree cannot amend First Timothy 3, and a congregation filled with enthusiastic supporters cannot repeal Titus 1.** The office belongs under divine authority, not human enthusiasm.

Now, the modern argument frequently insists that restricting the pastoral office to qualified men automatically makes women inferior Christians. That accusation collapses as soon as Galatians 3:26–28 is examined in its setting. Paul declares, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," and then states, "there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Every saved man and woman possesses the same salvation, the same Saviour, and the same standing before God through faith in Jesus Christ. A woman is

not justified by a lesser measure of grace, indwelt by an inferior Holy Spirit, or promised a smaller portion of eternal life because she does not occupy the pastoral office. But equality of standing does not eliminate every distinction of responsibility. First Corinthians 12 describes one body with many members performing differing functions. The foot is not the hand, and the ear is not the eye. The apostle does not conclude that the ear has been oppressed because it cannot see, or that the hand has become a second-class member because it cannot hear. **Equality in Christ does not require everybody to occupy the same office. God created one body with differing responsibilities, not an ecclesiastical assembly line manufacturing identical pastors.**

The Scriptures themselves provide abundant evidence that God has used women in extraordinary ways. Deborah judged Israel and communicated God's direction to Barak. Huldah delivered the word of the LORD to representatives of King Josiah. Miriam was identified as a prophetess and participated in Israel's celebration of deliverance from Egypt. Anna publicly testified concerning the Redeemer to those awaiting redemption in Jerusalem. Priscilla, working alongside Aquila, helped explain the way of God more perfectly to Apollos. Phebe was commended as a servant of the church at Cenchrea and a succourer of many. Lydia opened her home to the servants of Christ. Dorcas was remembered for good works and charitable deeds. Lois and Eunice contributed to the spiritual foundation of Timothy, while Paul recognized Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, Euodias, and Syntyche for their labour in the Lord. **These women were not decorative figures standing around waiting for the men to accomplish everything. They were genuine servants whose faithfulness the Holy Ghost considered worthy of recording in the everlasting Scriptures.** But honouring what they actually did does not require inventing offices the Bible never assigns them. Deborah was a judge, Huldah was a prophetess, and Priscilla helped instruct Apollos. None of those facts automatically makes any of them the bishop of a New Testament congregation.

And that brings us to one of the most persistent problems in contemporary Bible interpretation: the refusal to distinguish one biblical office from another. Somebody points to Deborah and announces that a woman exercised authority over men. Correct. Somebody points to Huldah and declares that a woman communicated divine revelation to male officials. Correct again. Somebody points to Philip's four daughters in Acts 21:9 and observes that women genuinely prophesied during the apostolic period. Absolutely correct. But then comes the unsupported conclusion that because these women exercised legitimate ministries, the qualifications for bishops in First Timothy 3 must no longer apply. That is where the argument collapses. **A judge is not automatically a pastor, a prophetess is not automatically a bishop, and possessing a spiritual gift does not automatically confer every governing office within the church.** The Old Testament

history of Israel must not be confused with the government of a New Testament congregation. Neither may the extraordinary revelatory gifts recorded during the apostolic period be treated as interchangeable with pastoral oversight. God established the distinctions. Our responsibility is to recognize them instead of manufacturing an imaginary contradiction and demanding that Scripture apologize for it.

There is another passage modern religion desperately wants to explain away. First Timothy 2:12 declares, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Paul then supplies his reasoning: "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." Notice where the apostle goes for his explanation. He does not appeal merely to local customs, social traditions, or temporary inconveniences at Ephesus. He reaches backward to Genesis and the original creation order. That matters. Yet the same Bible that restricts authoritative teaching over men also commands older women to be "teachers of good things" in Titus 2:3. It records Priscilla assisting Aquila in instructing Apollos and commends women who laboured in the gospel. Those statements must be understood together. **The Bible does not prohibit every Christian woman from teaching everything to everybody under every circumstance. It establishes boundaries concerning authority while positively assigning other responsibilities.** The man who ignores First Timothy 2 has mishandled the Scriptures, but the man who uses it to forbid what Titus 2 commands has accomplished exactly the same thing from the opposite direction.

We will also confront the difficult language of First Corinthians 14:34–35, where Paul instructs women to keep silence in the churches. That passage cannot be dismissed merely because its language is inconvenient. But neither can it be torn away from the surrounding discussion of tongues, interpretation, prophecy, judging prophetic messages, and maintaining proper order in the assembly. Earlier in the chapter, Paul commands a tongue-speaker without an interpreter to keep silence. He instructs a prophet to hold his peace when another receives revelation. Then he addresses women and their conduct during congregational gatherings. Meanwhile, First Corinthians 11:5 refers to women praying or prophesying. **The Holy Ghost did not contradict Himself between chapters 11 and 14, and Paul did not suffer a sudden attack of apostolic forgetfulness.** The question is what kind of speech and authority the passages regulate in their respective settings. We will examine the text carefully rather than using one passage as a club to beat another passage into silence. God's commandments deserve obedience, but they also deserve accurate interpretation. A restriction concerning church government must not become an excuse to forbid every legitimate expression of Christian service.

Then there is the matter of the modern celebrity preacher, where things become especially revealing. We live in a religious culture where television personalities, charismatic celebrities, motivational speakers, and ministry founders can develop enormous audiences while the actual qualifications for biblical leadership are treated as minor administrative details. A person may possess a broadcasting empire, sell thousands of books, collect impressive donations, and command the enthusiastic attention of multitudes while teaching doctrines that cannot survive five minutes of serious examination from a King James Bible. Some publicly claim prophetic authority, announce extraordinary revelations, or preside over religious meetings where dramatic manifestations become more important than the preaching of sound doctrine. These claims must be tested fairly rather than exaggerated through gossip, but the biblical standard remains unchanged. First Thessalonians 5:21 commands, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." First Corinthians 14:33 declares that God is not the author of confusion, and verse 40 commands that everything be done decently and in order. **A microphone does not make a pastor. A crowd does not make a prophet. A television program does not make an apostle. And a person falling on the floor during a religious meeting does not automatically prove that the Holy Ghost pushed him there.** The Scriptures, not the spectacle, must determine what receives our approval.

Yet we must be equally careful not to imagine that the problems of celebrity religion belong exclusively to women. There are plenty of male preachers whose ministries exhibit greed, pride, doctrinal corruption, manipulation, and religious theatrics. A man does not become qualified merely because the Scriptures describe the bishop as "the husband of one wife." Paul also requires him to be blameless, sober, vigilant, patient, apt to teach, capable of ruling his household properly, and possessing a good report from those outside the church. He must not be greedy of filthy lucre, covetous, violent, or lifted up with pride. First Peter 5 forbids elders from becoming lords over God's heritage. Hebrews 13:17 reminds us that spiritual leaders watch for souls as those who must give account. **The man who demands respect for his pastoral authority while ignoring the qualifications for that authority is not defending biblical government. He is demonstrating why God established qualifications in the first place.** It takes more than masculine anatomy, a preaching suit, and a firm handshake to become a faithful shepherd of God's people. The church belongs to Jesus Christ, and He never surrendered ownership to the fellow standing behind the pulpit.

Throughout this series, we will therefore refuse the false choice between honouring faithful women and maintaining biblical order. We will not apologize for the qualifications God established, and we will not belittle women who faithfully serve within the ministries Scripture recognizes. We will examine the creation order, the apostle Paul's instructions

concerning teaching authority, the qualifications for bishops, the women who exercised significant authority in Israel, the women who laboured alongside Paul, the prophetic gifts recorded in the early church, and the relationship between equality in Christ and differing responsibilities within His body. We will distinguish historical description from doctrinal instruction, spiritual gifting from ecclesiastical office, and genuine gospel service from religious ambition. **The Bible is not a collection of convenient arguments from which each denomination may select its favourite verses while quietly burying the rest. It is the word of God, and every passage deserves its proper place.** We do not strengthen doctrine by exaggerating what Scripture forbids, and we do not demonstrate Christian charity by explaining away what Scripture commands. Truth requires both accuracy and courage.

And let us remember something that religious controversy can easily obscure. The greatest need of the lost world is not another argument about religious titles. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works. Every Christian man and woman ought to rejoice in that message and faithfully proclaim it. The woman witnessing to her neighbour, the mother teaching her children, the older sister encouraging a younger believer, and the faithful servant distributing sound Bible teaching are all participating in work that matters eternally. The man faithfully overseeing a congregation according to the qualifications of Scripture is likewise performing an important responsibility. Neither form of service becomes unimportant merely because its assignment differs from another. **God never commanded every believer to become a pastor. He commanded His people to be faithful. The question at the Judgment Seat of Christ will not be who accumulated the most impressive collection of religious titles, but how believers served the Lord with the responsibilities entrusted to them.**

So here is where we stand as this study begins. We are not interested in protecting denominational traditions, defending celebrity personalities, flattering men who refuse responsibility, or discouraging women who faithfully labour for Jesus Christ. We are interested in what the Scriptures actually say. If God assigned a ministry to a woman, we will acknowledge it. If God established a qualification for a bishop, we will defend it. If a man claims pastoral authority while violating the qualifications for the office, we will not excuse him. If a woman faithfully teaches the truth in a setting Scripture authorizes, we will not condemn her for doing what God permits or commands. And if modern religion attempts to replace biblical authority with popularity, emotional excitement, or institutional approval, we will return to the Book and examine the claim. **There is no need**

to make women inferior in order to maintain biblical authority, and there is no need to abolish biblical authority in order to appreciate faithful women. The Lord Jesus Christ purchased His church with His own blood, and the church belongs to Him. He established its responsibilities, He supplied its instructions, and He will judge the faithfulness of His servants. Let the men obey the Book. Let the women obey the Book. Let the churches obey the Book. And when the Book has spoken, let religious ambition, personal opinion, and fashionable theology take their proper place—which is somewhere considerably lower than the throne of Almighty God.

1 of 10 — Women Pastors and Biblical Authority — Every Believer Has a Voice, but Not Every Believer Has a Pastor's Office

Key Passage: Mark 16:15; 1 Timothy 3:1–2 (KJV)

The Lord Jesus Christ gave a command in Mark 16:15 that ought to shake the dust off every comfortable Christian sitting around waiting for somebody else to do the Lord's work: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Notice what the Lord said. He did not say to preach the gospel to every creature provided the person carrying the message has a church building, a ministerial certificate, a theological degree, and a title printed on the office door. The message is the gospel, the destination is the world, and the intended recipients are every creature. The responsibility of spreading that gospel extends throughout the body of Christ, but there is something else the Bible establishes that modern religion has managed to confuse beyond recognition. **The command to proclaim the gospel is not the same thing as an appointment to govern the church.** A Christian woman can tell a lost sinner how to be saved without becoming a pastor. A Christian man can do the same thing without becoming a bishop. The authority of the message comes from the word of God, not from a title bestowed upon the messenger. The Bible makes that distinction, and we had better make it too.

The trouble begins when people refuse to distinguish between speaking the truth and occupying an office of spiritual authority. On one side, there are religious movements that take every example of a woman serving God and attempt to transform it into a justification for women occupying the pastoral office. On the other side, there are men who seem to think the biblical qualifications for a pastor somehow mean that Christian women ought to sit quietly in a corner while the men conduct all the spiritual business. Both positions are defective. One ignores the qualifications for the bishop; the other ignores the unmistakable record of women faithfully serving God throughout the Scriptures. Some of the most

diligent witnesses for Jesus Christ are women who will never stand behind a church pulpit, and some of the most unfaithful examples of Christian responsibility are men who have been sitting behind one for years. That observation does not abolish biblical order. It exposes the difference between possessing an office and faithfully discharging a responsibility. **God never made the pastoral office a measuring stick for the worth of every member of Christ's body.**

This opening study establishes the foundation for everything that follows. We are going to examine what the King James Bible actually says about preaching, witnessing, teaching, spiritual service, and pastoral authority. We will not apologize for 1 Timothy 3, and we will not apologize for Acts 8. We will not erase Paul's qualifications for the bishop, and we will not pretend Priscilla, Phebe, Lydia, Lois, Eunice, and the other faithful women of Scripture contributed nothing to the work of God. When God says that believers should speak truth, we ought to speak truth. When God describes the qualifications for an overseer, we ought to respect those qualifications. The Bible is not a collection of competing commandments waiting for some modern committee to negotiate a settlement. The Scriptures agree with themselves when they are understood in their proper settings. The real problem is not that God gave contradictory instructions. The problem is that religious people insist upon dragging instructions out of their settings until the whole thing resembles a church constitution written by a committee that never opened a Bible.

1. The Great Commission Is a Command to Proclaim Christ, Not a Certificate of Pastoral Ordination

Mark 16:14 establishes the immediate setting of Christ's words. The risen Lord appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat and upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who had seen Him after His resurrection. Then, in verse 15, He commanded them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. The original charge was delivered to the apostles, and the continuing proclamation of that gospel is demonstrated throughout the New Testament as the message spread far beyond those eleven men. But notice something important: the Lord did not discuss the qualifications of bishops in this passage. He did not establish the organizational structure of every local church. He commanded the proclamation of the gospel. There is a remarkable difference between receiving a command to carry a message and receiving an appointment to exercise oversight over an assembly. A postal worker can faithfully deliver a letter from the governor without becoming the governor. The authority belongs to the sender; the delivery does not confer the sender's office upon the messenger.

What exactly is this gospel that believers are responsible to proclaim? Paul identifies it in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4, declaring that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that

He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Salvation is not obtained through religious performance, ceremonial achievement, church membership, or the approval of an ecclesiastical official. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." The woman who opens her King James Bible and explains that gospel to a lost neighbour is doing something eternally important. The man who shares the same gospel with a coworker is doing the same thing. Neither person must first obtain the office of pastor before telling a sinner that Jesus Christ died for his sins and rose again. **The gospel does not become powerful when somebody puts a title before his name. It was already the power of God before the first modern ministerial certificate came off the printing press.**

There is also an important difference between proclaiming truth and assuming authority over those who hear it. Ephesians 4:25 commands, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another." The expression "every man" here is an ordinary inclusive expression addressing believers in the body, not an exemption allowing women to tell falsehoods while men tell the truth. The surrounding passage concerns putting off the old man, putting on the new man, rejecting corrupt conduct, and walking according to the new life received in Christ. Truthfulness belongs to Christian character. It is not reserved for ordained officers. A Christian woman who corrects a false statement with Scripture is not committing an act of pastoral usurpation merely because the person hearing her correction happens to be a man. The Bible does not require a believer to become dishonest, ignorant, or silent in ordinary Christian conversation in order to respect church government. **Biblical authority has boundaries, and biblical truth has obligations. Confusing those two things produces either rebellion against authority or an excuse for neglecting the truth.**

2. The Scattered Believers in Acts 8 Preached the Word Without Becoming Bishops

Acts 8 provides one of the clearest illustrations of the distinction between ordinary believers proclaiming the word and men appointed to specific offices. Following the murder of Stephen, a great persecution arose against the church at Jerusalem. Acts 8:1 states that the believers were scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, "except the apostles." Saul was making havoc of the church, entering houses, and committing men and women to prison. The persecution reached the congregation broadly, not merely its recognized leaders. Then verse 4 declares, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." There is the record. The apostles remained at Jerusalem while scattered believers carried the word elsewhere. Since the persecution involved both men and women, the scattered community was not simply a

travelling convention of ordained male pastors. Scripture does not identify every individual preacher in verse 4, but it unmistakably establishes that proclamation extended beyond the apostolic office. The word of God went forward through believers whose names were not accompanied by impressive religious titles.

Now examine what happens next. Acts 8:5 declares, "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." Philip had previously appeared among the seven men chosen in Acts 6 to attend to a particular practical need in the Jerusalem congregation. Later, Acts 21:8 identifies him as "Philip the evangelist." Notice that Scripture has no difficulty identifying a man's particular ministry when it wants us to know what that ministry is. Philip preached Christ, multitudes attended to the things he spoke, and the gospel reached people outside Jerusalem. Yet the work described in Acts 8 is evangelistic proclamation, not a declaration that every Christian who preached became the overseer of a congregation. Later in the chapter Philip explained Isaiah 53 to the Ethiopian eunuch and preached unto him Jesus. That is the kind of Bible handling every gospel witness ought to desire. The emphasis rests upon the Scriptures, the Saviour, and the sinner's need. Philip did not require an elaborate religious production to introduce the eunuch to Christ. He opened the Scripture and preached Jesus. An astonishingly simple arrangement, considering how complicated professional religion has managed to make it.

Acts 11:19–21 continues the account of believers scattered by the persecution connected with Stephen. They travelled into Phoenice, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word and proclaiming the Lord Jesus, with many believing and turning unto the Lord. The spread of Christianity was not confined to one pulpit in Jerusalem or one small circle of recognized leaders. Believers carried the message as they travelled, and the Lord blessed the proclamation. This historical record should discourage the idea that evangelism belongs exclusively to professional ministers. Yet it should equally discourage the opposite error of concluding that every person capable of proclaiming Christ therefore possesses authority to govern a church. The New Testament subsequently records the appointment of elders, the giving of spiritual gifts, and the establishment of orderly congregational responsibility. The scattered believers were doing the work of witnesses, not abolishing every distinction among the ministries of the body of Christ. **Persecution scattered the Christians, but it did not scatter the qualifications for church leadership into oblivion.**

3. Romans 10 Requires the Gospel to Be Heard, Not the Messenger to Possess a Pastoral Title

Romans 10:13 announces a promise that ought to be familiar to every gospel witness: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Paul then follows that declaration with a series of searching questions. How shall they call upon Him in whom

they have not believed? How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? By verse 17 the argument reaches its conclusion: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The emphasis is upon the necessary communication of God's revealed message. The sinner must hear the truth concerning Jesus Christ. Faith does not arise from religious entertainment, human cleverness, or ceremonial decoration. It comes by hearing the word of God. This passage teaches the necessity of proclamation, but it does not define every gospel witness as a bishop. To make it do so requires inserting an entirely different subject into Paul's argument.

Some will point to Romans 10:15 and ask whether the words "how shall they preach, except they be sent?" establish that only officially ordained church leaders may proclaim the gospel. That interpretation collapses as soon as the rest of the New Testament is considered. Paul himself possessed a distinctive apostolic commission, and the passage recognizes the necessity of messengers being sent with God's message. But it does not declare that every believer sharing the gospel must first undergo pastoral ordination. Acts 8 records believers preaching as they were scattered. Acts 18 records Aquila and Priscilla helping instruct Apollos. First Peter 3:15 commands readiness to give an answer concerning the believer's hope. These passages must be allowed to speak alongside Romans 10. There is an extraordinary amount of religious confusion produced by taking a verse about the necessity of gospel messengers and converting it into an ecclesiastical licensing office. The man who sees Romans 10 as proof that his denomination owns the right to distribute the gospel has apparently mistaken the treasury of God's grace for a franchise operation.

The issue becomes even clearer when we consider the standing of believers in Christ. Galatians 3:26 declares, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Verse 28 states that there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, "for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." That is a tremendous statement concerning the believer's standing in Christ. A saved woman possesses no second-class salvation. She is not justified by a lesser measure of grace, indwelt by an inferior Holy Spirit, or promised a smaller share in the everlasting life provided through Jesus Christ. But equality of spiritual standing does not abolish every distinction of responsibility and office. First Corinthians 12 describes one body possessing many members with differing functions. The eye is not the hand, and the foot is not the ear. The members belong to the same body without becoming interchangeable. **Grace makes believers equally accepted in Christ; it does not make every believer an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, or a pastor.**

4. Priscilla, Lois, Eunice, and Other Faithful Women Prove That Service Is Greater Than a Religious Title

Acts 18 introduces Aquila and Priscilla, a husband and wife who became valuable companions in the work of the apostle Paul. Later in that chapter, Apollos appears as an eloquent man mighty in the Scriptures, instructed in the way of the Lord, yet knowing only the baptism of John. Acts 18:26 records that when Aquila and Priscilla heard him, "they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." That is a remarkable testimony. Priscilla was involved with her husband in helping a knowledgeable man understand more fully the truth of God. The passage does not describe her being ordained bishop over a congregation, assuming the pastoral government of Apollos, or occupying a public office of authoritative oversight. It describes a married couple explaining Scripture more accurately. Anyone who insists that Priscilla's participation was spiritually worthless has a quarrel with the record of Acts. Anyone who insists that this event proves she held the pastoral office has added something that the record never says. **Priscilla did not need to become Apollos's pastor in order to help Apollos understand his Bible.**

Consider also the spiritual influence of Lois and Eunice upon Timothy. In 2 Timothy 1:5 Paul recalls the unfeigned faith that dwelt first in Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Then, in 2 Timothy 3:15, he reminds Timothy that from a child he had known the holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. What a testimony to the importance of godly instruction within the home. Here is a future minister of the gospel whose early biblical foundation was connected with the faith of two women. Titus 2:3–5 likewise commands the aged women to be teachers of good things and to instruct the younger women in righteous conduct. Scripture plainly recognizes women teaching within appropriate relationships and responsibilities. It does not describe all teaching as forbidden simply because a woman is doing it. A mother who teaches her son the Bible is not guilty of violating 1 Timothy 2. Otherwise, somebody will have to explain how Timothy received such a valuable spiritual inheritance from the women God placed in his life.

Then consider the Samaritan woman in John 4. After speaking with Jesus Christ, she left her waterpot, went into the city, and told the men about the One she had encountered. John 4:39 declares that many of the Samaritans believed on Christ "for the saying of the woman." There is no record of her receiving a pastoral office. She simply testified concerning Jesus Christ, and people responded to that testimony. Likewise, the women who visited the empty tomb carried news of the resurrection to the apostles in Luke 24, although their report was initially dismissed as idle tales. These passages expose the

foolishness of pretending God never used women to communicate spiritual truth to men. He did, and the Bible records it without embarrassment. But testimony, personal instruction, prophetic revelation, and pastoral government are not identical activities. We ought to rejoice over what God accomplished through these women rather than force every example into an argument concerning ordination. **The woman at the well brought men to hear Christ without demanding that anybody recognize her as the pastor of Samaria.**

5. A Pastor Is an Overseer of Souls, Not Merely Somebody Who Can Speak Behind a Microphone

Ephesians 4:11 states that the ascended Christ "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Notice that word "some." It is a remarkably small word with enormous consequences for this controversy. Christ did not appoint every member of His body to every ministry. The passage identifies particular gifts and ministries given for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ. An evangelist is not automatically a pastor, and a Christian who faithfully teaches Scripture in an appropriate setting does not necessarily occupy an office of governing authority. The ability to communicate biblical truth is essential to pastoral work, but it is not the only qualification. A man may deliver a splendid gospel message and still lack the qualifications necessary to oversee a congregation. Another may possess an impressive voice, a polished presentation, and a religious audience large enough to fill a stadium while knowing considerably less Bible than a faithful elderly woman who has studied it for decades. Popularity is not a spiritual gift listed in Ephesians 4.

Acts 20 supplies the practical responsibilities of recognized church leadership. In verse 17 Paul called for the elders of the church at Ephesus. In verse 28 he instructed those same men to take heed to themselves and to all the flock, "over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Here the work of elders, overseers, and shepherding responsibility comes together. These men were accountable for guarding doctrine, feeding the flock, and protecting believers against spiritual danger. Paul warned that grievous wolves would enter among them, not sparing the flock. Pastoral work is therefore considerably more than standing behind a pulpit delivering an inspirational address. It includes doctrinal responsibility, spiritual oversight, and accountability before God for the care of His people. That is why qualifications matter. **A microphone may amplify a man's voice, but it cannot manufacture the character, doctrine, and divine responsibility necessary to oversee a church.**

First Peter 5:1–4 reinforces that responsibility by instructing the elders to feed the flock of God and take the oversight thereof, willingly and with a ready mind. Peter specifically warns them against being "lords over God's heritage" and commands them to be examples to the flock. That warning deserves attention because some men who loudly defend pastoral authority appear strangely unfamiliar with the restrictions placed upon their own conduct. Hebrews 13:17 speaks of spiritual leaders who watch for souls "as they that must give account." Authority in the church is not a private kingdom, an opportunity for self-promotion, or a license to dominate believers. The congregation belongs to Jesus Christ, not to the person occupying the pulpit. A pastor is accountable to the Chief Shepherd, and his responsibility must be exercised according to the written word of God. If a man uses the pastoral office to exalt himself, manipulate the saints, or replace Scripture with personal decrees, he has misunderstood the office he claims to defend. **The sheep belong to Christ. The pastor is supposed to feed them, not turn the flock into his personal property.**

6. First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 Establish Qualifications That Religious Enthusiasm Cannot Cancel

First Timothy 3:1 begins with a direct statement: "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." Verse 2 continues, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach." Here we are dealing with an explicitly identified office and its qualifications. The passage is not discussing whether an ordinary Christian woman may share a gospel tract, explain a Bible verse, or encourage a discouraged brother. It concerns the bishop. The qualifications include a masculine household description, and within the traditional reading of the passage this establishes male qualification for the pastoral office. The words "husband of one wife" must be examined carefully without pretending they are meaningless or insisting that they automatically require every qualified pastor to be married. The description establishes the standards governing the man who occupies the office, not a requirement that marriage itself bestows eligibility. **God did not bury the qualifications for a bishop in a mysterious passage requiring a committee of modern experts to rescue the church from plain English.**

Continue reading, because the qualifications do not stop with the expression "husband of one wife." First Timothy 3:4–5 describes one who rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity, and then asks how a man who does not know how to rule his own house can take care of the church of God. Verse 6 warns against appointing a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Verse 7 requires a good report of them which are without. Here is a sobering list for men who

imagine that being male is sufficient qualification to occupy a pulpit. A man who is arrogant, doctrinally incompetent, morally careless, greedy, or incapable of properly managing his own responsibilities does not suddenly become qualified because he can grow a beard and purchase a preaching suit. The qualifications concern the complete character and conduct of the overseer. **The Bible does not say that every man may pastor. It says what kind of man may pastor. That distinction is every bit as important as the distinction concerning women.**

Titus 1:5–9 provides a second apostolic statement concerning the appointment of elders. Paul instructed Titus to ordain elders in every city and immediately supplied the qualifications. Verse 6 describes one who is blameless, "the husband of one wife," with faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. Verse 7 identifies the bishop as "the steward of God," while verse 9 requires him to hold fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may exhort and convince the gainsayers by sound doctrine. Notice the connection between moral qualifications and doctrinal ability. The bishop must not merely possess an attractive personality. He must know the Scriptures and be capable of confronting error. That obligation exposes another modern absurdity: religious institutions may proudly advertise their leaders' credentials while those same leaders cannot distinguish the gospel of grace from a system of religious works. A polished résumé does not compensate for a corrupted gospel. Neither does an ordination service possess the authority to alter the qualifications Paul gave Titus. **A church can vote a person into an office, but it cannot vote away the Scriptures governing that office.**

7. What Paul Restricts in the Assembly Must Not Be Turned Into a Universal Prohibition Against Faithful Women Serving Christ

First Timothy 2:11–12 must be addressed without evasion: "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." Paul then grounds his instruction in the creation of Adam and Eve, rather than presenting it merely as a temporary preference concerning the local customs of Ephesus. The passage deals with the relationship between teaching, authority, and the divinely established order governing men and women. The movement from these instructions into the qualifications for bishops in chapter 3 is significant. The traditional interpretation understands the apostle to prohibit women from occupying the authoritative teaching and governing office exercised over men in the congregation. But we must be careful not to manufacture additional prohibitions that Scripture does not establish. This passage does not say that women cannot know doctrine, cannot recognize false teaching, cannot instruct children, or cannot communicate the gospel. Those activities appear

elsewhere in Scripture with God's approval. **The apostle's command is serious enough without somebody stretching it until it forbids what God elsewhere permits.**

First Corinthians 14:34–35 presents another instruction concerning women keeping silence in the churches, and this must be examined within the discussion of congregational order. Paul has been regulating speaking in tongues, the interpretation of tongues, prophecy, and the orderly conduct of the assembled believers. Yet 1 Corinthians 11:5 also refers to a woman praying or prophesying, and Acts 21:9 records that Philip had four daughters who prophesied. These passages require careful comparison rather than a convenient decision to ignore whichever verses complicate an argument. The existence of women praying and prophesying does not automatically establish women as pastors, but neither should Paul's instructions concerning the assembly be interpreted as though he never acknowledged women's spiritual participation. We must distinguish the exercise of spiritual gifts, the proclamation of truth, ordinary instruction, and the authoritative government of a local congregation. The Bible is not confused merely because careless interpreters have mixed several different subjects together. **When Scripture gives distinct instructions concerning distinct responsibilities, the solution is to preserve the distinctions, not to erase half the verses.**

That brings us to the practical heart of the matter. Christian women who share the gospel, distribute Bible teaching, encourage struggling believers, instruct their children, help other women grow in doctrine, and speak truth in their ordinary relationships should be encouraged to continue serving Jesus Christ faithfully. At the same time, a congregation must honor the qualifications governing those appointed to pastoral oversight. Both responsibilities can be obeyed without contradiction. Consider the faithful women who serve day after day without demanding ecclesiastical titles, prominent positions, or personal recognition. Some have encouraged more discouraged believers, shared more Scripture, and helped more struggling families than men who possess impressive offices but seldom venture outside their own religious routines. That does not make the women pastors. It makes them faithful servants whose work matters to God. The answer is not to abolish the pastoral office, nor to discourage these women from serving. The answer is to recognize what Scripture authorizes and appreciate every legitimate ministry it commends. **God's work is not confined to the pulpit, and the pulpit does not confer a monopoly upon faithfulness.**

Conclusion — Every Christian Has a Gospel to Proclaim, but the Pastoral Office Has Qualifications to Preserve

The first great conclusion of this study is simple enough for a newly saved believer to understand, yet apparently difficult enough to confuse entire denominations: **the privilege**

of speaking God's truth does not automatically confer the authority of a pastor. Mark 16:15 commands gospel proclamation. Acts 8 records scattered believers preaching the word. Romans 10 establishes the necessity of hearing God's message. Ephesians 4:25 commands believers to speak truth. First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 establish the qualifications for the bishop and elder. These passages do not contradict one another because they do not all address the same responsibility. Trouble begins when somebody takes a command given to believers generally and demands that it erase the qualifications assigned to church leadership specifically. That is not rightly dividing the word of truth. That is taking a spiritual meat cleaver to passages that ought to be compared carefully. The Great Commission does not abolish the pastoral qualifications, and the pastoral qualifications do not abolish the responsibility of Christians to proclaim the gospel. There is room in the same Bible for both truths because God put both truths there.

The second conclusion concerns the faithful women who have labored in the work of God throughout biblical history and continue doing so today. Nobody needs to invent pastoral appointments for Priscilla, Lois, Eunice, Lydia, Phebe, or the Samaritan woman before acknowledging that God used them. Their contributions stand upon the authority of Scripture itself. The same principle applies to Christian women today who faithfully proclaim salvation by grace through faith, encourage believers, teach sound doctrine in proper settings, serve their families, and strengthen local assemblies. Their worth does not depend upon acquiring a title that Scripture reserves for a particular office. Meanwhile, Christian men ought to examine their own responsibilities before boasting about qualifications they may not possess. The man who insists upon biblical order but refuses biblical obedience has managed to defend the authority of Scripture with his mouth while undermining it with his conduct. What a miserable advertisement for the doctrine he claims to love. Biblical authority requires submission to God's commandments from the people exercising authority as surely as from those living under it. **A man cannot justify his own disobedience by pointing to the responsibilities of a woman.**

Finally, let us keep the Lord Jesus Christ at the center of the entire discussion. The gospel is not a competition for religious prominence. The church is not a marketplace where the loudest personality purchases authority with popularity. The ministry is not a contest to see who can collect the greatest number of titles, platforms, followers, or certificates. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. Lost sinners must hear that gospel, and saved believers must faithfully serve the One who redeemed them. The Lord has given His church both a message to proclaim and instructions concerning its order. We have no authority to suppress the message, and we have no authority to rewrite the instructions. Let Christian men preach the truth, let Christian women proclaim the gospel and faithfully exercise the ministries Scripture gives them, and let every

congregation appoint its overseers according to the qualifications God has written. There is no need to insult faithful women in order to defend biblical authority, and there is no need to discard biblical authority in order to appreciate faithful women. **A woman does not need a pastor's office to be a powerful witness for Jesus Christ, and a man does not become a faithful pastor merely by possessing one. The word of God settles both questions, and no religious title has the authority to overrule it.**

2 of 10 — Women Pastors and Biblical Authority — Before There Was a Church Pulpit, There Was a Garden: Adam, Eve, and God's Established Order

Key Passage: Genesis 2:7–25; Genesis 3:1–19; 1 Timothy 2:13–14 (KJV)

Before there was a church building, a pulpit, a denominational headquarters, a theological seminary, or an ordination committee, there was a garden. Before anybody started arguing about women pastors, pastoral authority, male headship, or the qualifications for church leadership, Almighty God had already established an order between the man and the woman. Genesis 2:7 declares, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." God formed Adam before He formed Eve. God placed Adam in the garden before He brought Eve to him. God gave Adam a command concerning the forbidden tree before Eve appeared in the account. These are not denominational traditions, cultural preferences, or inventions of some ancient patriarchal committee. They are statements of Scripture. And when the apostle Paul later addresses the relationship between men, women, teaching, and authority, he reaches backward past every religious institution on earth and points directly to the events recorded in Genesis. **When God establishes an order before human government exists, it takes considerable religious imagination to dismiss that order as merely a temporary social custom.**

The controversy surrounding women pastors frequently begins at the wrong end of the Bible. Somebody points to a successful female preacher, a woman leading a large congregation, or a popular religious personality attracting thousands of supporters, and immediately assumes that visible success establishes divine authorization. Another person responds by claiming that women are naturally inferior, spiritually gullible, or incapable of understanding doctrine. Both arguments have problems, and neither deserves protection from the Scriptures. The first substitutes religious achievement for biblical authority; the second confuses assigned responsibility with personal worth. Genesis does not teach that Eve was an inferior creature, and the New Testament does not establish the

pastoral office by holding a popularity contest. God created the woman as a suitable companion for the man, and He later gave explicit qualifications concerning those who would oversee His churches. **A woman does not become spiritually inferior because she does not occupy the pastoral office, and a man does not become spiritually superior because he owns a Bible and knows where the pulpit stands.** The Scriptures deserve a more careful examination than either caricature permits.

The decisive passage connecting Genesis to church order is 1 Timothy 2:13–14: "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." Notice the opening word, "For." Paul is supplying reasons for the instruction he has just given concerning teaching and authority. He does not appeal to Roman legislation, Ephesian fashion, or the personal preferences of a local congregation. He appeals to the formation of Adam and Eve and to the historical circumstances of their transgression. That does not mean every question concerning the application of the passage disappears without examination, but it establishes something modern arguments frequently overlook: Paul's stated reasoning reaches into creation itself. We must therefore return to Genesis, examine what actually happened, distinguish God's original design from the consequences of sin, and refuse to invent conclusions the passage does not support. **The answer to a biblical controversy is not to begin with the latest religious fashion and work backward until a verse can be made to cooperate. It is to begin where God began and follow what He actually wrote.**

1. Adam Was Formed First: God's Creation Order Was Established Before Sin Entered the World

Genesis 1:26–28 establishes a truth that must never be sacrificed while discussing biblical headship. God created mankind in His image, and verse 27 declares, "male and female created he them." Both man and woman belong to God's creation and share the dignity associated with being made in His image. Both are included in the blessing of Genesis 1:28, where God commands fruitfulness, multiplication, replenishing the earth, subduing it, and exercising dominion over the living creatures. The passage does not describe Eve as an inferior class of humanity or an unfortunate afterthought. Male and female are both included in the divine declaration concerning mankind. Yet Genesis 2 provides additional details concerning the sequence and circumstances of their creation. Adam is formed first, placed in the garden, and given responsibilities before Eve is brought to him. Equality of human worth and distinction in created order stand together in the same account. **God did not make two competing species, nor did He make two identical offices. He made man and woman according to His own wisdom.**

Genesis 2:7 identifies Adam's formation from the dust of the ground. Verse 8 records the LORD God planting a garden eastward in Eden and placing the man there. Verse 15 declares that God put him into the garden "to dress it and to keep it." Before the woman appears, Adam has work to perform and a charge to maintain. Verses 16–17 then record God's command concerning the trees, including the prohibition against eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The warning is unmistakable: "for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The order is significant. God gives Adam responsibilities and communicates a prohibition before the creation of Eve is narrated. Adam therefore cannot later pretend that divine instruction was somebody else's department. Responsibility did not begin when Eve arrived, and it did not disappear when the serpent appeared. **A man who wants the authority associated with biblical headship ought to remember that Adam received responsibility before he received a wife. God gave him a command before He gave him a companion.**

Now consider what this means when Paul refers to Adam being formed first. The chronological order is plainly stated, but chronology itself is not a measure of spiritual superiority. The animals were created before Adam, and nobody with a properly functioning Bible concludes that the beasts therefore possess authority over mankind. Paul's argument is not that everything formed earlier must govern everything formed afterward. His argument concerns the particular order God established in creating Adam and Eve and assigning their relationship. The context determines the significance of that order. Paul specifically appeals to it while addressing teaching authority in 1 Timothy 2. We should accept the apostle's application without manufacturing a universal rule that Scripture never teaches. Neither should we reduce the account to an irrelevant historical detail. God did not accidentally form Adam first and then require Paul to invent a reason for mentioning it. **The Creator established the relationship, and the apostle explained its significance. The interpreter's responsibility is to understand both, not improve upon either.**

2. Eve Was Made an Help Meet, Not an Inferior Creature or a Household Servant

Genesis 2:18 contains one of the most important statements in the entire discussion: "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." Up to this point, the creation account has repeatedly emphasized the goodness of God's work. Here God identifies something that is not good: the man's solitary condition. Adam has a garden, work, provision, and fellowship with his Creator, but God declares that he needs a suitable companion. The expression "help meet for him" does not describe a disposable servant or a spiritually defective assistant. It identifies a helper suitable to his condition and corresponding to his need. God Himself recognized that Adam's circumstances required something the existing creatures could not provide. That

ought to eliminate the foolish notion that womanhood was created merely to decorate a man's existence. **The man who imagines God created women because He needed somebody to wash Adam's dishes has confused divine creation with his own domestic convenience.**

Genesis 2:19–20 records the animals being brought before Adam and named, but the conclusion is that "for Adam there was not found an help meet for him." The animals could not provide the companionship appropriate to the man. Therefore God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, took one of his ribs, and made a woman. When God brought her to Adam, the man declared in verse 23, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." Adam did not respond as though God had delivered an inferior creature to his doorstep. He recognized one who shared his own humanity, distinct from the animals and uniquely suited to him. The woman was not formed from some lower category of existence. She came from the man himself, according to God's deliberate purpose. That fact is particularly important when considering the relationship between authority and worth. **A difference in responsibility is not a difference in humanity, and an order established by God does not give one participant permission to despise the other.**

Verse 24 then establishes the foundational pattern of marriage: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Notice that the relationship involves a genuine union, not ownership of one human being by another. The man leaves, cleaves, and enters a one-flesh relationship with his wife. The woman is not described as a hired labourer who may be dismissed when her usefulness declines. She is his wife, his own flesh, and his God-given companion. Ephesians 5:28 later applies this truth when Paul instructs husbands to love their wives as their own bodies. That is an extraordinary responsibility, especially for men who enjoy quoting passages about submission while forgetting the verses describing sacrificial love. The foundation is already present in Genesis. Adam and Eve were united before sin entered the world. **Biblical headship was never designed to turn marriage into a throne room where a self-appointed emperor issues commands to a frightened servant. God established a union, not a dictatorship.**

3. The Serpent Did Not Begin by Attacking Marriage; He Began by Attacking God's Word

Genesis 3:1 introduces the serpent as "more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made." His opening question to the woman was calculated to undermine confidence in God's command: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" There is the beginning of the catastrophe. The serpent does not initially present himself as an enemy of God demanding open rebellion. He begins by questioning what God said. The woman answers that they may eat of the fruit of the trees, but concerning the tree

in the midst of the garden she reports that God forbade eating it, adding, "neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Genesis 2 does not record God giving Adam that additional prohibition about touching, though the account does not tell us where Eve received that wording. The important point is that God's actual command must remain the standard. **The devil's first recorded doctrinal controversy began with the words of God, and religious confusion has been following the same trail ever since.**

The serpent proceeds from questioning God's word to openly contradicting it. Genesis 3:4 records his declaration, "Ye shall not surely die." Compare that statement with Genesis 2:17, where God had warned, "thou shalt surely die." The contradiction could hardly be clearer. The serpent removes the certainty of God's judgment and then supplies an attractive explanation of what disobedience supposedly offers. Genesis 3:5 promises opened eyes and a condition described as being "as gods, knowing good and evil." The deception appeals to the possibility of gaining something God allegedly withheld. Eve then looks upon the tree as good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise. The tragedy is that the attractiveness of the forbidden fruit becomes more persuasive than the command of the Creator. This is not merely a lesson about fruit in an ancient garden. It exposes the method of temptation: question what God said, contradict His warning, and advertise disobedience as advancement. **When a religious argument begins by explaining why God's explicit words must mean something more convenient, the serpent's old sales technique is still remarkably recognizable.**

Genesis 3:6 states that the woman took of the fruit, ate, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. The account establishes Eve's deception and Adam's participation, but it does not establish that Adam witnessed every word of the preceding conversation. We must not invent details to make the history more dramatic. First Timothy 2:14 later supplies the inspired distinction: "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." Eve was deceived; Adam was not deceived in the same manner. Yet both transgressed. It would be a remarkable misuse of this passage to conclude that every woman throughout history is intellectually inferior or incapable of sound judgment. Scripture does not say that. Neither does it teach that all men are immune to deception. Paul warns believers against being deceived repeatedly, and many of those warnings address entire congregations. **The distinction between Adam and Eve concerns the historical circumstances of their transgression. Turning it into a declaration that women cannot understand Scripture is an addition to the Bible, not an exposition of it.**

4. Adam Was Not Deceived, but He Disobeyed: The Man Was Not an Innocent Victim

There is something profoundly revealing about Adam's conduct. According to 1 Timothy 2:14, Adam was not deceived. Yet Genesis 3:6 declares that he ate the forbidden fruit. God had already told him what would happen if he disobeyed. He knew the command, and he nevertheless participated in the transgression. Whatever explanation somebody attempts to construct concerning his motives, the biblical verdict is sufficient: Adam disobeyed God. This immediately destroys the argument that the fall can be placed entirely upon the woman while the man stands nearby as some unfortunate spectator who accidentally wandered into judgment. Adam was responsible for his own conduct. The apostle does not excuse him, and neither should we. **If Eve was deceived into eating, Adam's deliberate disobedience hardly qualifies him for a medal recognizing superior spiritual judgment. Knowing the command and disobeying it is not an accomplishment. It is rebellion.**

After the transgression, Genesis 3:7 records the opening of their eyes and their recognition of their nakedness. They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. Then they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden and hid themselves among the trees. Here is fallen humanity's first attempt to deal with sin: manufacture a covering, hide from God, and hope the problem somehow disappears. The LORD God called unto Adam in verse 9 and said, "Where art thou?" God did not ask because He had lost track of Adam's geographical location. The question brought the guilty man into confrontation with his disobedience. When Adam answered, he explained his fear and nakedness. God then asked whether he had eaten from the forbidden tree. The Creator did not begin by asking for a denominational opinion on the matter. He brought Adam back to the command. **Sin had entered the garden, and the first man discovered that a covering made from leaves was no substitute for an honest answer before Almighty God.**

Adam's answer in Genesis 3:12 is one of the most revealing excuses in Scripture: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Notice the arrangement. Adam identifies the woman, reminds God that He gave her to him, and finally admits his own participation. The responsibility travels through everybody in sight before arriving where it belongs. Eve then explains that the serpent beguiled her, and she ate. Neither explanation cancels the transgression. God subsequently tells Adam in verse 17, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it." The issue was not that Adam had listened to a woman's voice as though female speech were inherently forbidden. The issue was that he had obeyed a voice contrary to God's explicit command. **Biblical headship never means a man must ignore his wife's wisdom. It means he must never substitute anybody's advice—including his own desires—for obedience to God.**

5. Romans 5 Places the Entrance of Sin Upon Adam, Not Upon a Supposedly Inferior Woman

Romans 5:12 provides the divine interpretation of mankind's entrance into sin: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Notice whom Paul identifies. He does not say that sin entered the world through one woman. He identifies one man, Adam. Verse 14 speaks of death reigning from Adam to Moses and describes Adam as "the figure of him that was to come." Verse 19 declares, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." The apostle places the representative responsibility upon Adam while presenting Jesus Christ as the obedient One through whom righteousness is provided. That is a devastating correction to any argument portraying men as naturally righteous guardians and women as the real source of humanity's spiritual problems. **If somebody wants to blame Eve for every disaster in human history, he will have to explain why Romans 5 keeps pointing its finger at Adam.**

First Corinthians 15:22 adds, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The contrast is between Adam, through whom death entered the human race, and Jesus Christ, through whom resurrection and life are secured. The passage must be understood in its resurrection context, not twisted into teaching that every individual is automatically saved without faith. Romans 5 likewise distinguishes the condemnation associated with Adam from the justification available through Jesus Christ. Our salvation rests upon the finished work of the Saviour, not upon an improvement in human nature or a redistribution of authority between men and women. Neither sex can claim moral superiority before the cross. Romans 3:23 declares, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Men need redemption. Women need redemption. Pastors need redemption. The entire human race stands guilty apart from Jesus Christ. **The cross is not a monument to masculine righteousness or feminine failure. It is God's answer to the sin of fallen humanity.**

This contrast also prevents an important doctrinal confusion. Adam and Eve lived before the giving of the Mosaic law, before the establishment of Israel's national covenant at Sinai, and long before the formation of the New Testament church. We must not pretend they were members of a local Christian congregation or read the complete church constitution backward into Eden. Yet Paul, writing under inspiration to New Testament believers, explicitly appeals to their creation and transgression when explaining church order. That application is legitimate because the apostle makes it. Romans 5 draws upon Adam to explain sin and redemption, while 1 Timothy 2 draws upon the same history to explain teaching authority. The same historical event may carry different doctrinal applications

without allowing us to confuse their immediate purposes. **Rightly dividing the word of truth does not mean cutting Genesis away from everything Paul says about it. It means following the inspired connections while refusing to invent connections of our own.**

6. Paul's Appeal to Creation Establishes Church Order Without Making Women Spiritually Inferior

Return now to 1 Timothy 2:11–15, where the apostle addresses the relationship between women, learning, teaching, and authority. Verse 12 declares, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Paul then supplies his reasons in verses 13–14, appealing to Adam's formation before Eve and to the circumstances of the transgression. This reasoning deserves serious attention because it reaches beyond the temporary conditions of a particular city. Paul does not say that women should refrain from authoritative teaching merely because Ephesus has an unusual educational problem or because some local men have requested the arrangement. His stated grounds are the creation order and the fall. The movement into chapter 3, where the qualifications for bishops are given, connects the discussion with recognized church leadership. **The pastoral office cannot be reconstructed according to modern preferences while treating the apostle's stated reasons as though they were inconvenient footnotes somebody accidentally left in the text.**

But observe something equally important in verse 11: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection." Paul explicitly directs that the woman learn. The passage does not recommend keeping women ignorant of Scripture, preventing them from becoming doctrinally knowledgeable, or discouraging serious Bible study. The instruction concerns the proper relationship between learning, submission, teaching, and authority in the assembly. It must be read alongside Titus 2:3–5, where older women are commanded to teach what is good, and Acts 18:26, where Priscilla and Aquila expounded the way of God more perfectly unto Apollos. The existence of these ministries does not eliminate Paul's restriction concerning authoritative teaching over men, but his restriction must not be inflated until it prohibits the ministries Scripture elsewhere recognizes. A woman may be an excellent Bible student, a faithful witness, and a valuable teacher within her proper sphere without occupying the pastoral office. **The Bible does not require a woman to remain ignorant in order to remain obedient. That particular theory owes considerably more to human foolishness than to apostolic instruction.**

Verse 15 introduces another expression that must not be twisted: "Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." Whatever questions arise concerning the precise relationship between childbearing and the passage's discussion of the fall, this verse cannot overthrow the

gospel of salvation by grace through faith. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that salvation is God's gift and is not obtained through works. A woman does not receive eternal life because she bears children, any more than a man receives eternal life because he occupies a pulpit. Childless women are not excluded from salvation, and motherhood is not an alternative to the blood of Jesus Christ. The reference must be handled in harmony with Paul's preceding argument and his clear teaching elsewhere. It recognizes the significance of the woman's calling without making reproduction a saving ordinance. **Anybody who turns childbearing into a requirement for eternal salvation has managed to create a works gospel from a passage that was never intended to replace Jesus Christ.**

7. Biblical Headship Requires Sacrificial Responsibility, Not Masculine Arrogance or Ecclesiastical Ambition

First Corinthians 11:3 establishes another important statement concerning divine order: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." Paul then discusses the relationship between men and women in the context of praying, prophesying, and proper order. Verses 8–9 specifically return to the creation account, explaining that the woman was of the man and created for the man. Yet verses 11–12 immediately establish their mutual dependence: "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord." Paul adds that as the woman is of the man, even so the man is also by the woman, "but all things of God." There is no contradiction. The apostle establishes headship while refusing to permit either sex to boast of independence from the other. **The man who proudly announces that woman came from man should remember that every man since Adam has entered this world through a woman. That tends to take some of the swagger out of the argument.**

Ephesians 5:22–33 supplies the moral responsibility that accompanies headship in marriage. The husband is identified as the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. But verse 25 immediately commands, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." The model is sacrificial love, not selfish domination. Christ gave Himself for the church. He did not exploit His people for personal convenience. First Peter 3:7 likewise commands husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, and recognizing that husband and wife are "heirs together of the grace of life." Those instructions expose the hypocrisy of a man who quotes biblical headship while humiliating, neglecting, intimidating, or mistreating his wife. The Scripture that establishes his responsibility also judges his conduct. **A husband who demands submission while refusing sacrificial love wants the**

authority of Christ without the character of Christ. That is not biblical headship. It is religious selfishness wearing a necktie.

The same principle applies when the discussion moves from marriage to church leadership. First Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9 establish qualifications for bishops and elders, describing the overseer as the husband of one wife and requiring moral integrity, household responsibility, doctrinal competence, and sound judgment. The office is not open to every man simply because he is male. A dishonest man is not qualified. A doctrinally incompetent man is not qualified. A proud novice is not qualified. A man who cannot govern his own household properly has no business assuming oversight of the church of God. At the same time, Christian women remain responsible to serve Christ faithfully through the ministries Scripture permits and commends. They may proclaim the gospel, teach their children, instruct other women, encourage believers, and communicate biblical truth without pretending that every act of ministry constitutes pastoral government. **The church needs qualified pastors and faithful labourers, not an endless contest over religious titles. A man may possess the correct qualification of sex and still fail nearly every other qualification God requires.**

Conclusion — The God Who Established the Order Also Established the Responsibilities

The account of Adam and Eve establishes facts that cannot be dismissed merely because contemporary religious culture finds them inconvenient. God formed Adam first, placed him in the garden, assigned him responsibility, and gave him the command concerning the forbidden tree. God then made Eve as an help meet for him and established the marriage relationship. When sin entered, Eve was deceived, Adam deliberately disobeyed, and both stood guilty before the Creator. Genesis records the history, Romans 5 explains Adam's representative responsibility concerning sin and death, and 1 Timothy 2 appeals to the creation order and transgression when addressing teaching authority. These passages must be allowed to say what they say. Yet none declares that every woman is spiritually inferior or that every man possesses superior biblical wisdom. **God's established order is not a certificate of masculine perfection, and the fall of Eve is not a license to despise Christian women. Scripture assigns responsibility without authorizing contempt.**

There is a further lesson that every man claiming spiritual authority ought to consider. Adam possessed the original responsibility in the garden, yet he failed to obey the command God gave him. He was not deceived, but he sinned. He attempted to explain his conduct by pointing toward his wife, but God held him accountable. Romans 5 still identifies Adam when explaining the entrance of sin into the world. This should provide a sobering warning to men who enjoy discussing authority considerably more than

obedience. Biblical headship does not excuse cowardice, ignorance, hypocrisy, or disobedience. The man who appeals to God's order must also submit himself to God's commandments. Likewise, the woman who serves Jesus Christ faithfully does not need to overturn that order to demonstrate her value before the Lord. There are countless opportunities for sound biblical instruction, evangelism, encouragement, prayer, and service without assuming the office of pastor. **The Lord does not measure Christian faithfulness by the size of the platform beneath a person's feet, but by obedience to the word He has spoken.**

Finally, the answer to the failure of Adam is found not in abolishing God's order but in the obedience of Jesus Christ. Romans 5:19 contrasts the disobedience of the first man with the obedience of the One through whom righteousness is provided. Adam brought sin and death into the human race; Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. Salvation is received by grace through faith, not through male authority, female achievement, marriage, motherhood, ordination, or religious performance. Those who have trusted Christ belong to Him and are called to walk according to His word. Men and women alike must submit to Scripture, exercise their responsibilities faithfully, and refuse to substitute human fashion for divine instruction. Before there was a pulpit, there was a garden. Before there was an ordination committee, there was a Creator. And before any modern institution began revising the qualifications for church leadership, the Holy Ghost had already supplied the apostolic record. **God never needed man's permission to establish His order, and He does not need a modern denomination's approval to preserve it. The same Bible that honours faithful women also establishes the qualifications for the pastor. Obedience requires accepting both.**

3 of 10 — Women Pastors and Biblical Authority — I Suffer Not a Woman to Teach: What Paul Forbade, and What Religion Tries to Explain Away

Key Passage: 1 Timothy 2:8–15; 1 Timothy 3:1–7 (KJV)

There are certain verses in the King James Bible that modern religion handles about as comfortably as a burglar handles a flashlight shining through the bedroom window. First Timothy 2:12 is one of them. The apostle Paul writes, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." There it stands, in plain English, nestled between instructions concerning Christian conduct and the qualifications for the office of a bishop. The difficulty is not that the sentence contains some mysterious doctrine requiring forty years of theological archaeology. The difficulty is that the sentence

establishes a restriction upon teaching and authority that conflicts with the practices of numerous contemporary churches. Consequently, an entire industry of explanations has arisen to assure everybody that Paul could not possibly have intended what his words appear to communicate. Some insist he was addressing only abusive authority. Others maintain he was dealing exclusively with uneducated women in Ephesus. Still others treat the whole passage as an embarrassing relic of ancient culture. **The modern religious solution to an inconvenient commandment is frequently to explain it so thoroughly that nobody is expected to obey it.**

But before anybody starts celebrating the supposed silencing of women, there is another error that must be dragged into the daylight. Paul did not command Christian women to stop serving Jesus Christ, cease studying their Bibles, abandon evangelism, refuse to teach their children, or surrender every opportunity to encourage believers with the Scriptures. The same New Testament that contains 1 Timothy 2:12 also commends Priscilla, recognizes the faith of Lois and Eunice, identifies women who labored in the gospel, and expressly commands older women to teach what is good. A faithful sister who opens her King James Bible and explains salvation to a lost neighbour has not suddenly become the bishop of her neighbourhood. A Christian mother instructing her children in sound doctrine is not usurping a pastoral office. The issue is the authoritative teaching and oversight exercised within the government of the local church. **God never prohibited women from being useful because He reserved particular offices for qualified men. Confusing those matters is not sound doctrine; it is careless Bible handling with a religious label attached.**

The proper examination must therefore begin with Paul's actual words, proceed through their immediate setting, and follow the apostle's own explanation of his command. First Timothy was written to Timothy concerning his responsibilities among believers at Ephesus. Paul explains his larger purpose in 1 Timothy 3:15: "that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." That statement identifies the governing concern of these instructions. Paul is addressing the conduct and order of God's household, not issuing a declaration that Christian women are incapable of understanding the Bible. Neither is he writing a collection of optional suggestions that each congregation may revise whenever its membership discovers a more fashionable arrangement. The passage belongs within the doctrine and government of the New Testament church. **If we are going to defend the authority of Scripture, we must allow Scripture to establish the boundaries of authority rather than inventing boundaries that suit our religious preferences.**

1. Before Paul Addresses Teaching Authority, He Addresses Holiness, Prayer, and Christian Conduct

First Timothy 2:8 begins with a command concerning men: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." Notice that Paul does not begin by congratulating men for their spiritual superiority. He requires holiness, prayer, and conduct free from wrath and doubting. The expression "holy hands" is not an endorsement of religious theatrics in which somebody waves his arms around while harbouring bitterness, hypocrisy, and unconfessed sin. Hands associated with holiness must belong to a life submitted to God. The man who wants everybody to recognize his spiritual authority had better recognize his spiritual responsibilities first. Paul does not grant men an exemption from obedience because they happen to be men. He commands conduct consistent with godliness. **A fellow can lift both hands toward heaven while his heart remains buried in rebellion, and the distance between his fingertips and the ceiling will not impress Almighty God.**

Verses 9–10 then turn to women: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety." Paul continues by contrasting outward display with good works becoming women professing godliness. The passage is concerned with conduct appropriate to a Christian profession. It does not teach that women are forbidden to dress respectably or that godliness requires deliberate neglect of personal appearance. The emphasis falls upon modesty, sobriety, and the superiority of godly conduct over ostentatious display. The woman professing devotion to Christ ought to demonstrate that devotion through conduct, not merely through expensive ornaments or public attention. But notice the order of Paul's discussion. Men are instructed concerning prayer and holiness; women concerning modesty and good works. The apostle is establishing expectations for both, not dividing humanity into a righteous male class and an inferior female class. **The man who quotes verse 12 while ignoring verse 8 has already demonstrated that selective obedience is considerably easier than sound exposition.**

This surrounding context matters because Paul is not suddenly introducing the subject of teaching authority without any connection to Christian order. The chapter begins with exhortations concerning supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving thanks for all men, including kings and those in authority. Verses 3–6 establish God's concern for salvation and declare that there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." The chapter is saturated with prayer, salvation, godliness, and ordered conduct. When Paul later addresses learning, teaching, and authority, he does so within that larger spiritual setting.

The church is not an arena for personal ambition. It belongs to the living God and exists to uphold His truth. **Christian ministry begins with submission to Christ, not with a scramble to discover who gets the largest chair, the most impressive title, or the microphone with the longest cord.**

2. Let the Woman Learn: The Command That Exposes the Myth of Biblical Female Ignorance

First Timothy 2:11 declares, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection." The first thing worth observing is that Paul actually commands the woman to learn. That fact deserves more attention than it frequently receives. The apostle does not tell Timothy to keep women ignorant of Scripture, prevent them from developing doctrinal understanding, or discourage them from examining the word of God. He directs that they learn, while specifying the manner of submission appropriate to the setting he is discussing. Christian women are not supposed to be strangers to their own Bibles. They should understand salvation, recognize false doctrine, comprehend the promises of God, and possess sufficient biblical knowledge to serve faithfully. The command to learn is not an accidental introduction to a command against teaching. Both belong to the same instruction. **A man who uses this passage to keep women ignorant has managed to violate the very sentence he claims gives him authority to do it.**

The expression "in silence with all subjection" must be considered in relation to the apostle's subsequent prohibition concerning teaching and authority. It is not a universal command forbidding every form of speech by a woman throughout her Christian life. Such an interpretation would collide with numerous passages in which women speak, pray, testify, instruct, and proclaim truth. The Samaritan woman testified concerning Jesus Christ in John 4. Priscilla participated with Aquila in explaining the way of God more perfectly to Apollos in Acts 18:26. Titus 2 commands older women to teach what is good. First Timothy itself later discusses the responsibilities of women within Christian households. Therefore, the silence of chapter 2 cannot legitimately be expanded into the claim that a woman must never communicate spiritual truth. The immediate connection concerns learning in submission rather than assuming the teaching authority Paul restricts. **Biblical submission is not biblical stupidity, and silence in an appointed setting is not a command to abandon every opportunity to speak truth.**

Verse 12 supplies the restriction: "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." The two connected matters are teaching and authority over the man. The prohibition must be interpreted within Paul's instructions concerning the church and the offices described immediately afterward. The traditional pastoral-office understanding recognizes that authoritative doctrinal instruction and congregational

oversight belong to the qualified men appointed to those responsibilities. This does not make every instance of a woman explaining Scripture identical to governing an assembly. Neither does it allow every possible teaching activity to be justified merely because somebody refuses to call it pastoral. The context, relationship, and authority being exercised matter. Paul is regulating more than the possession of knowledge; he is regulating the exercise of authority. **There is a difference between opening a Bible to explain a passage and occupying the office responsible for governing the doctrine and spiritual oversight of a congregation. Religion creates confusion when it insists those activities must always be identical.**

3. I Suffer Not a Woman to Teach: The Restriction Religion Keeps Trying to Rewrite

The words "I suffer not" express an apostolic prohibition. Paul is not merely recording that women happened not to be teaching during a particular Sunday gathering. He is stating what he does not permit. The same apostle who commands Timothy to preach the word in 2 Timothy 4:2 also gives instructions concerning the order of the church in his first epistle. His authority does not become optional whenever the subject changes from preaching the gospel to governing congregational conduct. Consider the logic involved. If Paul's instructions concerning bishops, deacons, prayer, doctrine, and godliness possess authority, why should his instructions concerning women and teaching suddenly be reduced to private opinion? One cannot treat the apostle as inspired when he discusses salvation and hopelessly outdated when he discusses authority. **The convenient practice of accepting Paul's commands until they inconvenience modern religion is not rightly dividing the Bible. It is dividing obedience according to personal preference.**

Some argue that the expression "usurp authority" means Paul forbids only the wrongful seizure or abusive exercise of authority, leaving women free to occupy the pastoral office whenever a congregation grants them permission. But the passage must be read as a whole. Paul connects teaching with authority over the man, then immediately supplies reasons drawn from creation and the fall. The argument that all pastoral authority becomes permissible merely because it has been politely conferred does not answer his stated reasoning. Furthermore, 1 Timothy 3 proceeds to describe the office of bishop in terms of a man who must meet specific qualifications. A church's willingness to appoint someone does not automatically establish that the appointment agrees with Scripture. Congregational approval must operate within biblical boundaries. **A religious committee cannot manufacture divine authorization by taking a prohibited arrangement, voting unanimously in its favour, and announcing that the prohibition no longer applies because everybody consented.**

At the same time, the prohibition must not become an excuse for men to behave like petty dictators. Paul does not authorize husbands, pastors, or male church members to silence every woman who disagrees with their interpretation of Scripture. The apostle's words concerning authority belong within the ordered life of God's church, not within some imaginary kingdom where every male Christian becomes the personal supervisor of every female Christian. First Peter 5:3 warns elders against being "lords over God's heritage," while 2 Corinthians 1:24 rejects exercising dominion over believers' faith. A pastor is accountable to Christ and must teach sound doctrine faithfully. He cannot turn pastoral oversight into an instrument of intimidation or demand submission to personal whims masquerading as commandments. **The Bible places restrictions upon women concerning pastoral authority, but it also places restrictions upon the men who exercise that authority. A man who ignores the second truth has no business boasting that he understands the first.**

4. Adam Was First Formed: Paul's Explanation Is Older Than Ephesian Culture

First Timothy 2:13 begins with the word "For," introducing Paul's explanation of his preceding command: "For Adam was first formed, then Eve." The apostle reaches back to Genesis 2, where God formed Adam from the dust of the ground, placed him in the garden, gave him responsibility, and subsequently formed Eve as an help meet for him. This argument predates the Mosaic law, the establishment of Israel as a nation, the founding of the church, and the existence of Ephesus itself. Paul does not say that women are prohibited from pastoral teaching merely because certain women in Timothy's congregation lack formal education. He identifies the order of creation. The reason matters because it places the instruction upon a foundation deeper than an unusual local disturbance. **When Paul establishes his reasoning in Genesis, the argument that the whole matter depends exclusively upon conditions in one ancient city has a rather serious geographical problem: Eden was not located in the Ephesian church building.**

Verse 14 continues, "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." Paul distinguishes the circumstances of the original transgression. Eve was deceived by the serpent; Adam was not deceived in the same manner. Genesis 3 records both participating in disobedience, and Romans 5:12 places the entrance of sin into the world upon one man, Adam. Therefore, the passage cannot honestly be transformed into an argument that all women are naturally gullible while all men possess superior spiritual judgment. Adam's deliberate disobedience hardly qualifies him as an example of flawless male discernment. Paul identifies a historical distinction relevant to his argument, not a universal declaration that every woman is incapable of recognizing truth. Scripture repeatedly warns men against deception, including false teachers who

corrupt entire congregations. **The serpent deceived Eve, but Adam disobeyed without that excuse. Anybody using this account to announce the natural perfection of masculine wisdom has apparently overlooked the man standing beside the forbidden tree.**

Verse 15 adds, "Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." This difficult statement must not be converted into a new gospel requiring women to bear children in order to obtain eternal life. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not through works. Romans 4:5 describes justification for the one who believes on Him that justifieth the ungodly. Motherhood is not an alternative to the finished work of Jesus Christ, and a woman without children is not excluded from salvation. The verse belongs within Paul's discussion of womanhood, conduct, and the original transgression, and its precise application must be handled without overturning the plain gospel. That is how Scripture should be compared. **No difficult expression gives an interpreter permission to cancel a clear doctrine established elsewhere. If an explanation of childbearing makes childbirth the Saviour, the explanation has gone badly wrong before the baby ever arrives.**

5. The Qualifications for Bishops Follow Immediately: The Connection Is Not an Accident

First Timothy 3:1 declares, "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." Notice the transition. Having addressed teaching authority in chapter 2, Paul immediately identifies the office of bishop and supplies its qualifications. Verse 2 continues, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach." Here is an explicitly identified office with specific requirements. The bishop is described in masculine household terms and must possess demonstrated ability to teach. Within the traditional interpretation of these passages, the connection is straightforward: the authoritative teaching office governed by Paul's preceding instruction is entrusted to properly qualified men. This does not mean every man is eligible, nor that every qualified man must necessarily be married. The qualifications describe the character and responsibilities expected of an overseer. **A man cannot stroll into the pulpit wearing a suit, announce that he is male, and assume he has satisfied the remaining qualifications by default.**

Continue through verses 3–7 and observe how much more Scripture requires. The bishop must not be given to wine, violent, greedy of filthy lucre, or covetous. He must be patient, not a brawler, and one who rules his own house well, having his children in subjection with all gravity. Paul asks in verse 5, "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" That question demolishes the notion that pastoral

authority is merely the privilege of occupying a prominent position. Household responsibility becomes evidence relevant to congregational oversight. Paul also prohibits appointing a novice and requires a good report from those outside the church. A man who lacks these qualifications is not rescued by his gender. **The office of bishop is not a consolation prize awarded to every male who volunteers. It is a serious stewardship with qualifications written by the Holy Ghost, not an honorary badge handed out by the church social committee.**

Titus 1:5–9 reinforces the same arrangement. Paul instructs Titus to ordain elders in every city and immediately identifies the relevant qualifications, including being "the husband of one wife" and maintaining proper household order. Verse 7 calls the bishop "the steward of God," while verse 9 requires him to hold fast the faithful word so that he may exhort and convince the gainsayers by sound doctrine. Acts 20:17–28 connects elders with overseers responsible for feeding the church of God. First Peter 5:1–4 likewise connects elders with feeding and overseeing the flock. These are not unrelated honorary titles. They identify a weighty ministry involving doctrinal instruction, protection, and spiritual care. The overseer must be able to teach truth and confront error. **A congregation may possess beautiful stained glass, a magnificent sound system, and a preacher with an impressive following, but none of those things substitutes for the biblical qualifications of the man entrusted with feeding the flock.**

6. Let Your Women Keep Silence: Corinth Confirms That Church Order Is Not a Religious Suggestion

First Corinthians 14:33–34 states, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. 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." The immediate context concerns the orderly exercise of speaking, interpretation, and prophecy within the assembled congregation. Paul has already instructed a tongue-speaker to keep silence when no interpreter is present, and a prophet to hold his peace when another receives revelation. These instructions regulate conduct during the gathering; they do not forbid all Christian communication outside it. When Paul addresses women in verses 34–35, the setting remains congregational order. The passage must therefore be examined according to its actual subject instead of being detached from the chapter and transformed into a universal prohibition against every woman speaking about Scripture. **Paul was regulating the assembly, not issuing a worldwide order requiring Christian women to become permanently mute.**

There is another passage that requires careful comparison. First Corinthians 11:5 refers to a woman praying or prophesying, while Acts 21:9 records that Philip had four daughters

who prophesied. These statements cannot simply be thrown away because somebody prefers an uncomplicated slogan about silence. Neither do they establish that the women possessed the office of pastor. Prophetic activity, prayer, personal instruction, and authoritative oversight are distinct matters requiring attention to their respective settings. First Corinthians 11 addresses headship and proper conduct concerning praying and prophesying; chapter 14 addresses order in the assembly. The precise relationship between these instructions deserves careful treatment, but one conclusion is unavoidable: Paul's own writings recognize spiritual activity by women while also placing restrictions upon authority and speaking in the congregation. **A preacher who uses chapter 14 to erase chapter 11 is not defending Paul. He is making the apostle contradict himself so that his favourite interpretation can survive.**

Now observe Paul's conclusion in 1 Corinthians 14:37: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." That statement should settle the question of whether the apostle considered his instructions concerning congregational order mere personal preferences. Paul identifies what he writes as the commandments of the Lord. Verse 38 adds, "But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." There is no suggestion that spiritual maturity consists of rejecting apostolic instruction whenever it becomes inconvenient. The Corinthians were expected to recognize divine authority behind the teaching. The same applies when considering 1 Timothy. Church order cannot be established by religious enthusiasm while treating clear apostolic instructions as expendable. **The congregation may rearrange its chairs, change its meeting schedule, or replace its hymnbooks, but it has no commission from heaven to revise the commandments governing its spiritual oversight.**

7. The Women God Commands to Teach Are Not Automatically the Pastors God Commands to Oversee

Titus 2:3–5 supplies the necessary balance that must accompany the entire discussion. Paul instructs "The aged women likewise" to behave as becomes holiness, not to be false accusers or given to much wine, and to be "teachers of good things." He then specifies that they are to teach the young women concerning love toward husbands and children, discretion, chastity, goodness, domestic responsibility, and obedience to their own husbands, "that the word of God be not blasphemed." Notice that teaching is not merely permitted here; it is positively commanded. Christian women possess genuine responsibility to instruct other women in godliness. Older believers should not bury their knowledge, experience, and understanding of Scripture because somebody has confused a restriction concerning pastoral authority with a prohibition against all female instruction.

A woman faithfully teaching what Titus 2 commands is obeying Paul, not defying him. It would be a remarkable achievement in biblical confusion to condemn her for doing exactly what the apostle told her to do.

Second Timothy 2:2 establishes another side of teaching responsibility: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." Timothy is instructed to transmit apostolic doctrine to reliable teachers capable of instructing others. The immediate context concerns the preservation and transmission of sound teaching in the ministry. Compare this with 2 Timothy 3:14–15, where Paul reminds Timothy to continue in the things he has learned and known, emphasizing his acquaintance with the holy Scriptures from childhood. Earlier, 2 Timothy 1:5 identifies the faith of his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois. Scripture therefore honours the formative spiritual influence of these women while directing Timothy concerning the appointment and training of faithful teachers. These passages are complementary, not contradictory. **Lois and Eunice helped establish Timothy in the Scriptures without either woman needing to claim the office Timothy was later instructed to administer responsibly.**

The application should be unmistakable. Christian women who proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ, teach children the Scriptures, instruct younger women, encourage discouraged believers, defend sound doctrine, and assist the work of the gospel deserve appreciation, not suspicion. A faithful sister who shares a verse with someone struggling against false teaching has not automatically assumed government over a congregation. Neither is a public religious platform automatically proof that the person operating it possesses pastoral authorization. The distinction concerns the office and authority being exercised, not merely the ability to speak before an audience. Meanwhile, Christian men must meet the actual qualifications of spiritual leadership rather than imagining that being male entitles them to rule. The church needs faithful women serving within biblical order and qualified men exercising oversight according to Scripture. **The Lord's vineyard contains considerably more work than can be performed from behind a pulpit, and the faithful labourer does not need to steal the overseer's title to prove that the harvest matters.**

Conclusion — What Paul Forbade Must Remain Forbidden, and What Paul Permitted Must Remain Permitted

First Timothy 2:12 does not disappear because contemporary religion finds its teaching uncomfortable. Paul writes, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." He grounds the instruction in the creation of Adam and Eve and the circumstances of their transgression. He then proceeds to identify the

qualifications for bishops, describing the office in masculine household terms and requiring sound doctrine, moral integrity, maturity, and competent oversight. The relationship between these passages forms the basis of the traditional understanding that the governing teaching office of pastor is entrusted to qualified men. Attempts to dismiss the prohibition as merely a rule against abusive behaviour, ignorance, or temporary Ephesian customs must contend with Paul's stated reasons rather than simply offering an explanation more acceptable to modern congregations. **An interpretation that explains away the command while refusing to account for the apostle's explanation has not solved the difficulty. It has merely relocated the difficulty beneath a pile of religious excuses.**

Yet the same Scriptures forbid us from turning biblical church order into an excuse for despising or discouraging faithful Christian women. Paul commanded women to learn. He instructed older women to teach what is good. He commended women who laboured in the gospel and recognized their contributions to the work of Christ. Those facts must be preserved just as firmly as the qualifications for bishops. A Christian woman may know her King James Bible thoroughly, explain salvation accurately, encourage believers effectively, and accomplish tremendous good without occupying the pastoral office. Her service does not become inferior merely because her responsibilities differ from those of an overseer. Nor does the pastoral office automatically make a man more faithful than the women serving quietly around him. **A title is not a substitute for obedience, and the absence of a title is not evidence of spiritual uselessness. God sees faithful labour that religious institutions may never bother to recognize.**

The final question is not whether modern congregations can discover a popular arrangement, gather enough votes, produce enough theological arguments, or attract enough supporters to justify what they wish to practice. The question is whether they will submit to the Scriptures governing the church of the living God. First Timothy 3:15 identifies that church as "the pillar and ground of the truth." A pillar is supposed to uphold something; it is not supposed to bend every time the weather changes. Christ purchased the church with His own blood, and the apostolic instructions governing its conduct deserve obedience rather than revision. Let qualified men bear the weighty responsibility of pastoral oversight. Let faithful women continue teaching, witnessing, encouraging, and serving in every ministry Scripture authorizes. Let no man turn biblical headship into personal tyranny, and let no religious institution convert Christian liberty into permission to abolish church order. **When Paul forbids something, the church has no authority to authorize it. When Paul commands something, the church has no authority to suppress it. And when the Holy Ghost has already spoken, the most spiritual thing a congregation can do is stop rewriting the instructions and start obeying the Book.**

4 of 10 — Women Pastors and Biblical Authority — The Husband of One Wife: Why God Wrote Qualifications for a Bishop Instead of a Popularity Contest

Key Passage: 1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9 (KJV)

The apostle Paul did not leave the qualifications for a bishop hanging somewhere in the clouds, waiting for a denominational committee to bring them down and make them suitable for modern consumption. He wrote them plainly, directly, and with sufficient detail to establish that the pastoral office is not an honorary title awarded to whoever can gather the largest congregation, raise the most money, or attract the loudest applause. First Timothy 3:1 declares, "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." Verse 2 immediately continues, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach." There is the beginning of God's qualifications, and notice the little word that modern religion would dearly love to replace: **MUST.** Paul did not write that a bishop might be qualified if the congregation finds it convenient. He did not say that the qualifications become negotiable when a popular personality develops an impressive following. The Holy Ghost established requirements, and the church's responsibility is to recognize them, not manufacture substitutes.

The controversy concerning women pastors frequently becomes tangled because people begin with personalities instead of passages. Somebody points toward a famous preacher with a television ministry, an enormous audience, several bestselling books, and enough religious merchandise to stock a department store. Then comes the familiar argument: surely somebody with that much influence must be called of God to occupy the pastoral office. But the New Testament does not qualify bishops by measuring audiences, counting book sales, or examining financial statements. A person may possess considerable public influence while failing the qualifications for spiritual oversight. A woman may be exceptionally knowledgeable, courageous, charitable, and effective in proclaiming biblical truth without thereby possessing the office of bishop. Likewise, a man may have the proper sex, an impressive education, and an expensive preaching suit while lacking the character necessary to oversee a congregation. **Popularity can establish that people are listening. It cannot establish that God authorized the person speaking to occupy a particular office.** That distinction is not difficult to understand unless somebody has already decided that popularity ought to outrank Scripture.

Our examination must therefore move beyond the question of who can preach an impressive sermon and consider precisely what a bishop is, what responsibilities belong to him, and what qualifications God requires. First Timothy 3 identifies the office and describes its qualifications. Titus 1 connects elders with the office of bishop and

emphasizes doctrinal faithfulness. Acts 20 identifies elders as overseers responsible for feeding and protecting God's flock. First Peter 5 commands elders to exercise oversight without becoming dictators. Hebrews 13 reminds believers that their spiritual leaders watch for souls and must give account. These passages establish something considerably more serious than a religious title. They describe an accountable stewardship within the New Testament church, purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. **The pastoral office is not a stage upon which religious ambition performs. It is a responsibility before Almighty God, and the qualifications belong to the One who owns the flock.**

1. If a Man Desire the Office of a Bishop: The Difference Between a Good Work and an Attractive Position

First Timothy 3:1 begins with a commendation of the desire for pastoral service: "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." Notice the expression "good work." Paul does not describe the office as a desirable opportunity for public recognition, personal advancement, or institutional control. The emphasis falls upon the work associated with the office. A bishop must teach, oversee, protect, correct, and care for the congregation entrusted to him. That involves spiritual responsibility rather than ceremonial importance. A man who desires the office merely because he enjoys standing before an audience has misunderstood the nature of the calling. The congregation does not exist to provide him with an appreciative audience, and the pulpit was never designed as a platform for personal advertisement. **The man who wants a pastor's title without a pastor's burden resembles somebody demanding the captain's uniform while refusing responsibility for the ship. The uniform may fit beautifully, but the vessel still needs somebody who can navigate.**

Verse 2 continues with the expression "A bishop then must." The word "then" connects the good work mentioned in verse 1 with the necessary qualifications for performing it. The word "must" establishes obligation rather than preference. Paul does not present a catalogue of desirable qualities from which a congregation may select whichever items fit its preferred candidate. He establishes the standards governing the office. The first qualification is that the bishop be "blameless," followed by the description "the husband of one wife" and further requirements concerning character, conduct, and doctrinal ability. A blameless man is not necessarily a man who has never committed a sin; otherwise no descendant of Adam could qualify. Romans 3:23 already settled that question. The emphasis concerns a life free from justifiable reproach that would discredit his ministry. **The office requires a man whose conduct supports his teaching, not somebody whose congregation must spend half its time explaining away his behaviour.**

The historical and doctrinal setting must also remain clear. Paul is writing to Timothy concerning the government and conduct of the New Testament church. First Timothy 3:15 identifies the purpose: "that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." These are instructions governing believers under the present ministry of the gospel of grace, not a restoration of Israel's Levitical priesthood. The bishop is not a sacrificing priest who repeatedly offers Christ for sin, and the congregation is not dependent upon his personal mediation for salvation. First Timothy 2:5 establishes one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. Nevertheless, the absence of an earthly sacrificing priesthood does not mean the church exists without appointed leadership. **The believer has direct access to God through Jesus Christ, but that liberty does not cancel the instructions Christ gave concerning the oversight of His churches.**

2. The Husband of One Wife: A Qualification Religion Cannot Convert Into Gender-Neutral Language

The expression "the husband of one wife" appears in 1 Timothy 3:2 and again in Titus 1:6. These are not disconnected remarks about marriage offered during a discussion of domestic life. Both passages occur within explicit instructions concerning the qualifications of church officers. Paul describes the candidate as a man and employs the relationship of husband and wife when establishing the standard. Within the traditional interpretation of these passages, that language identifies the pastoral office with qualified male leadership. The argument gains further support from 1 Timothy 2:12–14, where Paul restricts teaching authority over men and grounds his instruction in the creation of Adam and Eve. The passages must be examined together rather than treating each phrase as though it existed in isolation. **One cannot simply pronounce the words "husband of one wife" gender-neutral and pretend the entire surrounding discussion has disappeared.** A modern label does not possess the authority to cancel the distinctions Paul actually wrote.

Some argue that the expression concerns marital faithfulness rather than eligibility based upon sex. Certainly, marital faithfulness is involved, and that must never be minimized. A bishop cannot treat his marriage vows as optional while claiming to represent the moral standards of Scripture. But recognizing the requirement for marital integrity does not automatically erase the masculine description of the candidate. Titus repeats the wording, and First Timothy connects it with household government, fatherly responsibility, and the bishop's accountability for the church. The cumulative evidence matters. Nor does Paul describe the office by listing gender-neutral qualifications and then casually inserting a sentence about marriage unrelated to the person occupying it. The qualifications form a

connected picture of the overseer. **When the same description appears in two separate passages governing the appointment of church leadership, the solution is not to pretend that God accidentally used the wrong words twice.**

Yet another mistake must be avoided: turning "husband of one wife" into an absolute declaration that every man must marry before he can possibly serve Christ in pastoral ministry. The passage does not issue a universal command requiring all prospective ministers to obtain wives. Paul discusses the legitimate unmarried condition in 1 Corinthians 7 and recognizes that believers have differing circumstances and responsibilities. The relationship between the marital qualification and an unmarried candidate deserves careful biblical examination; the text does not expressly resolve every question concerning an unmarried overseer. What cannot be justified is treating marriage itself as a magical act that confers pastoral eligibility. A married man may still be unqualified through immorality, pride, incompetence, or corrupt doctrine. **A wedding ceremony does not ordain a pastor any more than a marriage certificate automatically produces spiritual maturity. The question is whether the whole man satisfies the biblical requirements for the office.**

3. Bishop, Elder, and Pastor: Different Descriptions of the Same Serious Responsibility

Titus 1:5 provides a crucial connection: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." Paul then lists the qualifications in verse 6, before continuing in verse 7, "For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God." Notice the transition from elders to bishop. Paul directs Titus concerning the appointment of elders and explains the qualifications by referring to the bishop. These are not presented as two unrelated offices occupied by entirely different classes of religious dignitaries. The elder is described in connection with the office of oversight. The terms emphasize aspects of the same work: recognized spiritual leadership, responsible government, and accountability for the people of God. **The New Testament is remarkably more interested in the qualifications and responsibilities of its leaders than in constructing elaborate religious ladders upon which ambitious men can climb toward increasingly impressive titles.**

Acts 20 makes the relationship even clearer. Verse 17 declares that Paul sent to Ephesus and called "the elders of the church." After addressing these men, he commands them in verse 28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The men called elders in verse 17 are addressed as overseers in verse 28, and their responsibility is to feed the flock. There are the principal ideas brought together in one passage. The elder is associated with recognized leadership, the overseer with spiritual

supervision, and the feeding of the flock with pastoral care. The passage does not establish three independent ranks requiring three separate religious appointments. It connects the functions within the same body of leadership. **A title may describe the responsibility, but repeating titles does not multiply spiritual qualifications. One unqualified man does not become three qualified ministers by calling himself elder, bishop, and pastor.**

First Peter 5:1–4 completes the picture. Peter addresses the elders, instructs them to "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof," and reminds them that the chief Shepherd shall appear. Ephesians 4:11 also identifies pastors and teachers among the ministries given by the ascended Christ for the edifying of His body. Taken together, these passages connect teaching, feeding, oversight, and accountable leadership. They do not require every congregation to reproduce precisely the same modern administrative arrangement, but they establish unmistakable responsibilities for those entrusted with pastoral care. Scripture even recognizes elders in the plural, warning against the assumption that a solitary religious celebrity must personally embody every aspect of church government. **The shepherd is supposed to care for sheep, not collect titles like trophies. And every earthly shepherd should remember that the Chief Shepherd has never surrendered ownership of His flock.**

4. Ruling His Own House Well: Why God Examines the Home Before Entrusting the Church

First Timothy 3:4–5 describes the bishop as "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity," and immediately asks, "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" There is an extraordinary principle in that question. God examines a man's demonstrated responsibility in ordinary life before entrusting him with spiritual oversight. A man may sound impressive while preaching on Sunday, but what happens when he returns home? Does he demonstrate patience, integrity, consistency, and responsible leadership? Does his conduct agree with the Bible he teaches? A public performance lasting forty minutes cannot substitute for a life of demonstrated faithfulness. **The household is not a rehearsal stage where a preacher may behave disgracefully until Sunday morning gives him another opportunity to appear spiritual. God examines the man when the microphone is turned off.**

Titus 1:6 likewise speaks of the elder's children, describing them as "faithful children not accused of riot or unruly." The wording emphasizes household order and conduct consistent with responsible leadership. This must not be twisted into the doctrine that a father can personally guarantee the salvation of every child. Salvation belongs to the individual through faith in Jesus Christ, and no earthly parent can exercise saving faith on

behalf of another person. Nevertheless, parental responsibility remains real. A man who neglects his children, refuses correction in his household, or allows persistent disorder while demanding authority over a congregation presents a serious contradiction. Paul considers domestic conduct relevant to spiritual leadership because character does not suddenly materialize when somebody enters a church building. **The preacher who cannot exercise responsible care over the household entrusted to him ought to hesitate before announcing that he is ready to supervise an entire congregation of households.**

But household government must not be confused with tyranny. Ephesians 5:25 commands husbands to love their wives "even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." First Peter 3:7 commands husbands to give honour unto their wives as heirs together of the grace of life. Biblical headship carries obligations that no honest reader can dismiss. A man who uses his position to intimidate his wife, humiliate his children, or demand unquestioning obedience to personal whims is not demonstrating the character Paul requires. He is displaying conduct that ought to call his qualifications into question. The bishop is instructed to take care of the church, not imitate a dictator presiding over conquered territory. **A man who thinks ruling his house well means frightening everybody inside it has confused biblical leadership with domestic occupation. Christ did not establish headship so that selfish men could turn their families into private kingdoms.**

5. Apt to Teach and Holding Fast the Faithful Word: Why Sound Doctrine Is Not Optional

First Timothy 3:2 includes the requirement that the bishop be "apt to teach." Titus 1:9 expands the matter by requiring him to be "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." This is not a minor qualification tucked among more impressive administrative abilities. The overseer must possess sufficient biblical understanding to instruct believers accurately and confront those contradicting sound doctrine. A pleasant personality cannot perform that duty. Neither can financial success, speaking ability, or religious enthusiasm. The congregation needs someone who knows what the Scriptures teach and can distinguish truth from error. **A pastor who cannot handle the word of God is like a surgeon who enjoys wearing surgical clothing but has never learned where the organs are located. The uniform may be convincing until somebody actually needs help.**

The larger pastoral epistles reinforce this responsibility repeatedly. First Timothy 1:3 records Paul's charge that Timothy confront those teaching other doctrine. First Timothy 4:16 commands, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them." Second Timothy 4:2 instructs him to "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove,

rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." The emphasis is not upon maintaining an agreeable atmosphere at the expense of truth. A pastor must be prepared to correct doctrinal error, identify dangerous teaching, and instruct believers faithfully. That requires careful study and obedience to Scripture, not merely the ability to deliver a moving speech. **The sheep do not need a professional entertainer who can make them feel wonderful while wolves gather outside the door. They need a shepherd who recognizes the wolves and knows how to feed the flock.**

The other qualifications must accompany doctrinal competence. First Timothy 3 prohibits the bishop from being given to wine, violent, greedy of filthy lucre, a brawler, or covetous. He must demonstrate patience, sobriety, and good behaviour. Verse 6 warns against appointing a novice, "lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." Verse 7 requires a good report from those outside the church. These requirements expose the danger of rushing an inexperienced or morally compromised personality into leadership simply because he attracts attention. An impressive theological degree cannot compensate for dishonesty. A polished sermon cannot excuse greed. A strong doctrinal position cannot justify cruelty. **The Bible requires sound doctrine and godly character together. The preacher who possesses one while deliberately neglecting the other is not qualified merely because his admirers prefer to overlook the deficiency.**

6. Feed the Church of God: Pastoral Authority Belongs Under the Chief Shepherd

Acts 20:28 identifies the congregation as "the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." That statement ought to remove every trace of casual ambition from the pastoral office. The church is not the personal possession of its pastor. It belongs to the One who purchased it. Paul therefore commands the elders to take heed first to themselves and then to all the flock. The order matters. A man cannot effectively guard others while carelessly neglecting his own spiritual condition. Paul subsequently warns in verse 29 that grievous wolves will enter, not sparing the flock, and verse 30 warns that dangerous teachers will arise even from among the leaders themselves. The overseer must remain alert because doctrinal danger does not always announce its arrival with an advertisement identifying itself as false teaching. **Sometimes the wolf carries a Bible, smiles pleasantly, and asks for a position on the church leadership committee.**

First Peter 5:2 adds that oversight must be exercised willingly, "not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." Verse 3 expressly prohibits elders from being "lords over God's heritage" and commands them to be examples to the flock. There is biblical authority, and then there is religious domination. The two must never be confused. An overseer is responsible to lead, teach, correct, and protect, but he has no authorization to replace Scripture with his personal opinions or demand obedience to arbitrary rules. The congregation is God's

heritage. The minister serves beneath the authority of Jesus Christ. **A pastor who behaves as though the church belongs to him has forgotten who paid for it. The purchase price was the blood of Christ, not the preacher's salary, sacrifice, reputation, or years of service.**

Hebrews 13:7 commands believers to remember those who have spoken unto them the word of God and to follow their faith while considering the outcome of their conduct. Verse 17 declares, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." This is substantial authority accompanied by substantial accountability. The overseer must answer to God for the spiritual care entrusted to him. Yet this is no command for believers to follow a leader into false doctrine. The same Scriptures require believers to test teaching, and Acts 17:11 commends the Bereans for searching the Scriptures daily. Spiritual oversight operates beneath biblical truth, not above it. **A faithful pastor points the congregation toward the Book. An unfaithful ruler wants the congregation to stop checking the Book whenever it threatens his authority. The difference is usually obvious once the Scriptures are opened.**

7. An Ordination Certificate Cannot Amend Scripture, and a Congregation's Vote Cannot Rewrite God's Qualifications

Consider the modern tendency to confuse recognition with authorization. A congregation may elect a pastor, a religious institution may confer an academic degree, and an organization may issue an ordination certificate. Such actions can have legitimate administrative purposes, but none possesses authority to alter the qualifications written in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Titus was instructed to ordain elders according to apostolic direction. Acts 14:23 likewise records elders being ordained in the churches. Recognition and appointment therefore have a place in biblical church government. But recognition must operate according to the word of God. A congregation cannot establish a person's eligibility merely by gathering enough votes. **If a church could vote away biblical qualifications, it could eventually vote away every other doctrine it found inconvenient. At that point, the Bible would no longer govern the congregation; the congregation would govern the Bible.**

The same principle applies to religious fame. A preacher may possess a television audience, millions of followers, bestselling books, numerous honorary degrees, and an international organization. None of those things appears among Paul's qualifications for a bishop. Public influence does not establish spiritual oversight, and the operation of a large religious ministry is not identical to pastoring a New Testament congregation. A woman may exercise significant influence through public Bible teaching without possessing the

pastoral office; such influence must be evaluated according to the nature of the ministry and the authority being claimed. Likewise, a man operating a prosperous religious enterprise may fail virtually every requirement associated with faithful pastoral leadership. **God never instructed Timothy to count followers before ordaining elders. Evidently, the Holy Ghost understood that a large audience can applaud a man whose doctrine is dangerously small.**

Nor does restricting the pastoral office mean that women should be discouraged from faithfully serving Christ. Romans 16 records Paul's appreciation for numerous women who laboured in the Lord. Titus 2:3–5 commands older women to teach what is good. Acts 18:26 records Priscilla participating with Aquila in explaining the way of God more perfectly to Apollos. Second Timothy 1:5 recognizes the sincere faith of Lois and Eunice. Their service deserves respect without requiring us to assign them an office Scripture does not record them occupying. Christian women can proclaim the gospel, teach within appropriate settings, strengthen families, encourage believers, and communicate biblical truth without assuming pastoral oversight. **The church should never have to invent a title for a faithful woman before it can appreciate her labour. The Lord knows the difference between spiritual fruitfulness and ecclesiastical office, even when modern religion insists upon confusing them.**

Conclusion — The Flock Belongs to Christ, and Christ Established the Qualifications

The first conclusion is that Scripture establishes actual qualifications for the pastoral office, and those qualifications cannot be dismissed as obsolete regulations. First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 describe a bishop in masculine household terms while requiring moral integrity, doctrinal competence, maturity, responsible leadership, and faithfulness. Acts 20 connects elders with the work of oversight and feeding the flock. First Peter 5 places pastoral authority beneath the Chief Shepherd. Hebrews 13 identifies leaders who watch for souls and must give account. These passages establish a consistent understanding of the office and its serious responsibilities. The church is not authorized to replace those requirements with popularity, education, financial success, or personal preference. **A certificate may recognize an appointment, but it cannot create qualifications that God has not supplied. A congregation may acknowledge a man's ministry, but it cannot excuse disobedience to the Scriptures governing that ministry.**

The second conclusion concerns the men who claim eligibility for the office. No man should imagine that being male automatically makes him qualified to pastor. Paul requires far more than that. He examines character, conduct, doctrine, maturity, household responsibility, and reputation. A man who fails these standards cannot hide behind a correct statement concerning male pastoral leadership. Nor may he use biblical headship

as a justification for pride, intimidation, greed, or spiritual manipulation. A pastor must be an example to the flock, not a religious tyrant demanding privileges while ignoring obligations. The same passage that establishes the office also exposes the unqualified man attempting to occupy it. **It is remarkably easy to defend the words "husband of one wife" while quietly stepping around "blameless," "sober," "patient," and "apt to teach." But God wrote the entire list, and the entire list deserves obedience.**

Finally, the church must remember that Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd, the owner of the flock, and the One before whom every earthly overseer will answer. The faithful women who serve Him through evangelism, instruction, encouragement, and godly labour must not be despised because they do not occupy the pastoral office. The qualified men entrusted with church oversight must not become arrogant because they do. Every believer stands in need of the same grace, and every legitimate ministry must operate beneath the authority of the same written word. The church of the living God is not a democracy empowered to amend divine revelation, nor is it the personal kingdom of whoever happens to occupy the pulpit. It belongs to Jesus Christ. **God did not establish the qualifications for a bishop so that modern religion could hold an election to determine whether they still apply. He established them because the souls of His people matter, the purity of His doctrine matters, and the government of His church matters. An ordination certificate cannot amend 1 Timothy 3, a congregation's vote cannot rewrite Titus 1, and a thousand applauding supporters cannot overrule one sentence of the living word of God.**

5 of 10 — Women Pastors and Biblical Authority — Deborah Was a Judge, Huldah Was a Prophetess, and Neither Was a New Testament Pastor

Key Passage: Judges 4:4–9; 2 Kings 22:14–20; Acts 2:16–18 (KJV)

There is a remarkable practice among modern religious interpreters when they encounter the qualifications for a bishop in 1 Timothy 3. Rather than remaining in the passage and examining what the Holy Ghost actually wrote, they immediately pack their theological suitcases and head backward into the Old Testament, looking for a woman whose ministry can somehow be converted into a New Testament pastoral appointment. Deborah was a judge! Huldah was a prophetess! Miriam led the women in praise! Anna spoke about the Redeemer! And with each announcement, the assumption is that another qualification for the bishop has been successfully removed from the Scriptures. But there is a rather substantial problem with this method of Bible interpretation. **A judge is not automatically**

a bishop, a prophetess is not automatically a pastor, and the ability to deliver God's message does not automatically confer the government of a New Testament congregation. God genuinely used these women, and the Scriptures record their ministries without apology. The question is not whether they possessed authority or communicated divine truth. The question is whether their particular callings establish an office the New Testament defines under different instructions.

The first mistake would be to minimize what these women actually accomplished. Deborah did not merely sit beneath a palm tree dispensing harmless religious encouragement while the men conducted all the serious business. Judges 4:4 declares, "And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time." She judged Israel. That is what the Book says. Huldah did not simply offer a private opinion when the king's representatives consulted her. She delivered the word of the LORD concerning judgment upon Judah. Miriam was called a prophetess, and Micah 6:4 places her name alongside Moses and Aaron in God's account of Israel's deliverance. Anna was a prophetess who publicly spoke concerning Jesus Christ to those awaiting redemption. These were significant women performing genuine spiritual service. Anyone who attempts to reduce their ministries to insignificant domestic activities has allowed his preferred argument to interfere with the historical record. **We do not strengthen biblical doctrine by weakening biblical history. The truth does not need a dishonest defence, and Scripture never requires us to erase a woman's genuine accomplishments to preserve God's established order.**

The second mistake, however, is equally serious: treating every example of female authority anywhere in the Bible as permission to occupy every spiritual office everywhere else in the Bible. That reasoning ignores dispensational distinctions, historical setting, covenant responsibilities, and the actual offices being discussed. Deborah ministered during Israel's period of judges. Miriam served during the Exodus and wilderness history. Huldah prophesied in Judah under the Mosaic covenant. Anna lived during the closing period of that covenant, before Christ's death and resurrection. The outpouring described in Acts 2 belongs to a prophetic passage with unmistakable connections to Israel and the last days. None of these settings can simply be renamed the government of a local New Testament church. First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 address that government directly. **If we want to know what a judge did in Israel, we should read Judges. If we want to know the qualifications for a bishop, we should read Timothy and Titus. The trouble begins when somebody insists that the first passage has secretly cancelled the second.**

1. Deborah Judged Israel: Her Authority Was Real, but Her Office Was Not a New Testament Pastorate

Judges 4 opens during another period of Israel's national disobedience. After Ehud's death, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and God sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The captain of his host was Sisera, a man commanding nine hundred chariots of iron. For twenty years Israel suffered oppression under this enemy. This was not a local congregation wrestling with who should teach Sunday school. It was the nation of Israel under the governmental chastening of God during the period before the establishment of the monarchy. Into that setting the Holy Ghost introduces Deborah, identifying her as a prophetess and recording that she judged Israel. Verse 5 adds that she dwelt beneath the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim, "and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment." **The Bible does not hesitate to acknowledge her judicial authority. Neither should anybody claiming to believe the Bible.**

Deborah's ministry included actual judgment among the people and communication of the word of the LORD. She was not simply the wife of an influential man whose position somehow borrowed significance from her husband's reputation. Scripture identifies her directly as a prophetess and judge. She occupied a recognized position within Israel during a national emergency. Men came to her for judgment, and the record does not condemn them for doing so. That fact ought to correct the exaggerated claim that God never permitted a woman to exercise any form of authority involving men. Deborah plainly did. But recognition of that authority does not settle the entirely different question of pastoral office. Israel's judges functioned within the history of a covenant nation governed by divine law, experiencing repeated cycles of apostasy, oppression, repentance, and deliverance. They were not appointed under the qualifications later delivered to Timothy concerning bishops. **Deborah was a judge because Scripture calls her a judge. She was a prophetess because Scripture calls her a prophetess. It takes an additional act of religious imagination to call her the pastor of a New Testament church.**

The distinction becomes especially important when considering how the book of Judges describes its leaders. Othniel, Ehud, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, and Deborah appear in circumstances involving national deliverance, military conflict, judicial responsibility, and God's intervention in Israel's history. Their ministries are not identical to one another, and their personal conduct was not uniformly exemplary. Judges 21:25 concludes the book by describing the absence of a king in Israel and the disorder associated with everyone doing what was right in his own eyes. This historical environment must not be transformed into a permanent pattern for New Testament congregational government. If every activity performed by a judge automatically establishes pastoral practice, somebody may eventually have to explain why Samson's jawbone ministry has not been incorporated into the qualifications for a bishop. **A historical record tells us what happened. A pastoral**

qualification tells us what the church must require. Confusing those categories is how people turn extraordinary events into ordinary regulations God never established.

2. Barak, Sisera, and Jael: The Victory Was God's, and the Women Were Not Decorations

Judges 4:6 records Deborah sending for Barak, the son of Abinoam, and delivering a command from the LORD God of Israel. Barak was to gather ten thousand men from Naphtali and Zebulun and move toward mount Tabor, where God would bring Sisera and his forces into battle and deliver them into Barak's hand. Deborah was not offering military advice based upon personal experience. She was communicating divine instruction. Yet Barak answered in verse 8, "If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go." Deborah agreed to accompany him but announced that the honour of the journey would not belong to him, because the LORD would sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. The account demonstrates Deborah's courage, her confidence in God's word, and Barak's dependence upon her presence. **The woman knew what God had commanded, while the military commander was reluctant to proceed without her. That is hardly the picture of an intellectually helpless woman needing a man to explain every spiritual matter.**

The prophecy concerning Sisera's defeat was fulfilled through Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. Judges 4:17–22 records Sisera fleeing from the battle and seeking refuge in Jael's tent. After he fell asleep, she took a nail of the tent and a hammer and drove the nail through his temples. The enemy commander who had terrorized Israel was dead. Judges 5:24 later declares, "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent." Whatever questions a modern reader may raise concerning the violence of the event, the biblical narrative presents Sisera's defeat as part of Israel's deliverance from oppression. Jael's action fulfilled the announced outcome, and Deborah's prophecy was vindicated. The Scriptures give these women genuine prominence in the victory. **The LORD did not require a religious committee's permission before using Jael to finish the battle. Sisera discovered that a tent peg could be considerably more persuasive than nine hundred iron chariots.**

Judges 5 records the song of Deborah and Barak, celebrating the LORD's deliverance and acknowledging those who participated in the conflict. In verse 7 Deborah declares, "The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel." She does not describe herself as an apostle, bishop, pastor, or elder of a church. She identifies her place within Israel's national deliverance. The song praises God's intervention, reproves those who failed to respond, and celebrates the overthrow of Israel's enemies. It also demonstrates that Deborah's significance cannot

honestly be reduced to a passive role. She spoke, judged, prophesied, accompanied Barak, and celebrated God's victory. But the account does not authorize the interpreter to carry her title across the centuries and replace the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3. **Deborah's authority must be acknowledged exactly where God placed it. The error is not recognizing her leadership; the error is pretending that her leadership was an ordination service for every office the New Testament would later establish.**

3. Miriam Was a Prophetess: The Woman Who Praised God's Deliverance Also Learned God's Order

Exodus 15:20 introduces another remarkable woman: "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances." This followed Israel's miraculous passage through the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh's pursuing forces. Moses and the children of Israel had sung concerning the LORD's triumph, and Miriam participated in the celebration by leading the women with timbrels and dances. Verse 21 records her declaration: "Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." She is explicitly called a prophetess. Her public ministry was real, her praise was directed toward the LORD, and the women followed her leadership in worship. **The Bible does not treat Miriam's participation as an embarrassing interruption of an otherwise respectable male religious gathering. God records her contribution as part of the celebration of His mighty deliverance.**

Miriam's significance extends beyond the song at the Red Sea. Micah 6:4 records the LORD reminding Israel, "For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam." There is a remarkable statement concerning her place in Israel's history. God identifies Miriam alongside Moses and Aaron when recounting His provision during the Exodus. We have no authority to erase her name because it complicates an argument about women exercising spiritual influence. Yet the same Scripture that acknowledges her ministry also distinguishes the particular calling given to Moses. In Numbers 12, Miriam and Aaron spoke against him, and their challenge went beyond his marriage. They asked whether the LORD had spoken only by Moses and not also by them. The issue became a dispute concerning divinely appointed authority. **God had genuinely used Miriam, but possessing a genuine ministry did not authorize her to redefine every boundary surrounding another servant's commission.**

Numbers 12:6–8 records the LORD explaining that He spoke to prophets through visions and dreams, while Moses occupied a distinctive position: "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house." God declared that He spoke with Moses mouth to mouth and

then rebuked the challenge against him. Miriam was struck with leprosy, Aaron acknowledged their foolish conduct, and Moses interceded for her healing. The account does not teach that women are forbidden to prophesy; God had already identified Miriam as a prophetess. It teaches that legitimate spiritual service does not confer permission to challenge an authority God has specifically established. Aaron, a man and a priest, was also involved in the wrongdoing, so this was hardly a demonstration of universal masculine wisdom. **The lesson is not that God cannot use a woman. The lesson is that being used by God does not make anybody—male or female—exempt from obeying God. A spiritual gift is not a license to overturn an appointed order.**

4. Huldah Spoke the Word of the LORD to Priests and Royal Officials, but She Was Not Their Pastor

Second Kings 22 brings us into the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, during a period of desperately needed national reform. The book of the law had been found in the house of the LORD, and Shaphan the scribe read it before the king. When Josiah heard the words, he rent his clothes, recognizing the seriousness of Judah's disobedience. He commanded that inquiry be made of the LORD concerning the words of the discovered book. The delegation included Hilkiah the priest and other royal representatives, who went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum. Second Kings 22:14 records their consultation without suggesting that approaching a woman for prophetic revelation was somehow illegitimate. The king's representatives were seeking the word of God, and Huldah was recognized as one through whom God communicated. **There stood a prophetess whose authority was not invented by modern religious enthusiasm. It was recorded in the very Bible some people insist never shows a woman speaking authoritatively to men.**

Huldah's answer was neither sentimental encouragement nor a collection of flattering religious observations. She declared, "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel," and announced that God would bring evil upon Jerusalem and its inhabitants because they had forsaken Him and burned incense unto other gods. She then delivered a separate message concerning Josiah, whose heart had been tender and who had humbled himself before the LORD. Because of his response, God would gather him to his fathers in peace, and his eyes would not see the calamity God intended to bring upon the place. Huldah was delivering divine judgment and mercy to the representatives of a king. Her prophetic word concerned the nation, the covenant, idolatry, and coming judgment. It was not a harmless private opinion offered from the sidelines. **The prophetess did not need to become king of Judah in order to tell the king what the King of heaven had said. That distinction alone ought to clear away a considerable amount of confusion.**

The historical setting remains decisive. Huldah ministered within Judah under the Mosaic covenant, while the temple stood and the monarchy governed the nation. Her function was prophetic, not pastoral oversight of a congregation established under the New Testament. Second Kings does not identify her as a bishop, describe her qualifications according to 1 Timothy 3, or appoint her to govern a Christian assembly. But let us not manufacture another error while rejecting that one. Huldah's ministry demonstrates that a woman could genuinely communicate God's authoritative revelation to men, including priests and royal officials. The authority belonged to the LORD whose message she delivered. That fact must be acknowledged without embarrassment. **God did not need to make Huldah a priest before she could speak His word to a priest. Neither does her prophetic ministry authorize somebody centuries later to rewrite the qualifications for a bishop. The Bible establishes both distinctions, and both deserve obedience.**

5. Anna Testified of the Redeemer: Her Public Witness Did Not Require a Pastor's Office

Luke 2:36 introduces Anna with unmistakable respect: "And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age." The account places her in Jerusalem during the infancy of the Lord Jesus Christ, when Joseph and Mary brought Him according to the requirements associated with the law of Moses. Simeon had just recognized the child as the Lord's salvation, prepared before the face of all people, "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Anna then entered the record as another faithful witness to the promised Redeemer. She belonged to Israel, and her ministry occurred while the temple still stood and before the completed work of Calvary. Those historical details matter. **Anna was not attending a New Testament church service under the pastoral regulations of Timothy. She was an Israelite prophetess recognizing the arrival of the Messiah promised in the Scriptures.**

Luke 2:37 describes Anna as a widow who departed not from the temple, "but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." Her life was marked by devotion, perseverance, and service. Then verse 38 declares, "And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Notice the expression "spake of him." Anna testified concerning Jesus Christ to those anticipating redemption. The passage does not restrict her testimony to women, nor does it portray her public speech as a violation of divine order. She recognized the significance of the child and communicated that truth to others. This should encourage every faithful Christian woman who desires to speak about Jesus Christ. **Anna did not need a pulpit, a denominational endorsement, or a television ministry to possess something worth**

saying. She had the Redeemer to speak about, and that was considerably more important than having a religious title.

Yet Anna's testimony must not be confused with the office of bishop. Luke does not identify her as pastor over the temple, elder of a Christian congregation, or overseer responsible for governing a local assembly. Her ministry was that of a prophetess and witness during a unique moment in Israel's redemptive history. The Lord Jesus had been born, but His death, burial, and resurrection had not yet occurred. The church-order instructions later delivered through Paul were not the governing framework of Anna's temple service. We may learn from her devotion and rejoice over her testimony without inventing a position Scripture does not assign her. And there is a practical rebuke here for religious men who imagine women should contribute nothing to the proclamation of Christ. **Anna spoke of the Redeemer while some who possessed religious positions failed to recognize Him. A person can occupy an impressive office and still miss the very Saviour the Scriptures were written to reveal.**

6. Your Sons and Your Daughters Shall Prophesy: Acts 2 Does Not Abolish the Qualifications of 1 Timothy 3

Acts 2:16–18 introduces another passage frequently used to defend the appointment of women pastors. On the day of Pentecost, Peter stood with the eleven and explained the extraordinary events taking place in Jerusalem. He declared, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," and proceeded to quote the promise that God would pour out His Spirit. Verse 17 includes the words, "and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." Verse 18 continues, "And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy." There is no legitimate way to remove the daughters and handmaidens from that prophecy. God explicitly included them. The argument that women were never permitted to receive prophetic gifts collapses immediately. **When God says daughters shall prophesy, the interpreter's responsibility is not to explain why daughters must never prophesy. His responsibility is to believe what God said and determine what the prophecy actually concerns.**

The setting, however, must be examined. Peter was addressing a gathering in Jerusalem that included Jews from many nations, and Joel's original prophecy concerned Israel, Zion, the outpouring of God's Spirit, and the coming day of the LORD. The quoted passage continues beyond the promise of prophecy to describe wonders in heaven, signs in the earth, blood, fire, vapour of smoke, and the sun being turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and notable day of the Lord. Peter connected the Pentecostal events directly with Joel's prophecy, but the entire prophetic description was not exhausted by the events of that morning. The remaining prophetic elements must not be quietly

discarded or transferred into an imaginary fulfilment merely to simplify a doctrinal chart. Neither should Joel's promises concerning Israel be used to erase the distinction between Israel and the Church. **The same Bible that records Pentecost also records the future day of the LORD. Prophecy does not cease to have a future because somebody has found a convenient present application.**

The New Testament itself supplies additional evidence of women exercising prophetic gifts. Acts 21:9 records that Philip the evangelist "had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy." First Corinthians 11:5 also refers to a woman praying or prophesying, while chapter 14 provides instructions regulating speech and order in the congregation. These passages deserve careful comparison, not selective deletion. But here is the distinction modern arguments repeatedly ignore: the gift of prophecy is not identical to the office of bishop. First Corinthians 12:28 distinguishes apostles, prophets, and teachers within God's arrangement of ministries. Ephesians 4:11 also identifies different ministerial gifts, including pastors and teachers. The existence of women who prophesied does not automatically establish that they occupied the governing office described in 1 Timothy 3. **If every person who received a spiritual gift automatically became a pastor, the church would have considerably more bishops than Paul ever instructed Timothy to appoint. Possessing a gift and holding an office are not interchangeable expressions.**

7. The New Testament Defines Its Own Pastoral Office, and Old Testament Examples Cannot Rewrite It

First Timothy 2:11–14 must be allowed to speak directly to the question of teaching authority. Paul writes, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." He then grounds the restriction in the formation of Adam before Eve and the circumstances of the original transgression. These are the apostle's stated reasons, not a later invention imposed upon his words. The passage must be understood within the conduct and government of the church, rather than stretched into an absolute prohibition against every woman explaining Scripture, teaching children, or proclaiming salvation. Nevertheless, the restriction concerning authoritative teaching over men cannot be dissolved simply by pointing to Deborah or Huldah. Their ministries belong to different historical and governmental settings. **A prophetess in Judah is not an amendment to an apostolic instruction concerning a congregation. Scripture does not contradict itself merely because an interpreter refuses to distinguish the responsibilities being discussed.**

First Timothy 3:1–7 then supplies the qualifications for a bishop, beginning with the statement, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." Verse 2 identifies the bishop as "the husband of one wife" and requires vigilance, sobriety, good

behaviour, hospitality, and aptitude for teaching. Titus 1:5–9 repeats the masculine household qualifications when directing the appointment of elders and requires the overseer to hold fast the faithful word. These instructions address the office itself. Deborah's national judicial position, Miriam's prophetic ministry, Huldah's authoritative revelations, Anna's testimony, and the prophetic gifts recorded in Acts do not cancel them. Neither does the fact that those women possessed genuine ministries make the pastoral qualifications unreasonable. **The church has no authority to convert a historical example into an exception that the apostle never authorized. A woman may be a faithful servant of God without being a bishop, just as a man may be a faithful servant without meeting the qualifications to become one.**

Acts 20:17–28 connects elders with overseers responsible for feeding the church of God, while First Peter 5:1–4 commands elders to feed the flock and exercise oversight without becoming lords over God's heritage. That responsibility is serious, accountable, and subject to the Chief Shepherd. It is not a prize awarded for religious popularity. Nor does male qualification excuse men who lack godly character, sound doctrine, or spiritual maturity. A disqualified man cannot hide behind the fact that Deborah was a woman any more than a person advocating women pastors can erase Paul's qualifications by celebrating Deborah's accomplishments. The church needs faithful men and women serving within the responsibilities Scripture establishes. Titus 2:3–5 expressly commands older women to teach what is good, and Acts 18:26 records Priscilla participating with Aquila in explaining the way of God more perfectly. **A faithful Christian woman does not need to occupy an unauthorized office to accomplish authorized work. The Lord's vineyard contains more labour than any pulpit could ever accommodate.**

Conclusion — Honour the Women God Used Without Inventing Offices He Never Gave Them

The record of Deborah, Miriam, Huldah, and Anna establishes beyond legitimate dispute that God has used women in significant spiritual responsibilities throughout biblical history. Deborah exercised judgment over Israel and delivered divine instruction to Barak. Miriam participated prominently in Israel's deliverance and praise. Huldah delivered the word of the LORD to representatives of Judah's king. Anna publicly testified concerning the Redeemer. Acts 2 announced prophetic activity involving sons and daughters, and Acts 21 records women who actually prophesied. These facts belong to Scripture and must be received without embarrassment. They correct the foolish notion that women are incapable of understanding divine truth or that God never permits them to communicate His word to men. **The Bible honours these women without needing our permission, and no defender of biblical authority has the right to diminish what God chose to record.**

But the recognition of those ministries does not establish that every spiritual office belongs equally to every believer. Deborah's judicial authority was exercised within Israel's period of judges. Miriam ministered during the Exodus and wilderness history. Huldah prophesied under Judah's monarchy and the Mosaic covenant. Anna testified during the earthly infancy of Jesus Christ, before His completed redemptive work. Joel's prophecy concerns the outpouring of God's Spirit and events associated with the last days. The New Testament pastoral office, however, is specifically addressed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, with related instructions concerning elders, bishops, teaching, and oversight. Those passages must govern their own subject. **If somebody wants to prove that Deborah was a judge, Judges 4 settles the matter. If somebody wants to prove that Huldah was a prophetess, 2 Kings 22 settles that matter. But if somebody wants to establish the qualifications for a bishop, the answer is not hiding beneath Deborah's palm tree. It is written plainly in Timothy and Titus.**

The final responsibility is to obey the whole counsel of God rather than selecting whichever passages best support a preferred religious arrangement. Let us honour Deborah without renaming her office, appreciate Miriam without ignoring the lesson of Numbers 12, believe Huldah's prophetic testimony without inventing a pastoral appointment, and rejoice over Anna's witness without pretending she governed a New Testament congregation. Let Christian women continue proclaiming Jesus Christ, teaching sound doctrine within biblical settings, encouraging believers, instructing their families, and faithfully labouring in the Lord's service. Let qualified men bear the responsibilities of pastoral oversight with humility, doctrinal integrity, and accountability before Jesus Christ. And let every believer remember that religious authority belongs to God, not to the person who discovers the most convenient interpretation. **Deborah did not need to become a pastor to be a great woman of faith. Huldah did not need a bishop's title to deliver the word of the LORD. Anna did not need a church office to speak of the Redeemer. God used them mightily in the ministries He gave them, and the New Testament still means exactly what it says concerning the office of a bishop. The truth is not established by choosing between those passages. It is established by believing both.**

6 of 10 — Women Pastors and Biblical Authority — Priscilla Helped Instruct Apollos, but Nobody Appointed Her Pastor

Key Passage: Acts 18:24–28; Romans 16:1–16; Philippians 4:2–3 (KJV)

There is a remarkable little incident in Acts 18 that has caused more than a few modern religious interpreters to develop an extraordinary talent for turning one thing into something entirely different. A man named Apollos, mighty in the Scriptures and fervent in spirit, was preaching what he understood concerning the Lord. A Christian husband and wife named Aquila and Priscilla heard him, recognized that his understanding needed further instruction, and took him aside to explain the way of God more perfectly. Acts 18:26 declares, "And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." There is the historical record. A woman participated with her husband in instructing a man concerning biblical truth. Nobody needs to deny it, diminish it, or manufacture excuses for it. But somewhere between that private instruction and the modern movement for women pastors, somebody apparently decided that **helping a man understand his Bible and occupying the governing office of a New Testament church must be the same thing.** The Holy Ghost never made that declaration. The distinction is ours to recognize, not His to apologize for.

The same difficulty appears throughout Romans 16, where the apostle Paul commends an impressive collection of faithful Christian women. Phebe served the church at Cenchrea and helped many believers. Priscilla laboured alongside Aquila and risked her own neck for Paul's life. Mary bestowed much labour upon the saints. Tryphena and Tryphosa laboured in the Lord. Persis laboured much in the Lord. Junia received an extraordinary commendation alongside Andronicus. These women were not religious decorations standing around while the men accomplished everything. They were active participants in the advancement of the gospel, and Paul did not hesitate to recognize their service. Yet the passage does not identify these women as bishops over congregations. It does not establish their qualifications for pastoral oversight or appoint them to the office described in 1 Timothy 3. **The modern assumption that a woman must possess a pastor's title before her ministry can be considered important is not a compliment to Christian women. It is an insult to the very forms of service Scripture praises.**

This study will therefore examine what these women actually did, what the Scriptures commend, and what the Scriptures do not establish concerning their offices. We will not approach the subject with the foolish assumption that Christian women are incapable of understanding sound doctrine, correcting error, strengthening churches, or contributing substantially to the work of Jesus Christ. Neither will we assume that every woman who performs an important ministry has secretly become a pastor, bishop, elder, or apostle. The New Testament recognizes differences between evangelistic work, personal instruction, charitable service, hospitality, prophetic activity, and the authoritative oversight of a local congregation. Those differences matter. **A Christian woman can faithfully serve the Lord**

without occupying the pastoral office, and a Christian man can occupy the pastoral office without faithfully serving the Lord. The first truth should encourage every godly woman; the second should frighten every careless man who mistakes possession of a religious title for evidence of divine approval.

1. Aquila and Priscilla Were Fellow Labourers, Not Spectators in the Work of God

Acts 18:1–3 introduces Aquila and Priscilla during Paul's ministry at Corinth. Aquila was a Jew born in Pontus who had recently come from Italy with his wife because Claudius had commanded the Jews to depart from Rome. Paul came unto them and remained with them because they shared the same occupation. Verse 3 explains, "For by their occupation they were tentmakers." Here was a husband and wife earning their living through ordinary labour while becoming valuable participants in the advancing gospel. They were not introduced as famous religious celebrities, professionally trained public personalities, or officers occupying impressive institutional positions. They worked with their hands, maintained their household, and assisted the ministry of the apostle Paul. That ought to encourage Christians who imagine they cannot accomplish anything significant unless somebody first supplies a religious title. **Paul did not discover this faithful couple while examining a directory of ordained celebrities. He found them making tents, and the Lord used them to help build something considerably more important than a temporary shelter.**

The narrative continues in Acts 18:18–19, where Paul departed Corinth and travelled with Priscilla and Aquila toward Syria, coming to Ephesus. The couple remained associated with the developing work of the gospel, and their usefulness would soon become apparent through the instruction given to Apollos. Later, Romans 16:3–4 records Paul's remarkable greeting: "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks." Paul adds that not only he but also all the churches of the Gentiles gave thanks for them. That is no insignificant commendation. The apostle acknowledged their personal sacrifice, their contribution to his ministry, and the gratitude owed them by multiple congregations. Priscilla was not simply mentioned because her husband happened to be involved. Both were identified as Paul's helpers, and both shared in the danger associated with their service. **It takes a remarkable amount of religious blindness to read that a woman risked her neck for the apostle Paul and then announce that women have no important work to perform for Jesus Christ.**

Romans 16:5 adds another revealing instruction: "Likewise greet the church that is in their house." A congregation met in the home associated with this faithful couple. Their hospitality provided a place where believers assembled, heard the word of God, and enjoyed Christian fellowship. But notice what the statement does not say. It does not appoint Priscilla pastor because the gathering took place in her home, nor does it declare

Aquila bishop merely because he lived there. Hosting a congregation and overseeing a congregation are distinguishable responsibilities. The use of a house for Christian assembly does not automatically confer pastoral office upon the homeowner. We may recognize that Priscilla and Aquila were valuable fellow labourers without inserting an appointment that the passage never records. **Owning the building where Christians gather does not automatically make somebody their shepherd. If it did, every landlord renting property to a congregation would need an immediate examination under 1 Timothy 3.**

2. Apollos Was Mighty in the Scriptures, but He Still Needed More Instruction

Acts 18:24 introduces Apollos as "a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures." Verse 25 adds that he had been instructed in the way of the Lord and was fervent in spirit, speaking and teaching diligently the things of the Lord, "knowing only the baptism of John." These descriptions establish both his strengths and his limitation. He possessed knowledge, eloquence, zeal, and substantial acquaintance with the Scriptures, but his understanding was incomplete. Being an impressive speaker does not guarantee that every doctrine he teaches is correct. A man may handle portions of Scripture effectively while still needing instruction concerning matters he has not yet understood. **A powerful voice, an energetic delivery, and an impressive command of religious language may fill a room with listeners, but none of those accomplishments can supply information the preacher does not possess.** Apollos needed further instruction, and God provided it through an ordinary Christian couple.

Verse 26 records that Aquila and Priscilla heard Apollos speaking boldly in the synagogue, took him unto them, and "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." The wording deserves careful attention. They did not take possession of the synagogue, install Priscilla as its pastor, or announce that Apollos must submit to their permanent ecclesiastical government. They took him unto themselves and explained the truth more completely. The instruction was purposeful, biblical, and effective. Both husband and wife are included in the account, and Scripture does not separate their contributions into competing levels of usefulness. This is a direct contradiction of the claim that a Christian woman may never help a man understand Scripture. Yet it is not evidence that the pastoral qualifications established elsewhere have been abolished. **Priscilla corrected a deficiency in Apollos's understanding without requiring an ordination ceremony, a bishop's chair, or a denominational resolution declaring her the first female pastor of Ephesus.**

What followed demonstrates the value of that instruction. Acts 18:27 records that when Apollos desired to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote to the disciples to receive him.

Verse 28 declares, "For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ." Notice the progression. A man who already possessed substantial biblical knowledge received additional instruction and subsequently became an even more effective witness concerning Jesus Christ. The passage commends the Scriptures, the willingness to learn, and the usefulness of faithful believers who communicate truth. There is also a rebuke here for men who imagine they are too important to receive correction from a woman. If Apollos could benefit from the biblical understanding of Priscilla and Aquila, a modern preacher ought not imagine that possessing a microphone makes him incapable of learning from a knowledgeable sister in Christ. **The man who refuses sound instruction because it comes from a woman has confused masculine pride with biblical authority. Apollos had enough sense to learn before he went forward to teach.**

3. Phebe Was a Servant and a Succourer: Romans 16 Praises Her Without Calling Her Bishop

Romans 16:1 begins with an unmistakable commendation: "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea." Verse 2 continues by instructing believers to receive her in the Lord as becometh saints and assist her in whatever business she required, "for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also." The apostle identifies Phebe as a sister in Christ, a servant of a particular congregation, and a woman who had rendered substantial assistance to numerous believers, including Paul himself. There is nothing dismissive about his language. He places his personal commendation behind her and expects the Roman believers to receive her properly. Her work mattered, her reputation was honourable, and her assistance deserved recognition. **Paul did not regard a faithful Christian woman as an ecclesiastical inconvenience. He regarded Phebe as somebody whose service had proved valuable enough to merit apostolic commendation.**

The controversy arises when the expression "servant of the church" is treated as though it automatically establishes that Phebe occupied an ordained office equivalent to pastoral oversight. The King James Bible calls her a servant, and the immediate passage explains the practical assistance she had rendered. Some understand the description as indicating recognized service associated with the church; others infer an official appointment. But Romans 16:1–2 does not explicitly name her a bishop, elder, or pastor. Even establishing that a person occupied a recognized office of service would not establish that the person held the governing teaching office described in 1 Timothy 3. Those are different questions. First Timothy 3 itself distinguishes bishops and deacons, demonstrating that the New Testament does not treat every form of church service as pastoral oversight. **A servant is**

not automatically a shepherd, and the fact that somebody has rendered tremendous assistance does not require us to manufacture an entirely different office before we can appreciate the work.

The word "succourer" in Romans 16:2 points toward the assistance Phebe provided. Paul says she had helped many people, including himself. That is a remarkable testimony, particularly when we consider the difficulties associated with early Christian ministry: travel, opposition, persecution, material needs, and the demands of establishing congregations across the Roman world. Scripture does not identify every particular act Phebe performed, so we should not invent an elaborate biography describing work the passage never records. But it tells us enough to establish her faithfulness. She was known for helping others, and the apostle expected believers to respond with similar assistance toward her. The application is plain. The work of supporting gospel ministry is not spiritually inferior merely because it does not involve occupying the pulpit. **A church may have a preacher who receives public applause, but the quiet servant helping that ministry survive may possess a record of faithfulness that will astonish people when the Lord examines His servants.**

4. Junia, Mary, Tryphena, and Persis: Paul Remembered the Labourers Religion Often Overlooks

Romans 16:7 introduces Andronicus and Junia with an extraordinary commendation: "Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me." The verse credits these individuals with a close association to Paul, suffering imprisonment, distinction in relation to the apostles, and conversion before his own. Junia is commonly understood to be a woman, and the passage deserves consideration in any serious discussion of women serving in the early church. But the expression "of note among the apostles" does not, by itself, settle every question concerning whether the individuals were counted among apostles or were notably regarded by them. The wording has been interpreted in more than one way. We ought not manufacture certainty where the particular relationship is not explicitly explained. **What Scripture unmistakably establishes is that these individuals were honoured workers who had suffered for Christ. It does not identify Junia as pastor over a congregation.**

Even if somebody argues that Junia should be counted among those described as apostles, another distinction immediately becomes necessary. The New Testament does not use every ministry designation as an interchangeable synonym for bishop. Ephesians 4:11 distinguishes apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. First Corinthians 12:28 likewise distinguishes appointments within the body of Christ. The foundational

apostolic ministry associated with the establishment of the early church is not identical to the continuing qualifications given for local overseers. Therefore, an argument concerning Junia's relationship to the apostles cannot simply jump over those distinctions and arrive at the conclusion that 1 Timothy 3 no longer governs pastoral appointments. That would require proving considerably more than Romans 16:7 actually states. **The fact that a woman receives an honourable commendation involving apostles does not magically insert the word "bishop" into a passage where the Holy Ghost did not put it. Biblical interpretation is supposed to follow the text, not supply the missing conclusion demanded by a favourite argument.**

Romans 16 continues with an impressive record of women's service. Verse 6 declares, "Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us." Verse 12 commands, "Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord," and then honours Persis, "which laboured much in the Lord." Paul also greets the mother of Rufus with personal affection in verse 13 and includes other women among the saints in his closing salutations. Notice the repeated emphasis upon labour. These women were not praised for religious titles, elaborate ceremonies, or institutional prestige. They were remembered because they worked. Their sacrifices had become known to the apostle, and he considered those contributions worthy of inclusion in his inspired letter. **Some people seem to imagine the early church consisted of men doing the work while women supplied occasional refreshments. Paul apparently never received that memo. He kept naming women whose labour mattered to the advancement of the gospel.**

5. Lydia Opened Her House, and Euodias and Syntyche Laboured in the Gospel

Acts 16:13–15 introduces Lydia during Paul's ministry at Philippi. On the sabbath, Paul and his companions went outside the city to a riverside where prayer was customarily made, and they spoke to the women gathered there. Verse 14 identifies Lydia as "a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God." As she listened, the Lord opened her heart to attend unto the things spoken by Paul. Verse 15 records her baptism and that of her household, followed by her invitation for the missionaries to remain in her house. Lydia's response demonstrated hospitality, conviction, and willingness to associate herself with the servants of Jesus Christ. Her home became a place of welcome for the ministry. **The Lord opened Lydia's heart, and Lydia opened her house. Neither action required somebody to invent a pastoral title before recognizing that God was doing something important through her.**

The significance of her hospitality becomes clearer near the end of the chapter. After Paul and Silas were imprisoned, the prison doors were opened, the keeper of the prison believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and the missionaries were eventually released. Acts

16:40 states that they entered into the house of Lydia, saw the brethren, comforted them, and departed. Her house remained associated with the believers at Philippi. But once again, the passage does not identify Lydia as the pastor of that gathering. Hosting believers, providing lodging, and offering a place of fellowship are valuable ministries without necessarily constituting authoritative oversight. Acts 12:12 similarly records believers gathered for prayer in the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark. The ownership or use of a home does not automatically establish its owner as the congregation's bishop. **If providing a meeting place were sufficient to confer pastoral office, church real-estate records would become more important than the qualifications written in Timothy. Fortunately, God did not establish church government through property ownership.**

Philippians 4:2–3 introduces two additional women whose service Paul remembered. He beseeches Euodias and Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord, then asks his true yokefellow to help "those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life." Notice both the commendation and the correction. These women had genuinely laboured with Paul in the gospel, yet they also needed to resolve a disagreement affecting their fellowship. The apostle did not dismiss their previous work because they required correction, nor did he ignore the problem merely because they had accomplished important things. Christian labourers remain accountable for their conduct. **Serving Christ faithfully does not make anybody immune to correction, and needing correction does not erase every good work previously performed. Paul could recognize their labour and confront their disagreement without confusing either issue with pastoral ordination.**

6. Dorcas Was Full of Good Works: A Ministry Measured by the Lives She Helped

Acts 9:36 introduces another faithful woman: "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." The Holy Ghost identifies her as a disciple and immediately records the character of her service. She was full of good works and charitable deeds. The passage does not begin by announcing her office, educational credentials, public speaking ability, or institutional influence. It describes what she did for others. When Dorcas became sick and died, the disciples sent for Peter. The widows stood by him weeping and showing the coats and garments Dorcas had made while she was with them. Her ministry had left tangible evidence in the lives of those she helped. **There are people who possess enormous religious platforms and leave little behind except promotional material. Dorcas left garments on the backs of widows who knew exactly what her kindness had meant.**

Peter entered the upper chamber, put the mourners outside, knelt down, and prayed. He then turned toward the body and said, "Tabitha, arise." Acts 9:40 records that she opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. He presented her alive to the saints and widows, and verse 42 declares that the event became known throughout Joppa, with many believing in the Lord. The miracle was performed through Peter's ministry, but the account surrounds it with testimony concerning Dorcas's faithful service. Her life mattered to the congregation, and her restoration brought considerable joy. Yet nothing in the passage identifies Dorcas as the bishop of Joppa. Her ministry was charitable service flowing from genuine Christian discipleship. **The widows were not standing around displaying Dorcas's ordination certificate. They were holding garments she had made. Sometimes the most convincing evidence of Christian service is not hanging on an office wall; it is being worn by somebody who had a need.**

This is precisely where the modern obsession with religious titles becomes so destructive. The body of Christ contains numerous forms of service, and the Lord does not measure every contribution by its proximity to the pulpit. First Corinthians 12:18 declares, "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." Verse 22 adds that members appearing more feeble are necessary. The body needs instruction, prayer, evangelism, encouragement, hospitality, assistance, and countless expressions of faithful obedience. Dorcas served through good works. Lydia offered hospitality. Phebe assisted believers. Priscilla helped communicate biblical truth. Their ministries differed, but none was spiritually worthless. Ephesians 2:10 declares that believers are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. **The Lord never required every member of the body to become its mouth before that member could be useful. A hand that serves faithfully is not inferior because it does not occupy the pulpit.**

7. Faithful Women Can Teach, Witness, and Serve Without Occupying the Pastoral Office

The governing distinction must now be established through the passages addressing the actual office of pastor. First Timothy 2:12 declares, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Paul then grounds his instruction in the formation of Adam and Eve. The following chapter begins, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work," and proceeds to establish qualifications including "the husband of one wife," moral integrity, proper household government, maturity, and aptitude for teaching. Titus 1:5–9 supplies corresponding qualifications for elders and bishops. These passages specifically address the governing teaching office within the congregation. They must not be dismissed because Scripture elsewhere records women exercising other

legitimate ministries. **The question is not whether Priscilla could explain Scripture to Apollos. Acts says she did. The question is whether that event appointed her to the pastoral office. Acts never says that it did.**

At the same time, these restrictions must not be expanded into a prohibition against every form of instruction by Christian women. Titus 2:3–5 expressly commands older women to be "teachers of good things" and identifies the younger women they are to instruct. Second Timothy 1:5 commends the faith of Lois and Eunice, while 2 Timothy 3:15 reminds Timothy of his knowledge of the holy Scriptures from childhood. Acts 18 records Priscilla participating in instruction given to Apollos. Romans 16 honours women whose labour advanced the gospel. These passages establish that faithful women possess genuine responsibilities involving biblical knowledge, instruction, service, and testimony. A woman who shares the gospel with a lost neighbour does not thereby assume oversight of a congregation. A woman who teaches her children Scripture is not usurping the office of bishop. **The same Holy Ghost who gave the qualifications for a pastor also recorded these women's ministries. The interpreter has no authority to erase either side of the testimony.**

The responsibility of qualified male leadership must also be taken seriously. First Peter 5:2–3 commands elders to feed the flock of God and exercise oversight willingly, not for filthy lucre, and not as lords over God's heritage. Acts 20:28 identifies the flock as the church of God, purchased with His own blood. A man who occupies the pastoral office but neglects sound doctrine, mistreats believers, pursues personal wealth, or refuses correction has no right to congratulate himself merely because he satisfies a gender-related qualification. The office requires considerably more. Meanwhile, a faithful Christian woman should never be discouraged from serving Christ simply because she does not occupy that office. **A disqualified man does not become a faithful shepherd because he is male, and a faithful woman does not become a useless Christian because she is not a pastor. God judges obedience according to the responsibilities He actually gives, not according to the titles religious people prefer.**

Conclusion — The Bible Honoured These Women for Their Work, Not for Offices Invented Afterward

The women examined in this study were genuine participants in the advancement of the gospel. Priscilla laboured with Aquila, helped Paul, risked her life, and participated in instructing Apollos. Phebe served the church at Cenchrea and assisted many believers. Junia received an honourable commendation alongside Andronicus. Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis were remembered for their labour. Lydia demonstrated hospitality and opened her home to the servants of Christ. Euodias and Syntyche worked alongside Paul in

the gospel. Dorcas performed charitable deeds that brought tangible assistance to widows. These women did not receive their commendations because somebody centuries later decided to decorate their names with pastoral titles. They received recognition because their work was real. **God recorded their faithfulness in the Scriptures, and that honour exceeds anything a modern institution could manufacture through an ordination ceremony.**

The distinction between ministry and office must therefore remain intact. The New Testament does not teach that every believer who explains Scripture becomes a bishop, that every Christian who hosts an assembly becomes its pastor, or that every person who labours in the gospel possesses governing authority over a congregation. Scripture establishes particular responsibilities and qualifications for overseers while recognizing numerous other forms of faithful service. The same principle protects Christian women from unnecessary restrictions and protects the church from unauthorized appointments. A woman may possess excellent biblical understanding without occupying pastoral government, just as a man may possess considerable preaching ability without satisfying the qualifications for the office. **The church does not need fewer faithful women doing the work of Christ. It needs fewer religious arguments that confuse doing the work with possessing a title. The Lord never instructed His people to manufacture offices before they could appreciate obedience.**

Finally, let every Christian remember that Jesus Christ purchased His church with His own blood and remains the Chief Shepherd of His people. The gospel of His death, burial, and resurrection must be proclaimed faithfully, and those who have trusted Him are called to serve according to His word. Let qualified pastors feed and protect the flock. Let Christian women teach where Scripture commands, witness where opportunity is given, strengthen families, encourage believers, assist gospel work, and continue the faithful service demonstrated by the women of the New Testament. Let no man use biblical church order as an excuse to demean women, and let no congregation use women's genuine contributions as an excuse to disregard the qualifications for pastoral office. **Priscilla helped Apollos understand his Bible, but nobody appointed her pastor. Phebe served the church, but Paul did not call her bishop. Lydia opened her house, but hospitality did not become ordination. Dorcas clothed widows, but charity did not become ecclesiastical government. These women were honoured for what God actually called them to do. And what God called them to do was important enough without somebody rewriting the Scriptures to give them a different office.**

7 of 10 — Women Pastors and Biblical Authority — Women Praying and Prophesying: Head Coverings, Spiritual Gifts, and God's Order in the Assembly

Key Passage: 1 Corinthians 11:2–16; 1 Corinthians 12:4–31; 1 Corinthians 14:26–40 (KJV)

There is an interesting problem confronting anybody who attempts to settle the question of women and church authority by grabbing one verse, waving it triumphantly in the air, and pretending the rest of the New Testament has disappeared. First Corinthians 11:5 declares, "But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven." There it stands. The apostle Paul plainly discusses a woman praying or prophesying, and his immediate concern is the manner in which she does so. Yet three chapters later, the same apostle writes, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law" (1 Corinthians 14:34). Now we have two statements from the same inspired writer, addressed to the same congregation, within the same epistle. **The problem is not that Paul forgot what he wrote three chapters earlier. The problem begins when religious interpreters decide that one passage must be sacrificed so their preferred interpretation of the other can survive.** The Holy Ghost is not confused, and the Scriptures do not require a theological demolition crew to make them agree.

Some insist that 1 Corinthians 11 proves women may occupy every teaching and governing office within the church because Paul acknowledges women praying and prophesying. Others insist that 1 Corinthians 14 prohibits every Christian woman from speaking about the Bible under practically any circumstances. Both positions make claims that require considerably more examination than their advocates generally provide. Prayer is not identical to prophecy. Prophecy is not automatically identical to pastoral teaching. Possessing a spiritual gift is not the same thing as occupying a governing office. And maintaining order within a congregation is not the same thing as declaring that Christian women must abandon evangelism, instruction, testimony, and every other form of biblical service. The church has enough genuine problems without manufacturing additional ones through careless interpretation. **A woman does not become a bishop every time she opens her mouth to speak God's truth, and a man does not become a competent Bible teacher merely because he insists that she close hers.**

The proper examination must follow Paul's argument through 1 Corinthians 11, consider the distribution and purpose of spiritual gifts in chapter 12, and then examine his instructions concerning congregational order in chapter 14. We must also consider Acts 21, where Philip's four daughters are explicitly identified as women who prophesied, and

Joel 2, where God promises prophetic activity involving sons and daughters. These passages belong to particular historical and doctrinal settings, and those settings must be respected. The Corinthian church existed during the apostolic period, when genuine revelatory gifts operated among believers and required proper regulation. The qualifications for bishops were also established under apostolic authority. Neither truth cancels the other. **The Bible does not authorize us to turn every prophet into a pastor, every pastor into an apostle, or every Christian woman who faithfully serves the Lord into a candidate for ecclesiastical government. Before anybody starts distributing offices, we had better learn to distinguish what God actually distributed.**

1. The Head of Every Man Is Christ: God's Order Begins With Authority, Not Personal Superiority

First Corinthians 11:2 begins with Paul commending the Corinthians for remembering him and keeping the ordinances as he delivered them. Then verse 3 establishes the foundation for his discussion: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." Notice that Paul begins with relationships involving authority and order rather than personal worth. Christ is the head of every man. The man is identified as the head of the woman. God is identified as the head of Christ. These statements must be examined together. The apostle does not establish male independence from God or authorize men to exercise spiritual authority without accountability. Every man remains subject to Christ. **A man who loudly announces his headship while refusing submission to Jesus Christ has begun his argument by violating the very order he claims to defend. That is an impressive accomplishment in biblical inconsistency.**

Consider the expression "the head of Christ is God." Nobody who believes the deity of Jesus Christ should conclude that the Son is an inferior divine being. John 10:30 declares, "I and my Father are one." Philippians 2:6 describes Christ as being in the form of God and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God. Yet Philippians 2:7–8 also describes His voluntary humiliation, obedience, and death upon the cross. The distinction between divine equality and the order associated with Christ's incarnate mission must be preserved. Paul's argument concerning headship therefore cannot honestly be reduced to the claim that one person possesses greater intrinsic worth than another. Applied to the man and woman, the passage establishes an order without declaring that women are intellectually defective, spiritually inferior, or excluded from the blessings of redemption. **Authority is not a measurement of human value. If it were, every subordinate relationship would become a declaration of inferiority, and Paul's own example involving Christ would expose the absurdity.**

Paul continues in verses 8–9 by returning to Genesis: "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." Here the apostle connects his argument to the creation of Adam and Eve. But before anybody turns those verses into a declaration of masculine independence, read verses 11–12: "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord." Paul adds that as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman, "but all things of God." There is creation order and mutual dependence in the same passage. A man who quotes verse 8 while ignoring verse 12 has not discovered biblical headship. He has discovered selective reading. **Adam was formed first, but every ordinary birth afterward has involved a mother. God arranged the relationship so neither man nor woman could reasonably boast of complete independence from the other.**

2. Covered and Uncovered Heads: The Passage Religion Either Turns Into a Fashion Show or Throws Away

First Corinthians 11:4–6 addresses the outward expression of the order Paul has described. Verse 4 declares, "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head." Verse 5 applies the contrasting instruction to a woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered. Verse 6 continues, "For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered." Notice that Paul is not merely discussing fashionable clothing or offering suggestions about attractive hairstyles. He connects covering, uncovering, honour, shame, prayer, prophecy, and the relationship between men and women. The outward practice communicates something associated with God's established order. **The passage is not a first-century beauty advertisement, and the apostle is not attempting to become Corinth's most influential fashion consultant. He is teaching spiritual order through a visible distinction.**

Verse 10 introduces another statement requiring attention: "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels." The wording connects the woman's head with authority, and Paul gives the angels as part of his reasoning. Scripture does not explain every detail of the angels' relationship to this practice, so we should not construct an elaborate system of invisible angelic supervision and present imagination as revelation. Nevertheless, the reference must not be ignored. Paul's argument extends beyond what the congregation happens to consider fashionable. He has already appealed to creation, and now he mentions the angels. That is hardly the language of an apostle who regards the whole matter as meaningless personal decoration. **Whenever a preacher reaches a difficult expression and announces that it means absolutely nothing today**

because he would rather not discuss it, he has not explained the passage. He has merely placed an inconvenient verse beneath the theological carpet.

Verses 13–15 introduce the relationship between natural hair and covering. Paul asks whether it is comely for a woman to pray unto God uncovered, appeals to the distinction between male and female hair, and declares, "But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering." Some understand this to mean the woman's long hair itself supplies the covering under discussion. Others distinguish the natural covering of hair from an additional covering associated with prayer and prophecy, pointing particularly to verse 6, where being uncovered is distinguished from being shorn. Both readings must account for the complete passage, including verse 16 concerning contentiousness and the custom of the churches. The lasting principle of divinely established order is unmistakable, even where the precise application of the outward covering remains disputed. **A congregation should not turn head coverings into a substitute for holiness, nor should it discard Paul's teaching about authority because somebody has decided the subject is inconvenient.**

3. Every Woman That Prayeth or Prophesieth: The Statement That Must Not Be Erased

Return to 1 Corinthians 11:5 and examine the actual words: "But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head." Paul addresses the conduct of a woman praying or prophesying. He does not introduce the activity by declaring that a woman can never do either thing. His instruction concerns the relationship between the activity and the order symbolized by the covering. This is important because some interpretations of 1 Corinthians 14 are expressed so broadly that they appear to prohibit the very activity Paul discusses in chapter 11. Scripture does not permit us to eliminate one passage merely because another passage raises questions about its setting. The proper response is to distinguish the circumstances and authority involved. **If Paul's words in chapter 11 become meaningless every time somebody quotes chapter 14, we have not compared Scripture with Scripture. We have conducted a theological execution and called the remains an interpretation.**

Prayer and prophecy must also be distinguished. Prayer involves addressing God. Prophecy during the apostolic period included the communication of revelation given through the Spirit of God. First Corinthians 14:3 declares, "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." The chapter also describes revelation and prophecy operating within the assembled congregation under specific restrictions. A woman praying is not automatically exercising pastoral oversight. A woman receiving a genuine prophetic revelation during that period was not automatically appointed bishop over the people who heard it. The authority of authentic prophecy rested upon the divine

revelation communicated, not upon the prophet's assumption of every office within the church. **A messenger may deliver an authoritative message without personally occupying every office associated with the people receiving it. The authority of God's word does not automatically confer the governing authority of a pastor upon its messenger.**

The immediate setting of 1 Corinthians 11 also deserves caution. Although the broader epistle concerns congregational conduct, chapter 11:5 does not explicitly identify every occasion on which the women prayed or prophesied. Verse 17 subsequently introduces Paul's rebuke concerning their coming together, and verse 18 specifically mentions coming together in the church. Therefore, some understand the earlier discussion as involving conduct in the assembly, while others distinguish the occasions of prayer and prophecy from the formal exercise of congregational oversight. The passage itself should not be made to answer questions it does not expressly address. What it establishes beyond doubt is that Paul recognized women praying and prophesying under an order he expected them to honour. **Recognizing that fact does not require ordaining women as pastors, and defending male pastoral leadership does not require pretending chapter 11 was never written. A sound interpretation must have room for everything God actually said.**

4. Philip Had Four Daughters Who Prophesied: Their Spiritual Gift Was Real, but Their Pastoral Appointment Is Missing

Acts 21:8–9 supplies historical confirmation of women exercising prophetic gifts. Luke records that Paul and his companions came to Caesarea and entered the house of "Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven." Then verse 9 declares, "And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy." Notice the precision of the record. Philip is identified as an evangelist, and his daughters are identified as women who prophesied. Their prophetic activity is not presented as an embarrassment requiring explanation or concealment. Neither does Luke identify them as pastors, bishops, or elders. The distinctions are preserved in the account itself. **Philip was an evangelist. His daughters prophesied. Scripture was perfectly capable of identifying both ministries without needing a modern religious committee to announce that every spiritual gift must secretly be a pastoral office.**

The surrounding narrative makes the distinction even more interesting. Acts 21:10–11 records the arrival of a prophet named Agabus, who took Paul's girdle, bound his own hands and feet, and declared what the Holy Ghost had revealed concerning Paul's coming imprisonment. Luke specifically records the prophetic message delivered by Agabus, but he does not tell us the individual contents of the daughters' prophecies. We must therefore resist the temptation to invent their messages, construct an imaginary ministry

organization, or assign them positions the passage never mentions. Their genuine prophetic activity is sufficiently established by verse 9. The historical record gives us all we need to know for the present argument. **The daughters possessed a gift of prophecy. That is a biblical fact. The claim that they governed the church at Caesarea is an addition somebody must supply from somewhere other than the passage.**

The broader purpose of Acts must also be respected. The book records the historical transition from the apostolic proclamation beginning at Jerusalem to the widespread preaching of Jesus Christ among Jews and Gentiles. Miracles, signs, tongues, prophecy, and extraordinary revelations appear during this foundational period. Their presence in the historical record does not establish that every manifestation must continue unchanged throughout the entire Church Age. Neither does it authorize denying what God actually accomplished through those gifts. We can acknowledge genuine apostolic-period prophecy while distinguishing it from the continuing responsibilities of church officers described in Timothy and Titus. **God did not require Philip's daughters to become pastors before permitting them to prophesy, and their possession of a revelatory gift does not give modern claimants permission to manufacture revelations that contradict the completed Scriptures.**

5. Your Sons and Your Daughters Shall Prophesy: Joel's Promise Must Remain in Its Proper Setting

Joel 2:28 declares, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." Verse 29 adds that God would pour out His Spirit upon servants and handmaids. The prophecy explicitly includes daughters and women among those receiving the promised outpouring. Nobody has biblical authority to remove them. But Joel was addressing circumstances involving Israel, the land, Zion, restoration, and the coming day of the LORD. The surrounding context matters. The promise was not originally delivered as an ordination handbook for New Testament congregations. It belonged to a prophetic message concerning God's dealings with His covenant people. **The fact that daughters were promised prophetic activity is undeniable. The assumption that every daughter receiving prophecy must therefore become a bishop is something Joel never wrote.**

Acts 2:16–18 records Peter declaring on the day of Pentecost, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." He then quotes the prophecy concerning the Spirit, sons, daughters, visions, dreams, servants, and handmaidens. The events at Pentecost were thus connected by apostolic testimony to Joel's promise. Yet Peter's quotation also includes the wonders in heaven, signs in the earth, blood, fire, vapour of smoke, and the

darkening of the sun and moon before the great and notable day of the Lord. The entire prophetic picture must not be treated as though every detail was exhausted that morning in Jerusalem. The remaining prophetic elements retain their significance in God's dealings with Israel and the approaching day of the LORD. **Prophecy does not lose its future elements simply because part of its language receives a historical application. God did not authorize an interpreter to cut Joel's prophecy in half and throw the inconvenient portion into the nearest theological wastebasket.**

Furthermore, the promise that daughters would prophesy must not be confused with the qualifications for permanent local church oversight. Prophecy and pastoral government are distinct subjects. First Corinthians 12 identifies different spiritual gifts and operations, while Ephesians 4:11 distinguishes apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The fact that one individual could exercise a genuine gift did not necessarily establish eligibility for every other ministry. Women were included in the prophetic activity recorded during the apostolic period; that is not disputed. But the qualifications for bishops remain written in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. **Joel establishes what God promised concerning prophecy. Acts records what occurred during the apostolic period. Timothy establishes qualifications for church oversight. The Bible becomes confused only when somebody insists that three distinguishable subjects must all mean exactly the same thing.**

6. Let All Things Be Done Unto Edifying: Corinthian Liberty Was Never Permission for Congregational Disorder

First Corinthians 12:4 declares, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." Paul proceeds to distinguish gifts, administrations, and operations while emphasizing that God works through the body according to His own arrangement. Verse 7 states, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." Verse 11 explains that the Spirit distributes these gifts "to every man severally as he will." The purpose was not to create a religious competition in which believers competed for prominence. The gifts were given for the profit of the body. Later, verse 29 asks, "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?" The questions plainly anticipate that not every member possesses the same calling. **The Holy Ghost distributed gifts according to divine wisdom, not according to a congregational popularity contest. Everybody was not appointed to every ministry, regardless of how impressive the individual happened to be.**

First Corinthians 14:26 brings the subject directly into the gathered congregation: "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto

edifying." Paul then regulates the exercise of tongues and prophecy. If there is no interpreter, the tongue-speaker must keep silence in the church. If something is revealed to another prophet sitting by, the first is instructed to hold his peace. Verse 33 declares, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." Notice that silence is commanded in different circumstances for the purpose of maintaining proper order. No legitimate gift authorized uninterrupted self-display. **The Corinthian assembly was not supposed to resemble a religious traffic accident in which everybody claimed the right of way because the Holy Ghost had supposedly handed him the steering wheel.**

Then come verses 34–35, where Paul instructs the women to keep silence in the churches and directs those wishing to learn to ask their husbands at home. The wording is strong and cannot honestly be erased. Yet its place within a chapter regulating congregational speech must be respected alongside chapter 11's discussion of women praying and prophesying. Some understand the restriction particularly in relation to the authoritative judging of prophetic messages mentioned in verse 29; others apply it more broadly to authoritative speaking within the assembled congregation. The immediate passage does not expressly say that the only prohibited speech is judging prophecy, so that explanation must not be presented as though Paul supplied those exact words. Nevertheless, the restriction must be understood without abolishing every legitimate biblical activity performed by Christian women. **The solution is not to make chapter 14 swallow chapter 11, nor to make chapter 11 erase chapter 14. The solution is to recognize that spiritual participation does not automatically confer governing authority.**

7. Genuine Spiritual Gifts Do Not Manufacture Pastoral Offices or Authorize Modern Religious Spectacles

The apostolic church experienced genuine revelatory gifts during a foundational period in which the Lord confirmed His message through appointed witnesses. Second Corinthians 12:12 identifies signs, wonders, and mighty deeds associated with Paul's apostolic ministry. Hebrews 2:3–4 describes God's bearing witness through signs, wonders, divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. First Corinthians 13:8 expressly declares that prophecies would fail, tongues would cease, and knowledge in that revelatory sense would vanish away. The precise timing and explanation of those changes require careful handling of the surrounding passage, but the Scriptures certainly do not teach that every extraordinary gift must remain permanently operative in identical fashion. Today, claims of fresh divine revelation must never be allowed to compete with the written Scriptures. Second Timothy 3:16–17 identifies inspired Scripture as sufficient to furnish the man of God unto all good works. **A preacher who claims a new revelation authorizing what the**

written word forbids is not bringing additional light. He is asking the congregation to exchange God's established authority for his personal announcement.

This becomes especially dangerous when modern religious performances are defended by appealing to the genuine manifestations described in Acts and Corinthians. A person may claim prophecy, demonstrate unusual emotional behaviour, announce visions, or gather large crowds around supposed supernatural experiences. None of those activities establishes that the Holy Ghost is responsible. First John 4:1 commands, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." First Corinthians 14:32 declares, "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." Verse 40 concludes, "Let all things be done decently and in order." These passages do not authorize uncontrolled religious confusion as evidence of spiritual maturity. Genuine revelation could not contradict God, and spiritual gifts were never intended to overthrow His instructions. **The Holy Ghost does not need a circus to prove He is present, and a congregation does not become spiritual merely because the furniture is shaking and everybody has forgotten what the Bible says.**

Finally, the distinction between a spiritual gift and pastoral office returns us to the governing instructions of the New Testament. First Timothy 2:12 restricts authoritative teaching over men, and chapter 3 establishes the qualifications for bishops, describing the overseer as "the husband of one wife" and requiring godly character, household responsibility, maturity, and aptitude for teaching. Titus 1:5–9 reinforces those qualifications. Yet Titus 2:3–5 commands older women to teach what is good, and Acts 18:26 records Priscilla helping Aquila explain the way of God more perfectly to Apollos. Those ministries were legitimate without becoming pastoral appointments. **A woman may possess valuable biblical understanding, faithfully proclaim Jesus Christ, instruct other women, teach her children, and encourage believers without assuming an office Scripture does not assign her. And a man who fails the qualifications for that office cannot repair his deficiency by boasting that he happens to be male.**

Conclusion — The Holy Ghost Is Not Confused About the Order He Established

The first conclusion is that Paul recognized women praying and prophesying while also establishing regulations concerning congregational authority and order. First Corinthians 11 addresses headship, covering, honour, and the conduct of men and women in relation to prayer and prophecy. First Corinthians 12 distinguishes spiritual gifts and their distribution within the body. First Corinthians 14 regulates their exercise during the assembly and specifically addresses the conduct of women within that setting. Acts 21 confirms that Philip's daughters genuinely prophesied, while Joel 2 and Acts 2 establish prophetic promises involving sons and daughters. All these passages belong in the Bible,

and all must be believed. **The Scriptures do not become contradictory because they describe different ministries, circumstances, and responsibilities. They become contradictory only when somebody insists that every form of spiritual speech must be identical to the governing office of a pastor.**

The second conclusion concerns the responsibility of Christian men and women to honour God's order without inventing restrictions He never commanded. Men cannot appeal to headship while refusing submission to Christ. They cannot demand order while displaying pride, incompetence, or spiritual carelessness. Women cannot use genuine biblical examples of prayer, prophecy, or instruction to eliminate the qualifications governing the pastoral office. But neither may men use those qualifications to discourage faithful women from exercising the ministries Scripture plainly recognizes. The believer's worth is established through Jesus Christ, not through ecclesiastical prominence. Galatians 3:28 declares that believers are one in Christ Jesus, while First Corinthians 12 establishes that members of the same body possess differing responsibilities. **Equality in salvation does not require sameness of office, and distinction in office does not establish inferiority in salvation. The church needs both truths, because God gave both truths.**

Finally, we must remember whose church this is. Jesus Christ purchased the church with His own blood, and the Holy Ghost supplied instructions concerning its doctrine, worship, conduct, and leadership. No man possesses authority to rewrite those instructions, and no woman needs an unauthorized title to become useful to the Lord. Genuine spiritual gifts were given according to God's will, not according to human ambition. The apostolic record must be accepted as history, the prophetic Scriptures must be understood in their proper settings, and the qualifications for pastoral oversight must remain where God placed them. Let Christian women pray, study, witness, teach within their biblical responsibilities, encourage believers, and serve Jesus Christ faithfully. Let qualified men exercise pastoral oversight with humility, sound doctrine, and accountability before the Chief Shepherd. And let every congregation remember that religious excitement is no substitute for scriptural obedience. **If your interpretation of First Corinthians 14 cannot survive First Corinthians 11, something is wrong with your interpretation. If your interpretation of First Corinthians 11 requires erasing First Timothy 3, something is wrong with your interpretation. The Holy Ghost wrote all three chapters. He did not contradict Himself, He did not forget His own instructions, and He certainly does not need modern religion to correct His work. Open the Book, compare the Scriptures, respect the distinctions, and let God have the final word.**

8 of 10 — Women Pastors and Biblical Authority — Let Your Women Keep Silence in the Churches: The Command Nobody Wants to Read in Its Context

Key Passage: 1 Corinthians 14:26–40 (KJV)

There are certain verses in the King James Bible that modern religion would apparently prefer to have printed in disappearing ink. First Corinthians 14:34–35 is certainly among them. The apostle Paul writes, "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 any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." There it stands, without apology, qualification by popular vote, or permission from the latest denominational committee. The command is genuine, the language is strong, and the apostolic authority behind it cannot be dismissed merely because contemporary church arrangements find it inconvenient. But there is another problem. Some men have taken those words and stretched them so far beyond their setting that a Christian woman supposedly cannot sing a hymn, testify concerning Jesus Christ, explain salvation to a sinner, or ask a legitimate biblical question without violating the Scriptures. **One crowd wants to erase Paul's command. Another wants to enlarge it until it forbids things Paul never prohibited. Both need to return to the chapter and read what the Holy Ghost actually wrote.**

The controversy becomes especially revealing when we examine the surrounding passage. First Corinthians 14 is not a random collection of disconnected restrictions against women. Paul is regulating the exercise of spiritual gifts within the assembled congregation. He addresses speaking in tongues, interpretation, prophecy, revelation, orderly participation, and the responsibility to edify the church. He commands a tongue-speaker without an interpreter to keep silence. He instructs a prophet to hold his peace when another receives revelation. Then he addresses women and silence within the assembly. These instructions occur within the same discussion, but they do not necessarily prohibit precisely the same activity. The identity of the person, the kind of speech, and the circumstances all matter. **The word "silence" does not magically eliminate context. A preacher who ignores the surrounding thirty verses while shouting about two of them is not demonstrating superior reverence for Scripture. He is demonstrating how loud a man can become while refusing to read.**

The difficulty becomes even more apparent when First Corinthians 11:5 is placed alongside chapter 14. There Paul refers to a woman praying or prophesying and addresses the covering of her head. Acts 21:9 records that Philip had four daughters who prophesied. Titus 2:3–5 commands older women to teach what is good. Acts 18:26 records Priscilla participating with Aquila in explaining the way of God more perfectly to Apollos. These

passages cannot be discarded to preserve an exaggerated interpretation of silence. Neither can they be used to abolish Paul's restrictions concerning authoritative teaching and church government. The Scriptures must be compared according to their actual subjects. **God did not inspire First Corinthians 11 on Monday, forget what He said, and change His mind by First Corinthians 14. The contradiction exists only when somebody demands that every kind of speaking must mean the same thing in every setting.**

1. When Ye Come Together: Paul Was Regulating the Assembly, Not Every Conversation in a Christian's Life

First Corinthians 14:26 establishes the immediate setting: "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying." Notice the expression "when ye come together." Paul is addressing the gathered congregation, where various believers were exercising gifts and communicating spiritual truth. The problem was not an absence of religious activity. The Corinthians apparently had plenty of that. Their difficulty concerned the orderly exercise of those activities for the benefit of the church. Some had tongues, others revelations, others doctrines, and still others interpretations. Yet the apostle did not congratulate them merely because everybody possessed something to contribute. He established a governing principle: everything must be done unto edifying. **A congregation can have enough religious activity to exhaust a small army and still accomplish remarkably little spiritual good if everybody is determined to be heard and nobody is concerned about obedience.**

The wider epistle confirms that congregational disorder was not limited to the exercise of spiritual gifts. In First Corinthians 11:17–22, Paul rebuked their conduct when they came together, including serious abuses surrounding the Lord's supper. First Corinthians 3 exposed divisions and carnality. Chapter 5 confronted tolerated fornication. Chapter 6 addressed lawsuits among believers. By the time we reach chapter 14, the congregation has already demonstrated an alarming ability to turn privileges into opportunities for disorder. The apostle is therefore correcting a church whose enthusiasm repeatedly outran its obedience. His instructions concerning tongues, prophecy, and silence must be understood within that corrective purpose. The subject is not whether Christians should communicate truth in ordinary life; it is how the gathered assembly must function under divine authority. **Corinth had spiritual gifts, impressive personalities, and plenty of activity. What it desperately needed was the discipline to let God's instructions govern the performance.**

The closing command in verse 40 confirms the chapter's central concern: "Let all things be done decently and in order." That statement does not appear as an accidental afterthought.

It summarizes the apostle's treatment of orderly congregational participation. The same chapter declares that spiritual manifestations must edify, that speech must be intelligible, that speakers must exercise restraint, and that God is not the author of confusion. Consequently, the instruction concerning women must be understood within this larger framework. A command governing conduct during an assembly cannot automatically be converted into a universal prohibition against a woman's speech everywhere else. Nor does the concern for order permit the congregation to ignore an explicit restriction. **The church is not a religious free-for-all where everybody does whatever seems spiritual, and it is not a prison where Scripture is stretched into regulations God never established. Biblical order requires obeying the actual commandments in their actual setting.**

2. Let Him Keep Silence: The Tongue-Speaker Without an Interpreter Was Ordered to Stop

First Corinthians 14:27 gives precise instructions concerning tongues: "If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret." The apostle limits the number of speakers, requires orderly participation, and insists upon interpretation. He does not permit the entire congregation to erupt into simultaneous unintelligible speech while everybody announces that the confusion proves the presence of the Holy Ghost. The purpose of the gift within the assembly was subject to intelligibility and edification. Earlier, verse 9 asks how anyone can know what is spoken unless words are easy to understand. The instruction is plain: communication that cannot be understood cannot provide the doctrinal benefit Paul requires. **A man may become tremendously excited about hearing himself speak, but the congregation is not edified merely because his lungs are functioning and his neighbours cannot understand a word he says.**

Verse 28 establishes the consequence when no interpreter is present: "But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God." There is our first explicit command concerning silence in this immediate sequence. It addresses a person otherwise permitted to exercise a particular gift. The prohibition is conditional. Without interpretation, he must remain silent in the assembly concerning that exercise of tongues. But does this mean the individual may never sing, pray intelligibly, testify, or communicate biblical truth again? Certainly not. The command restricts a particular activity under particular circumstances. The speaker remains a believer, but his freedom to exercise a gift publicly has been limited by apostolic instruction. **Even a genuine spiritual gift did not give its possessor permission to ignore order. If the Holy Ghost commanded restraint, disobedience could not become spiritual merely because the disobedient person claimed to be inspired.**

This restriction exposes a weakness in many modern arguments concerning church liberty. People frequently assume that possessing a spiritual gift automatically grants unrestricted permission to exercise it whenever, wherever, and however they please. Paul teaches the opposite. The gift does not govern the congregation; God's word governs the use of the gift. First Corinthians 12:11 states that the Spirit distributes gifts according to His will, while chapter 14 establishes regulations concerning their operation. Divine origin and orderly exercise belong together. A person could possess a legitimate gift and nevertheless be commanded to remain silent under specified circumstances. That principle prepares us to understand the following restrictions without inventing contradictions. **Spiritual usefulness does not abolish spiritual government. The man who claims that God gave him a gift and therefore nobody may regulate its exercise needs to meet the apostle Paul before he begins distributing invitations to his religious performance.**

3. Let the First Hold His Peace: Even Prophets Had to Yield to God's Order

First Corinthians 14:29 continues, "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge." Here Paul turns from tongues to prophecy and establishes another orderly arrangement. Prophetic speech was not to produce a crowd of competing voices. A limited number would speak, and the others would judge. This instruction is important because it demonstrates that claims of revelation were not to be accepted without examination. The apostolic congregation was not commanded to surrender discernment whenever somebody claimed spiritual inspiration. The message had to be weighed within the order God established. That is a necessary warning against any religious movement in which a supposedly anointed personality declares himself beyond correction. **A man who announces that his revelations must never be questioned has already departed from the instructions governing the very gift he claims to possess. The Holy Ghost was not afraid of biblical examination; religious pretenders usually are.**

Verse 30 introduces another restriction: "If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace." Notice the command. A prophet who was speaking had to yield when another received revelation. Verse 31 explains that they could prophesy one by one, "that all may learn, and all may be comforted." The objective was the congregation's instruction and edification, not the promotion of an individual speaker. A prophet could not monopolize the assembly merely because he possessed a genuine gift. The phrase "hold his peace" expresses the required restraint, just as verse 28 commands the tongue-speaker to keep silence. These are different circumstances involving distinct activities, but both demonstrate the same principle: spiritual communication must submit to apostolic regulation. **The prophet was not permitted to turn divine revelation into a personal**

speaking marathon. The congregation belonged to God, not to the man who happened to be talking.

Verse 32 declares, "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." This statement destroys the excuse that someone exercising a genuine gift necessarily loses all control over his conduct. The Corinthians could not justify disorder by claiming that the Spirit had overwhelmed their ability to obey the apostle. Verse 33 supplies the reason: "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." That principle remains essential when evaluating claims of supernatural activity. Shouting, uncontrolled behaviour, competing revelations, and disorder do not become evidence of divine approval merely because they occur inside a religious gathering. **The Holy Ghost does not contradict Himself by inspiring a command for order and then supposedly requiring somebody to violate that command as proof of spiritual power. A man who cannot distinguish revelation from commotion should begin by learning the difference between a church assembly and a stampede.**

4. Let Your Women Keep Silence: The Restriction Must Be Read Within the Same Discussion

We now reach First Corinthians 14:34: "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." The wording is strong, and no honest examination should pretend otherwise. Paul addresses women within the gathered churches and establishes a restriction upon their speaking. The reference to obedience connects the command with divinely established order, not merely with the practical inconvenience of too many people talking simultaneously. The surrounding discussion concerns authoritative religious communication, prophecy, interpretation, and the proper conduct of an assembly. The restriction must be taken seriously in that context. **The apostle did not write a polite request inviting the Corinthians to consider silence whenever the congregation found it agreeable. He gave an instruction, and modern discomfort does not possess the authority to delete it.**

But what precise kind of speaking does Paul prohibit? The immediate context includes the judging of prophetic messages in verse 29, leading to the understanding that Paul's restriction particularly concerns women's participation in authoritative evaluation and teaching within the congregation. That explanation coheres with First Timothy 2:12, where Paul restricts teaching and authority over men. Yet we must distinguish an interpretation drawn from context from words Paul explicitly supplied. First Corinthians 14:34 does not itself say, "Let the women refrain only from judging prophecies." It uses broader language within a particular setting. The passage therefore demands careful comparison with the

rest of Scripture rather than an artificial certainty built upon an inserted qualification. **We must not remove words from the Bible to escape a command, and we must not insert words into the Bible merely because they make our preferred explanation easier to defend.**

The opposite extreme is equally defective. Some insist that because Paul says women must keep silence, every Christian woman is forbidden to sing in church, participate in congregational responses, share the gospel, instruct her children, or speak about Scripture in ordinary conversation. But the passage addresses conduct in the gathered assembly; it does not establish a universal prohibition covering every form of communication. Ephesians 5:19 instructs believers concerning psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Titus 2 expressly commands older women to teach what is good. Acts 18 records Priscilla participating in biblical instruction, and Acts 21 identifies women who prophesied. These passages cannot be erased. **The biblical restriction concerning congregational authority must not become a religious muzzle placed upon every faithful woman who desires to serve Jesus Christ. Paul was regulating church order, not declaring that half the redeemed had permanently forfeited the ability to communicate truth.**

5. Let Them Ask Their Husbands at Home: Learning, Authority, and the Limits of the Command

First Corinthians 14:35 continues, "And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." This verse supplies a specific alternative to the speaking Paul restricts. Questions arising within the assembly were not to become occasions for violating its established order. The instruction directs married women toward learning through conversation with their husbands at home. In the setting of a chapter regulating prophecy, revelation, and congregational speech, this is especially relevant to questioning and discussion connected with the proceedings. But the passage does not identify every possible form of enquiry in every possible church setting, nor does it explicitly resolve how an unmarried woman should seek instruction. We must interpret the principle without manufacturing rules the apostle did not state. **A command concerning learning and order should not be transformed into the ridiculous idea that a Christian woman commits rebellion whenever she asks where to find the book of Habakkuk.**

First Timothy 2:11 provides an important comparison: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection." Notice again that Paul commands learning. He does not require women to remain biblically ignorant, doctrinally helpless, or dependent upon religious personalities who may know less Scripture than they do. Verse 12 continues with the prohibition concerning teaching and usurping authority over the man, while verses 13–14 ground the

instruction in Adam's formation before Eve and the circumstances of the original transgression. These are substantial reasons that cannot simply be dismissed as temporary local inconvenience. Yet the restriction must remain connected with the governing teaching authority being discussed. The same apostle commands older women to teach younger women in Titus 2:3–5. **The woman is commanded to learn, certain teaching responsibilities are expressly given to her, and pastoral authority is restricted. The interpreter's responsibility is to preserve those distinctions, not abolish whichever one his denomination finds uncomfortable.**

There is another matter that deserves attention. A husband is not an infallible interpreter of Scripture merely because he is a husband. Second Timothy 2:15 commands study and rightly dividing the word of truth. Acts 17:11 commends those who searched the Scriptures daily to determine whether what they heard was so. A woman whose husband does not know the answer to a biblical question is not condemned to lifelong ignorance. She can study the word of God, receive sound instruction in appropriate settings, and seek understanding without assuming pastoral oversight. Likewise, a husband who demands submission to false doctrine has no authority to place his personal ignorance above the Scriptures. **Marriage does not transform a man into an inspired commentary. If he cannot find the answer, the solution is to open the Bible and study, not to announce that his wife must remain confused until he becomes knowledgeable enough to explain it.**

6. Every Woman That Prayeth or Prophesieth: Chapter 11 Must Be Allowed to Speak

First Corinthians 11:5 creates an unavoidable responsibility for the interpreter: "But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head." Paul discusses a woman praying or prophesying while addressing headship and the covering of the head. He does not explicitly identify every occasion on which such activity occurred, but he recognizes the activity within his argument concerning proper conduct. His discussion begins in verse 3 with the relationship between Christ, the man, the woman, and God, and continues through the outward distinctions associated with covering. Therefore, any explanation of chapter 14 that makes chapter 11 unintelligible is defective. **The apostle who wrote about women praying and prophesying is the same apostle who wrote about women keeping silence. He was not suffering from a three-chapter lapse of memory, and the Holy Ghost did not lose track of His own revelation.**

The relationship between these chapters is best examined by distinguishing spiritual activity from authoritative government within the assembly. A woman praying does not automatically occupy the office of bishop. A woman exercising genuine prophecy during the apostolic period did not necessarily govern the congregation receiving the message.

Prophecy involved divine communication under the regulations then governing spiritual gifts; pastoral oversight involved continuing responsibilities for doctrine, teaching, and the care of the flock. First Corinthians 12:28 distinguishes different appointments within the church, while verse 29 asks, "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?" These questions plainly reject the idea that every member possesses every ministry. **A gift is not automatically an office, and the authority of a message does not confer every form of ecclesiastical authority upon the person delivering it. God knows the difference, even when religious interpreters seem determined to erase it.**

Acts 21:9 strengthens this distinction by recording that Philip the evangelist had four daughters who prophesied. The Holy Ghost did not hesitate to identify their genuine prophetic activity. Yet the passage never appoints those women bishops, elders, or pastors over the congregation at Caesarea. Neither does the historical existence of prophetic gifts require us to accept every modern claim of fresh revelation. The apostolic period included genuine revelations and extraordinary gifts that served God's purposes during the establishing of the church. Claims of equivalent authority must be tested against the written Scriptures, never allowed to supersede them. First John 4:1 commands believers to try the spirits, while Second Timothy 3:16–17 establishes the sufficiency of inspired Scripture to furnish the man of God unto all good works. **The Bible does not deny that women prophesied. It denies us permission to turn every woman who prophesied into an officeholder Scripture never appointed.**

7. The Commandments of the Lord: Paul's Instructions Were Not Personal Prejudice or Optional Advice

First Corinthians 14:36 introduces a sharp rebuke: "What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?" The Corinthians were apparently in need of a reminder that their congregation was not the birthplace of divine revelation nor the exclusive possessor of spiritual authority. They had no right to treat their local practices as though the rest of the churches and the apostolic instructions must submit to them. Paul proceeds in verse 37: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." That is a devastating statement for the argument that Paul's instructions were merely personal preferences. **The apostle did not introduce his commands as suggestions from a religious consultant. He identified what he wrote as commandments of the Lord, and the Corinthians were expected to recognize that authority.**

This declaration also exposes the weakness of dismissing Paul as personally prejudiced against women. The same apostle commended Phebe, Priscilla, Mary, Persis, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and women who laboured with him in the gospel. He recognized the faith of Lois

and Eunice and commanded older women to teach good things. The claim that he simply despised women's spiritual usefulness cannot survive the testimony of his own letters. His restrictions concerning congregational authority must be understood alongside his commendations of women's genuine ministries. Nor can a modern congregation declare itself sufficiently spiritual to disregard these instructions. Verse 38 adds, "But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." **The person who claims superior spirituality while rejecting apostolic commandments has selected an unusual definition of spiritual maturity. Apparently, in some circles, the highest form of enlightenment is the ability to explain why obedience is no longer necessary.**

Verses 39–40 conclude the chapter: "Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order." Notice the balance. Paul has imposed restrictions, yet he does not authorize the Corinthians to prohibit every legitimate exercise of the gifts operating among them. The commands regulate rather than indiscriminately abolish. This same interpretive discipline must govern the discussion of women and silence. The restrictions concerning authoritative teaching and congregational order are genuine. The legitimate spiritual activities Scripture elsewhere recognizes are genuine as well. First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 establish qualifications for bishops, while Titus 2 establishes responsibilities for women who teach what is good. **The church possesses no authority to loosen God's restrictions or tighten them beyond His words. A religious rule does not become more biblical merely because somebody has made it harsher than the commandment God actually gave.**

Conclusion — The Command Must Stand, but the Context Must Stand With It

The first conclusion is that First Corinthians 14:34–35 contains a genuine apostolic instruction concerning women's conduct within the assembled church. It cannot honestly be dismissed as an insignificant cultural curiosity or explained away as Paul's private dislike of women. The surrounding chapter regulates spiritual communication, including tongues, interpretation, prophecy, the judging of prophetic messages, and orderly congregational participation. A tongue-speaker without an interpreter must keep silence. A prophet must hold his peace under the circumstances Paul describes. Women are likewise instructed concerning silence and submission within the assembly. These commands address distinct circumstances and must not be flattened into one indiscriminate rule governing every word spoken by every Christian. **The command concerning women is neither an embarrassing accident nor a blank cheque allowing men to invent whatever restrictions they please. God established the order, and the interpreter must remain within the boundaries of what He actually revealed.**

The second conclusion is that biblical order does not establish the spiritual inferiority of Christian women. First Corinthians 11 recognizes women praying and prophesying. Acts 21 records women who prophesied. Titus 2 commands older women to teach good things. Acts 18 records Priscilla helping Aquila explain Scripture more perfectly to Apollos. These activities cannot be eliminated merely because somebody has isolated two verses from First Corinthians 14. Neither do those activities abolish the restrictions governing pastoral authority. Women may proclaim the gospel, teach their children, instruct other women, encourage believers, and communicate sound biblical truth without assuming the governing teaching office of a pastor. Meanwhile, the men who occupy that office must satisfy the moral and doctrinal qualifications established in First Timothy 3 and Titus 1. **A faithful woman does not become disobedient because she speaks the truth in a setting Scripture permits, and an unqualified man does not become a biblical pastor simply because he happens to possess the proper anatomy.**

Finally, the church must recognize that spiritual authority belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, not to the preferences of religious institutions. He purchased His church with His own blood, and the Holy Ghost supplied the instructions governing its conduct. A congregation may not dismiss apostolic restrictions because they conflict with contemporary fashion, nor may a preacher manufacture additional restrictions because he enjoys exercising authority over others. The Scriptures must be read together, with the same respect given to every inspired statement. Let Christian women faithfully serve Christ in the ministries Scripture authorizes. Let qualified men exercise pastoral oversight with humility, sound doctrine, and proper accountability. Let every believer remember that order without truth becomes empty regulation, while religious activity without obedience becomes confusion. **Paul did not command women to abandon every opportunity to speak God's truth. He did command order within the church. If somebody must erase First Corinthians 11 to defend First Corinthians 14, he has mishandled the Bible. If somebody must erase First Corinthians 14 to defend his interpretation of First Corinthians 11, he has done the same thing. The Holy Ghost wrote both chapters, and the church has no authority to correct either one. Read the context, obey the command, and stop making the apostle say what he never said.**

9 of 10 — Women Pastors and Biblical Authority — Equal at Calvary, Different in Office: Why Biblical Order Does Not Make Women Second-Class Christians

Key Passage: Galatians 3:26–29; 1 Corinthians 11:11–12; 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 (KJV)

There is a remarkable little trick employed by modern religion whenever the biblical qualifications for church leadership become inconvenient. Somebody opens Galatians 3:28, reads that there is "neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus," and immediately announces that every distinction of office, responsibility, and authority has been abolished. Apparently, one verse concerning the believer's standing in Christ has become a theological bulldozer capable of flattening every other instruction the Holy Ghost gave the church. But the apostle Paul did not write Galatians 3 because he had suddenly forgotten what he wrote elsewhere concerning bishops, elders, husbands, wives, teachers, and spiritual gifts. He was establishing the believer's position through faith in Jesus Christ, not conducting an ordination ceremony for everybody who could quote the passage. **Equality at Calvary does not mean everybody receives the same office in the church. The blood of Jesus Christ makes sinners children of God; it does not automatically make every child of God a bishop.** That distinction is neither difficult nor insulting unless somebody has decided that possessing authority is the only acceptable evidence of spiritual worth.

Unfortunately, the opposite error can be just as ugly. There are men who correctly recognize that the pastoral office is restricted by biblical qualifications and then proceed to behave as though those qualifications somehow establish the spiritual inferiority of every woman in the congregation. They enjoy quoting verses about submission, but their enthusiasm mysteriously evaporates whenever Scripture commands husbands to love their wives sacrificially, pastors to avoid pride, or church leaders to become examples rather than dictators. They will happily accept a woman's labour, hospitality, encouragement, financial sacrifice, prayer, and faithfulness, then act as though her contribution becomes insignificant because she does not occupy the pulpit. That is not biblical headship. That is religious arrogance operating under borrowed authority. **The man who needs to make women appear small in order to make his office appear important has already demonstrated that his understanding of spiritual leadership is considerably smaller than he imagines.** God never authorized contempt as a qualification for church government.

The Scriptures establish two truths that must never be separated. First, every person saved through faith in Jesus Christ receives the same salvation, belongs to the same spiritual body, and stands accepted before God upon the same finished work of the Saviour. Second, God has established differing responsibilities, gifts, relationships, and qualifications within that body. Galatians 3 explains the believer's standing in Christ. First Corinthians 12 explains the differing members and functions of His body. First Corinthians 11 establishes headship while acknowledging mutual dependence. Titus 2 assigns important teaching responsibilities to godly women. Second Timothy honours the

influence of Lois and Eunice, while Romans 16 records numerous women whose faithful labour advanced the gospel. The qualifications for bishops remain established in First Timothy 3 and Titus 1. **The Bible does not ask us to choose between honouring women and respecting church order. It commands obedience to both. The confusion begins when religious people insist that one truth must be murdered before the other can survive.**

1. Ye Are All the Children of God by Faith: Salvation Establishes Equal Standing, Not Identical Offices

Galatians 3:26 supplies the foundation: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Notice the words "all," "children," and "by faith." The apostle does not establish different methods of salvation for men and women, different degrees of justification according to ecclesiastical office, or separate classifications of redeemed people based upon their position in a congregation. The believer becomes a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8–9 confirms that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast. Romans 5:1 declares, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." A Christian woman does not receive a smaller justification than a Christian man. Her sins are not washed away by a weaker blood. She does not possess an inferior standing before the throne of grace. **Calvary has no first-class section for ordained men and second-class seating for faithful women. Every redeemed sinner stands upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ, not upon a religious title.**

Verse 27 continues, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." In the context of union with Christ, this concerns the believer's identification with Him, not the idea that water baptism or religious ceremonies earn salvation. First Corinthians 12:13 likewise declares that believers are baptized by one Spirit into one body. Galatians 3:28 then states, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." The emphasis concerns shared standing in the Saviour. Jews and Gentiles receive the same salvation, though that truth does not erase every historical distinction concerning Israel and the nations. Likewise, men and women are one in Christ without every distinction of earthly responsibility disappearing. **Being one in Christ does not mean becoming identical in every function. A man's salvation does not turn him into a woman, and a woman's salvation does not automatically turn her into a pastor.**

Verse 29 concludes, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Paul is explaining the believer's relationship to the promise through Christ, particularly against those attempting to impose the law as the basis of righteousness. The

context concerns faith, sonship, inheritance, and the superiority of God's promise over justification through legal observance. It is not a chapter instructing congregations to disregard pastoral qualifications. Neither does belonging to Christ require pretending that Israel's national covenant promises have been transferred wholesale to the Church. God's promises concerning Israel retain their proper setting, while believers in Christ enjoy the spiritual blessings established through Him. **The apostle was dismantling the false gospel of justification by law, not dismantling every distinction of responsibility within Christian assemblies. Turning a passage about salvation into an excuse to abolish church order is not exposition. It is theological burglary committed with a perfectly good verse.**

2. One Body, Many Members: Equality Does Not Require Every Christian to Perform the Same Function

First Corinthians 12:12 declares, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." There is the unity of believers, but notice the repeated emphasis upon many members. The body is one without every member possessing the same function. Verse 13 explains that by one Spirit believers are baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free. Every saved believer belongs to Christ's body through the Spirit's work. But verse 14 immediately declares, "For the body is not one member, but many." The apostle refuses to confuse unity with uniformity. **The body of Christ is not an assembly line producing identical religious officers. It is a living organism in which God has placed different members according to His wisdom. If everybody were the pastor, somebody would still need to explain who was supposed to do everything else.**

Paul develops the argument with a wonderful illustration. In verse 15, the foot imagines that because it is not the hand, it does not belong to the body. In verse 16, the ear makes the same complaint because it is not the eye. Paul then asks in verse 17, "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?" The absurdity is obvious. A functioning body requires differing members. Yet modern religious thinking frequently measures importance by visibility, prominence, or recognized authority. Somebody imagines that unless he occupies the pulpit, his service possesses little value. Another decides that unless a woman can occupy every office available to a qualified man, she must be treated as inferior. **Paul answers both complaints with the same illustration. An ear does not become worthless because it cannot see, and an eye does not become superior because it refuses to hear. God designed the body to function through differences, not through everybody demanding the same position.**

Verse 18 settles the matter: "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." God establishes the arrangement. Verse 21 adds that the eye cannot say unto the hand, "I have no need of thee," nor the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." Verse 22 goes further: "Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary." That is a devastating rebuke to religious arrogance. The apparently less prominent members remain necessary to the body's proper functioning. A faithful woman teaching children, assisting struggling believers, or strengthening other women in sound doctrine may accomplish tremendous spiritual good without occupying pastoral government. **The member who demands another member's office has misunderstood God's arrangement, but the leader who despises the other members has misunderstood the body itself. The church cannot function properly when everybody wants the head's responsibilities and nobody appreciates the hands doing the work.**

3. Neither Is the Man Without the Woman: Biblical Headship Does Not Establish Human Superiority

First Corinthians 11:3 establishes the relationship of headship: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." This passage must not be ignored merely because modern society dislikes the arrangement. Paul establishes an order and grounds the discussion in spiritual principles. Yet notice that every man is placed beneath the authority of Christ. Biblical headship is therefore not masculine independence from divine government. A husband remains accountable to the Lord. A pastor remains accountable to the Chief Shepherd. No man receives permission to treat other believers as personal property. Moreover, the statement concerning Christ and God cannot legitimately be used to imply that Jesus Christ is inferior in divine nature. John 10:30 declares, "I and my Father are one." **Headship establishes an order of relationship and responsibility; it does not automatically establish superiority of essence, intelligence, or spiritual worth. A man who cannot distinguish authority from superiority has already misunderstood the verse he enjoys quoting.**

Paul continues in First Corinthians 11:8–9 by explaining that the woman was of the man and created for the man, referring to the creation account in Genesis 2. But he immediately supplies a necessary qualification in verses 11–12: "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God." Notice the closing statement. All things are of God. Adam was formed first, and Eve was made from the man, but subsequent generations of men entered the world through women. Mutual

dependence does not abolish the order Paul establishes, but it prevents the order from becoming a justification for arrogance. **The man who boasts that Eve came from Adam should remember that he came into this world through a mother. God arranged matters so masculine pride would have difficulty surviving an honest reading of the entire paragraph.**

Ephesians 5:25 then establishes the husband's obligation: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." The example is sacrificial love. Christ gave Himself for the church. He did not exploit His people, despise their needs, or establish authority for personal amusement. Verse 28 commands men to love their wives as their own bodies. First Peter 3:7 instructs husbands to give honour unto their wives, recognizing that they are "heirs together of the grace of life." There is no biblical permission for cruelty, humiliation, or domineering conduct. These are serious responsibilities imposed upon the man claiming headship. **A husband who demands submission while neglecting sacrificial love wants the authority of Christ without the character of Christ. The Bible did not appoint him emperor of his household. It commanded him to love his wife with a seriousness that ought to make every selfish man examine himself before opening his mouth.**

4. Teachers of Good Things: Titus 2 Commands Women to Do Work That Some Men Foolishly Discourage

Titus 2:1 begins with a command to the minister: "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine." Paul proceeds to address aged men, aged women, young women, young men, and servants, establishing practical responsibilities appropriate to their circumstances. Verse 3 instructs "The aged women likewise" to maintain conduct becoming holiness, avoid false accusations, reject bondage to much wine, and become "teachers of good things." There is the command. God positively assigns teaching responsibilities to mature Christian women. A woman faithfully carrying out this ministry is not defying apostolic authority. She is obeying it. Paul does not instruct older women to become spiritually ignorant, surrender their biblical understanding, or refuse opportunities to instruct those entrusted to their care. **The Bible that restricts the pastoral office also commands women to teach. If somebody cannot explain how both instructions can be obeyed, the problem lies with his interpretation, not with the Holy Ghost who gave them.**

Verses 4–5 identify the intended instruction: "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children." Paul continues with discretion, chastity, goodness, domestic responsibility, and proper conduct toward husbands, concluding that the word of God be not blasphemed. These are not trivial subjects. The

spiritual condition of homes, marriages, children, and Christian testimony matters tremendously. Older women who understand the Scriptures have a genuine responsibility to instruct younger women in godliness. That ministry requires knowledge, integrity, patience, and practical application of biblical doctrine. A congregation that neglects such instruction while treating every ministry outside the pulpit as unimportant is failing to appreciate the work God specifically commands. **There is more to building a godly church than delivering sermons from a platform. Someone must also help believers live according to those sermons when they return to their homes.**

This teaching responsibility also establishes the proper distinction between ministry and governing office. Titus 1:5–9 gives qualifications for elders and bishops, including the description "the husband of one wife" and the requirement to hold fast the faithful word. Titus 2 subsequently commands mature women to teach within their assigned sphere. The same epistle contains both instructions, and there is no contradiction. Women can possess substantial biblical understanding, communicate sound doctrine, and help others grow in godliness without automatically occupying the pastoral office. Nor should their teaching be treated as spiritually inferior merely because it operates within different responsibilities. **A woman teaching younger believers to obey Scripture is accomplishing an authorized ministry. She does not need a bishop's title to make the teaching valuable, and the bishop does not become more important by pretending her contribution is insignificant.**

5. Lois and Eunice: The Women Who Helped Prepare Timothy Before He Ever Received a Ministerial Charge

Second Timothy 1:5 contains one of Paul's most remarkable personal acknowledgments: "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." Notice the family connection. Paul remembers the sincere faith of Timothy's grandmother and mother while encouraging his younger fellow labourer. Their faith was not merely an item of family history; it formed part of the spiritual environment in which Timothy developed. Acts 16:1 identifies Timothy's mother as a believing Jewish woman and his father as a Greek. The record does not supply every detail of his childhood, so imagination must not be allowed to write a biography beyond Scripture. Nevertheless, the apostle expressly honours the faith associated with these two women. **Before Timothy became a recognized minister, there were faithful women whose spiritual influence mattered. God did not consider their contribution unworthy of mention simply because neither occupied the office Timothy would later administer.**

Second Timothy 3:14–15 supplies another important piece of the picture. Paul commands Timothy to continue in the things he had learned and been assured of, knowing from whom he had learned them. Then he declares, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Timothy possessed acquaintance with Scripture from childhood, and his mother's and grandmother's faith formed part of the testimony Paul remembered. Their example illustrates the tremendous importance of biblical instruction within the family. The Scriptures Timothy knew were the sacred writings available before the completion of the New Testament, and they pointed toward the salvation fulfilled in Jesus Christ. **A child who learns the Scriptures faithfully at home may later stand before congregations and preach truths first brought to his attention through the patient instruction of godly women. That is not an embarrassment to biblical order. It is evidence that God uses faithful service to prepare future workers.**

Now consider the irony. Some men imagine that acknowledging the importance of women's spiritual instruction somehow weakens the qualifications for pastoral leadership. Yet Paul himself commended Lois and Eunice while giving Timothy some of the New Testament's clearest instructions concerning church government. First Timothy 3 establishes the qualifications for bishops, while Second Timothy 2:2 directs the transmission of apostolic teaching to faithful men able to teach others also. Neither instruction requires erasing the influence of Timothy's mother and grandmother. The man who rejects biblical instruction merely because it comes from a woman may be refusing something God intended for his profit. Apollos was willing to receive instruction from Aquila and Priscilla in Acts 18:26. **A man ought to possess enough spiritual maturity to recognize truth when a faithful woman speaks it, even while maintaining the distinctions governing pastoral office. Masculine pride is not a substitute for biblical discernment, and ignorance does not become holy when it wears a man's suit.**

6. Romans 16: Paul Thanked the Women Who Laboured Instead of Treating Them as Second-Class Believers

Romans 16 provides an extraordinary catalogue of faithful service within the early church. Paul begins by commending Phebe, "a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea," and asks the Roman believers to receive her in the Lord and assist her. He explains that she had been "a succourer of many, and of myself also." That is substantial praise. Phebe had assisted believers, including the apostle, and her faithful service deserved recognition. Paul then greets Priscilla and Aquila, identifying them as his helpers in Christ Jesus who had laid down their own necks for his life. He adds that all the churches of the Gentiles gave thanks for them. **Here are women whose usefulness did not depend upon**

possessing an ecclesiastical title. Their work was important enough for the apostle to acknowledge before an entire congregation. A modern preacher who considers such women insignificant has managed to become considerably less appreciative than Paul.

The chapter continues with further recognition. Romans 16:6 declares, "Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us." Verse 12 mentions Tryphena and Tryphosa, "who labour in the Lord," and then Persis, "which laboured much in the Lord." Paul also greets Andronicus and Junia, who were his kinsmen and fellowprisoners and were "of note among the apostles." The precise relationship expressed in that final description has been understood differently, but the honourable commendation is unmistakable. These individuals suffered and served faithfully. Paul was not afraid to recognize women whose work had contributed to the advancement of the gospel. Nor does the passage automatically appoint every woman mentioned to the office of bishop. **It takes a peculiar kind of religious arithmetic to conclude that a woman's work counts for nothing unless somebody can place the word "pastor" before her name. Paul counted labour, sacrifice, faithfulness, and service. Modern religion might profit from examining his method.**

Philippians 4:2–3 supplies additional confirmation when Paul refers to Euodias and Syntyche as women who had laboured with him in the gospel. He addresses their disagreement while recognizing their previous work. Similarly, Acts 9:36 describes Dorcas as full of good works and almsdeeds, while Acts 16 records Lydia's hospitality toward the servants of Christ. These women occupied differing circumstances and performed differing services, but the Lord used their contributions. That should rebuke men who readily accept women's labour while treating them with contempt. It should also correct the modern assumption that faithful service requires acquisition of pastoral authority. **The widows who displayed Dorcas's garments were not interested in whether she possessed an ordination certificate. They knew her charity had reached their lives. A church that measures spiritual value only by who stands behind the pulpit has forgotten how much work is accomplished by faithful hands elsewhere in the body.**

7. Headship Is Responsibility Before God, Not Permission for Men to Become Religious Dictators

First Timothy 3:1–7 establishes the qualifications for a bishop, including the description "the husband of one wife," vigilance, sobriety, good behaviour, hospitality, and ability to teach. But the passage does not stop with a male qualification. The overseer must not be greedy, violent, covetous, quarrelsome, or a novice lifted up with pride. He must rule his own house well and possess a good report from those outside the church. Titus 1:5–9 supplies corresponding qualifications, emphasizing doctrinal faithfulness and the ability to

convince those contradicting sound teaching. **The man who quotes the gender-related qualification while ignoring the requirements for character has apparently mistaken the pastoral office for a biological entitlement. God did not say every male qualifies to oversee His church. He described the kind of man who must be appointed.**

First Peter 5:2–3 places further restrictions upon pastoral conduct: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." Notice that Peter directly forbids domineering conduct. The flock belongs to God. Acts 20:28 declares that He purchased the church with His own blood. The pastor serves beneath Christ's authority, not as the personal owner of the congregation. A man who humiliates women, dismisses their legitimate ministries, or demands unquestioning loyalty to his personal opinions is not demonstrating spiritual strength. **A dictator can command a crowd, but that does not make him a shepherd. The shepherd is supposed to feed the sheep, guard them from wolves, and remember who owns the pasture. Religious tyranny is not biblical headship with stronger leadership skills. It is disobedience wearing religious clothing.**

The same warning applies within marriage. Ephesians 5 commands wives concerning submission while commanding husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church. First Peter 3:7 requires husbands to give honour unto their wives as heirs together of the grace of life. These duties are inseparable from biblical headship. No man may use a passage concerning authority to excuse mistreatment, intimidation, neglect, or selfishness. Nor does a woman need to occupy the pastoral office to possess equal standing before God or make a valuable contribution to Christian ministry. Men and women alike must obey what Scripture assigns them. **A man who uses headship as permission for arrogance has misunderstood headship just as surely as the person who uses equality in Christ to erase every distinction of office. The Bible does not authorize either rebellion. It establishes order, demands faithfulness, and places everybody beneath the authority of Jesus Christ.**

Conclusion — Equal Before God, Different in Responsibility, and Accountable to the Same Lord

Galatians 3:26–29 establishes that believers are children of God through faith in Jesus Christ and are one in Him. That is a glorious truth purchased through the finished work of the Saviour. Salvation does not come through ordination, church office, masculine authority, motherhood, charitable service, or personal achievement. It comes by grace through faith. A Christian woman possesses the same eternal life, the same standing in Christ, and the same access to God through the one mediator, Jesus Christ. Yet First

Corinthians 12 establishes that members of the same body possess differing functions, while First Corinthians 11 recognizes divinely established order and mutual dependence. These truths are not enemies. **Equality of salvation does not abolish responsibility, and distinction of responsibility does not diminish salvation. The Lord has not created a second-class category of redeemed women merely because the pastoral office has specific qualifications.**

The record of faithful women throughout the New Testament should bring conviction to every congregation that undervalues their service. Lois and Eunice contributed to Timothy's early knowledge of Scripture. Priscilla helped instruct Apollos. Phebe assisted many believers. Lydia opened her house. Dorcas ministered through charitable works. Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, Euodias, and Syntyche were remembered for their labour. Titus 2 expressly commands godly older women to teach what is good. These ministries were not insignificant simply because they differed from pastoral oversight. Likewise, men occupying leadership positions must remember that the qualifications for their offices concern far more than possessing the proper sex. They must demonstrate biblical character, sound doctrine, maturity, responsibility, humility, and sacrificial service. **The woman serving faithfully without a title may accomplish considerably more for Jesus Christ than the man displaying an impressive title while neglecting the duties attached to it. Heaven is not impressed by the size of a nameplate. God knows the work performed beneath it.**

The final responsibility is to reject the false choice between biblical order and the dignity of faithful Christian women. We do not need to rewrite First Timothy 3 in order to appreciate the women of Romans 16. We do not need to abolish Galatians 3:28 in order to preserve the distinctions established in First Corinthians 12. We do not need to discourage Christian women from studying, witnessing, teaching within their biblical responsibilities, or encouraging believers merely because they do not occupy the pastoral office. And we certainly do not need men turning church government into a private kingdom where their opinions are treated as commandments from heaven. Jesus Christ purchased the church with His own blood, and every believer belongs to Him. **At Calvary, the ground is level. In the body of Christ, the responsibilities are distinct. Before the Judgment Seat of Christ, every servant must give account. God never commanded women to become second-class Christians, and He never authorized men to become first-class tyrants. He commanded His people to believe the Book, honour His order, and faithfully perform the work He has given them. A man who cannot appreciate a faithful woman without making her a pastor has misunderstood her ministry. A man who cannot defend the pastoral office without belittling faithful women has misunderstood his own.**

10 of 10 — Women Pastors and Biblical Authority — A Microphone Does Not Make a Pastor: Celebrity Preachers, Religious Spectacles, and Women Who Faithfully Serve Christ

Key Passage: 2 Timothy 4:1–5; 1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9 (KJV)

There was a time when a preacher was expected to open his Bible, explain what God said, warn sinners about judgment, proclaim salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ, and instruct believers in sound doctrine. Today, a fellow can purchase a microphone, install theatrical lighting, surround himself with an enthusiastic audience, establish a religious organization, and emerge from the entire production with enough titles to make an archbishop look underemployed. Somewhere along the way, the ability to attract attention became confused with the authority to oversee a church. The apostle Paul anticipated this appetite for religious entertainment in 2 Timothy 4:3: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." Notice that the problem is not a shortage of teachers. The people accumulate teachers. Their difficulty is an unwillingness to endure sound doctrine. **A microphone can make a person's voice louder, but it cannot make the message biblical. A crowd can make a preacher famous, but it cannot make that preacher qualified. And an ordination ceremony cannot give divine authorization to an office when the Scriptures withhold it.**

That brings us to the modern controversy over women pastors, celebrity evangelists, television personalities, and religious performers whose influence sometimes extends far beyond the congregations in which they originally appeared. Names such as Joyce Meyer and Paula White-Cain are familiar examples of highly visible women in contemporary religious broadcasting and public ministry, though their particular ministries, titles, teachings, and organizational responsibilities must be examined individually rather than treated as identical. The biblical question is not whether a woman can attract an audience, communicate religious ideas, raise money, write books, or develop a successful organization. Clearly, women can accomplish those things. Neither is the question whether every prominent female religious teacher is guilty of every excess committed within charismatic Christianity. That would be careless judgment. The question concerns the doctrine being taught, the authority being claimed, and whether the person occupying a pastoral office satisfies the qualifications God established. **Public influence is not pastoral authorization, religious celebrity is not spiritual maturity, and extraordinary popularity is not an additional verse in First Timothy 3.**

Yet before anybody mistakes this concluding study for an attack upon Christian women, another truth must be established with equal force. Some of the most faithful labourers in

the Lord's vineyard are women who will never possess a church title, appear on television, publish a bestselling book, or receive applause from a religious audience. They witness to lost sinners, distribute Scripture, encourage discouraged believers, teach their children, help struggling families, support gospel ministries, and stand faithfully upon the word of God when others compromise. Their labour is not second-class Christianity. It is genuine service to Jesus Christ. We have examined Deborah, Huldah, Priscilla, Phebe, Lydia, Dorcas, Lois, Eunice, and the women Paul commended for their work. None needs an invented pastoral appointment to make her contribution significant. **The church does not need to manufacture a pastor's office for a faithful woman before it can recognize that God is using her. And the man standing behind the pulpit had better remember that possessing the proper sex does not excuse lacking the proper qualifications.**

1. Preach the Word: The Command That Exposes the Difference Between Biblical Ministry and Religious Entertainment

Second Timothy 4:1–2 contains one of the most solemn charges ever delivered to a minister of the gospel. Paul writes, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." Notice who stands behind the command. Paul places Timothy before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, the coming Judge. This is not an invitation to discover which religious presentation will produce the greatest public enthusiasm. Timothy must preach the word. The command includes reproof, rebuke, exhortation, longsuffering, and doctrine. Biblical preaching therefore involves considerably more than making people feel enthusiastic about their possibilities. **The preacher is not employed by the congregation's emotions. He is accountable to the Lord whose word he has been commanded to proclaim.**

Verse 3 explains the danger: people will refuse sound doctrine and accumulate teachers according to their own lusts. Verse 4 adds, "And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." That is a remarkable description of religion that replaces biblical instruction with attractive substitutes. A congregation can enthusiastically applaud a message that never explains sin, grace, justification, judgment, or the finished work of Christ. An audience can spend an hour hearing about financial breakthroughs, personal promotion, extraordinary experiences, and supposedly unlimited earthly success without receiving a meaningful explanation of the gospel. None of that establishes that every encouraging message is false. Scripture certainly offers encouragement. But encouragement severed from sound doctrine becomes something altogether different. **A preacher who feeds the congregation a steady diet of religious**

candy should not be surprised when the people eventually develop an appetite that cannot tolerate the meat of the word of God.

Verse 5 concludes Paul's charge with the instructions, "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." There is vigilance, endurance, evangelistic responsibility, and accountability for the ministry entrusted to Timothy. The passage describes labour rather than luxury and faithfulness rather than celebrity. It also demonstrates that public proclamation and pastoral oversight must not be confused. Timothy had responsibilities involving evangelism and church order, but every Christian who evangelizes does not thereby become a bishop. Likewise, every person who delivers an impressive sermon is not automatically qualified to govern a congregation. The qualifications for that office are established elsewhere. **A man can preach the gospel without being a pastor, and a woman can proclaim salvation without becoming one. The microphone does not confer the office any more than a fishing rod makes its owner captain of a commercial vessel.**

2. Beware of False Prophets: Miracles, Crowds, and Religious Success Cannot Replace Sound Doctrine

Matthew 7:15 records the warning of Jesus Christ: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." The Lord does not describe false prophets as necessarily appearing frightening, openly wicked, or immediately recognizable by their outward presentation. They come in sheep's clothing. Their appearance can conceal their true character. Verse 16 declares, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." In the immediate setting of the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord is warning His hearers concerning deceptive religious professions and the necessity of genuine obedience to His words. We must respect that kingdom setting without carelessly converting the passage into a new gospel requiring believers to earn eternal life through visible performance. Nevertheless, the warning supplies a legitimate principle concerning spiritual discernment. **Religious appearances are not sufficient evidence of truth. A wolf does not become a sheep because somebody has dressed him in wool and handed him a microphone.**

Verses 21–23 become even more serious. Jesus describes those who will claim to have prophesied in His name, cast out devils in His name, and performed many wonderful works. Yet He declares, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Notice the tremendous religious claims. These people appeal to extraordinary activities as evidence that they should be accepted. But their claims do not compel the Lord's approval. The passage does not authorize us to pronounce every person claiming a miracle unsaved, nor does it teach that a genuinely saved believer maintains

salvation through successful works. It establishes that impressive religious claims cannot substitute for a genuine relationship with Christ and obedience to His truth. **A supposed miracle does not become authentic because the crowd shouts, and a religious performance does not receive heaven's approval because the audience purchases tickets.**

This principle is especially important when examining modern ministries built around signs, wonders, prophetic declarations, healing claims, and extraordinary spiritual manifestations. Some religious personalities claim unusual gifts or divine authority, while supporters point toward crowds, testimonies, and dramatic experiences as evidence of authenticity. Those claims must be examined individually and honestly. Rumour is not evidence, and an unfamiliar religious practice is not automatically fraud. But neither is an emotionally charged performance proof of divine power. First Thessalonians 5:21 commands, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." That instruction requires examination rather than gullibility. The doctrinal content, claimed authority, and observable facts matter. **The Christian who believes every extraordinary story merely because somebody attaches the name of Jesus to it is not demonstrating superior faith. He is demonstrating why God commanded His people to test what they hear.**

3. Celebrity Religion and the Pastoral Office: The Problem Is the Claimed Authority, Not Merely the Person's Popularity

Consider the difference between a woman teaching biblical material through books, broadcasts, or public presentations and a woman claiming the governing office of pastor over a congregation. These activities are not automatically identical. A person may maintain an international religious platform without personally exercising local pastoral oversight. Another may occupy a specific church office while attracting relatively little public attention. Therefore, each ministry must be evaluated according to what it actually teaches and the authority it actually exercises. When discussing prominent personalities such as Joyce Meyer or Paula White-Cain, the proper examination concerns documented teaching, publicly identified responsibilities, and the relationship of those activities to Scripture. It does not require invented scandals, exaggerated accusations, or assertions concerning private motives. **A legitimate doctrinal argument should be strong enough to survive without gossip. If the Bible establishes the standard, there is no need to manufacture evidence against the person being examined.**

The same distinction applies to men. A male religious celebrity may possess a large organization, receive tremendous financial contributions, publish numerous books, and command an enthusiastic following while failing the biblical qualifications for pastoral oversight. His gender cannot rescue corrupt doctrine, immoral conduct, greed, or a lack of

spiritual maturity. Conversely, an ordinary Christian woman may explain Scripture accurately, proclaim salvation faithfully, and encourage thousands through publicly available teaching without necessarily claiming the office of pastor. Her work should be evaluated according to its content and proper biblical setting. The number of listeners does not automatically transform public communication into local church government. **A television audience is not a congregation merely because the speaker calls everybody family, and a broadcasting studio does not become a New Testament church simply because somebody installs a pulpit beneath the camera lights.**

The deeper problem is the modern tendency to treat religious influence as proof of divine authorization. A person becomes famous, gathers followers, receives invitations, develops an organization, and eventually assumes that the public success itself establishes a calling to whatever office is desired. But Scripture supplies actual qualifications for bishops, elders, and overseers. Those requirements do not rise or fall with audience size. Neither does disagreement over a person's claimed office mean every statement that person has ever made must be false. First Thessalonians 5:21 commands believers to prove all things and hold fast what is good. That requires distinguishing correct biblical statements from unsound teaching rather than accepting or rejecting everything through celebrity loyalty. **A preacher can be right about one passage and wrong about another. The Bible remains the measuring rod; the personality standing beside it does not become the ruler merely because the crowd likes the way the ruler is dressed.**

4. God Is Not the Author of Confusion: Religious Spectacles Must Submit to the Written Word

First Corinthians 14:33 declares, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." The immediate context concerns the orderly exercise of tongues, prophecy, interpretation, and other activities within the Corinthian assembly. Paul regulates the number of speakers, requires interpretation, commands silence under specified circumstances, and directs that spiritual communication produce edification. Verse 32 declares, "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." That statement is especially important because it rejects the suggestion that genuine spiritual activity necessarily places a person beyond self-control or apostolic instruction. The Holy Ghost did not authorize the Corinthians to transform their assemblies into uncontrolled competitions for attention. **The Spirit who inspired the command for order does not need somebody to violate that order in order to demonstrate His presence. Confusion is not automatically supernatural merely because it occurs beneath a church roof.**

Consider religious meetings in which dramatic reactions, bodily movements, emotional excitement, extraordinary declarations, or apparent manifestations become the central

attraction. Such experiences should not be dismissed without examining what actually happened, but neither should they be accepted as divine merely because a religious personality claims special power. A person trembling, falling, shouting, or reacting emotionally does not, by that fact alone, establish a miracle. The crowd may interpret the event in various ways, but the interpretation must not outrank the word of God. First Corinthians 14:40 concludes, "Let all things be done decently and in order." That command remains a necessary standard when evaluating claims concerning spiritual manifestations. **The Holy Ghost does not require a theatrical production to authenticate the Scriptures. The Bible was true before the stage lights came on, and it will remain true after the performers have packed their equipment and gone home.**

Nor should extraordinary claims be permitted to manufacture authority over believers. During the apostolic period, genuine signs and revelations served God's particular purposes. Second Corinthians 12:12 identifies signs associated with Paul's apostleship, while Hebrews 2:3–4 describes God bearing witness through signs, wonders, divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Those historical facts do not authorize every modern claimant to announce a fresh revelation or demand obedience to personal prophecies. Second Timothy 3:16–17 establishes the inspiration and sufficiency of Scripture to furnish the man of God unto all good works. A claimed revelation contradicting written Scripture must be rejected regardless of the personality announcing it. **God has not placed a religious celebrity above His Book. If a supposed prophet requires believers to abandon Scripture in order to accept the prophecy, the congregation has already been told which authority it is being asked to surrender.**

5. The Husband of One Wife: God's Qualifications Still Govern the Man Behind the Pulpit

First Timothy 3:1–2 establishes the office under consideration: "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach." These qualifications describe an overseer in masculine household terms and require godly character, responsible conduct, and doctrinal ability. Within the traditional understanding of the passage, the pastoral office belongs to qualified men. First Timothy 2:12–14 provides the related instruction concerning teaching authority and grounds Paul's reasoning in the creation of Adam and Eve. We have examined these passages throughout this series. Their requirements cannot be overturned by appealing to religious popularity or exceptional examples from different historical settings. **God did not establish the qualifications for bishops so that modern congregations could decide whether the apostle had become sufficiently outdated to ignore.**

But the same passage exposes another dangerous assumption: that every man automatically qualifies merely because he is male. Paul requires the bishop to be blameless, sober, patient, not greedy, not covetous, capable of teaching, and responsible in his household. He prohibits appointing a novice and requires a good report from those outside the church. Titus 1:7–9 similarly describes the bishop as God's steward, requiring moral integrity and the ability to exhort and convince gainsayers through sound doctrine. These are not decorative qualifications printed beneath the heading of a church constitution. They establish real requirements. **A man who boasts about being the husband of one wife while neglecting the remaining qualifications has apparently mistaken one line of Scripture for permission to ignore the rest of the paragraph. God wrote the entire list, and the entire list still applies.**

Acts 20:28 identifies the church as belonging to God, "which he hath purchased with his own blood." First Peter 5:2–3 commands elders to feed the flock, exercise oversight willingly, reject filthy lucre, and avoid becoming lords over God's heritage. Hebrews 13:17 describes spiritual leaders watching for souls as those who must give account. Here is the solemn responsibility attached to the office. The pastor is not the congregation's celebrity owner, financial monarch, or personal dictator. He is an accountable servant beneath the Chief Shepherd. His authority must operate according to the written word. **A preacher who uses male headship to excuse arrogance, greed, cruelty, or doctrinal ignorance has not defended biblical government. He has demonstrated why the qualifications were necessary in the first place. The sheep belong to Jesus Christ, and no man receives ownership simply because he found himself a pulpit.**

6. The Women Who Actually Do the Work: Faithfulness Does Not Require an Ecclesiastical Title

Acts 18:24–28 records the ministry of Aquila and Priscilla when they encountered Apollos, an eloquent man mighty in the Scriptures who nevertheless needed more complete instruction. Verse 26 declares that they "took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." The wife participated with her husband in helping a knowledgeable man understand the Scriptures. The passage does not identify Priscilla as a pastor or claim that she assumed governing authority over a congregation. Her ministry was genuine, useful, and consistent with what Scripture records. **Priscilla did not need an impressive title before she could recognize that Apollos needed additional instruction. She opened the Scriptures with her husband and helped correct the deficiency. That is considerably more valuable than possessing a religious title while teaching something the Bible never said.**

Romans 16 provides an equally striking record of women whose service Paul appreciated. He commended Phebe as a servant of the church at Cenchrea and a succourer of many, including himself. He recognized Priscilla and Aquila as fellow helpers who had risked their lives. Mary laboured much. Tryphena and Tryphosa laboured in the Lord. Persis was remembered for much labour. Philippians 4:3 similarly mentions "those women which laboured with me in the gospel." These women were not honorary decorations in the early church. They were working participants in the advancement of the gospel, and the apostle acknowledged their contributions. **Paul did not need to appoint every faithful woman a bishop before he could thank her for the work she performed. Evidently, he understood something modern religion occasionally forgets: usefulness to Christ is not measured by the number of titles printed before a person's name.**

The same principle applies to faithful Christian women today. A sister may share the gospel with lost sinners, publish KJV Scripture studies, encourage discouraged believers, teach her children, instruct younger women according to Titus 2:3–5, assist families in need, and support ministries proclaiming salvation by grace through faith. Such service should be encouraged rather than discouraged. These women may possess considerable biblical knowledge and recognize doctrinal errors that some ordained men have overlooked. Their understanding does not automatically confer pastoral office, but neither does their absence from that office diminish their value. **The church needs women who know their Bibles, love the Saviour, recognize false doctrine, and faithfully serve where Scripture authorizes them. It does not need men who confuse defending pastoral qualifications with discouraging half the congregation from accomplishing anything useful for Jesus Christ.**

7. Prove All Things: The Bible Must Judge Every Ministry, Every Claim, and Every Office

First Thessalonians 5:21 supplies a command that should govern every examination of religious teaching: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Notice that Paul does not instruct believers to accept every claim from a popular personality or automatically reject every statement from someone whose ministry they question. The command requires examination. Acts 17:11 commends the Bereans because they received the word with readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily to determine whether the things they heard were so. That is the proper attitude toward religious instruction. A preacher's reputation, gender, organizational influence, education, and public following do not replace biblical examination. **The church does not need more celebrity loyalty. It needs more Christians who can open their King James Bibles and distinguish what God said from what somebody famous claims He said.**

This examination must also distinguish doctrinal disagreement from reckless accusation. If a person publicly claims the office of pastor, the qualifications for that office can be examined. If a preacher teaches salvation through works, the message can be compared with Ephesians 2:8–9 and First Corinthians 15:1–4. If somebody announces a prophecy or claims miraculous authority, that claim may be tested against Scripture and whatever facts are actually established. But we must not invent misconduct, assign secret motives, or pronounce individuals lost simply because we reject their ecclesiastical position. Scripture commands righteous judgment, not religious gossip dressed in the vocabulary of discernment. **A biblical argument does not become stronger when somebody adds an unverified scandal. If the doctrine is wrong, expose it with the Book. If the office is unauthorized, demonstrate the qualifications. The truth has enough ammunition without borrowing cartridges from the rumour mill.**

Finally, the church must apply the same standard to men and women according to the responsibilities Scripture assigns. A woman occupying a pastoral office must not be excused from biblical qualifications because her ministry is popular. A man occupying that office must not be excused from moral and doctrinal requirements because he satisfies the masculine description. A faithful woman serving in a biblical ministry should not be condemned merely because other women claim unauthorized positions. And a congregation must not confuse loud religious performances with the quiet, patient work of sound doctrine. Second Timothy 2:15 commands believers to study and rightly divide the word of truth. **The answer is not to lower God's standards for popular people or raise them beyond Scripture for ordinary people. The answer is to let the Book govern everybody. An open Bible is a much better safeguard against religious deception than a permanently impressed audience.**

Conclusion — The Church Needs Biblical Pastors and Faithful Women, Not Religious Celebrities Rewriting the Rules

After examining the creation order, Paul's restrictions concerning teaching authority, the qualifications for bishops, the ministries of Deborah and Huldah, the faithfulness of Priscilla and Phebe, the spiritual gifts recorded in Corinthians, and the equality of believers in Christ, the conclusion is unmistakable within this biblical framework. **The authority to proclaim the gospel is not identical to the authority to govern a congregation.** Every born-again believer has a responsibility to bear witness to Jesus Christ, but the pastoral office carries qualifications that the church has no authority to discard. First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 establish those requirements. First Peter 5 explains the responsibility of oversight. Second Timothy 4 commands faithful preaching. None of those passages suggests that an impressive public following, religious celebrity, emotional performance, or institutional

endorsement can substitute for biblical qualifications. The church does not exist to manufacture spiritual celebrities. It exists to uphold the truth of the living God.

At the same time, let us express genuine appreciation for the faithful Christian women whose work so often goes unnoticed by the religious world. The woman who faithfully witnesses to her neighbour, the mother who teaches her children the Scriptures, the older sister who instructs younger believers, the woman who publishes sound Bible teaching, and the faithful servant who encourages discouraged Christians are accomplishing work that matters eternally. They do not need to become pastors before the Lord can use them. Their contributions should be recognized, encouraged, and appreciated. The men entrusted with pastoral authority should lead by example, teach sound doctrine, demonstrate godly character, and honour the believers who labour alongside them. **A man who cannot appreciate faithful women without surrendering biblical order has misunderstood the order. A man who cannot defend biblical order without belittling faithful women has misunderstood the faithfulness. God never commanded us to choose between those truths.**

And now we arrive at the final verdict. The church belongs to Jesus Christ, who purchased it with His own blood. Its gospel is the message of His death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection according to the Scriptures. Salvation is by grace through faith, not through religious office, personal performance, or institutional approval. The Lord has given His people responsibilities to perform and instructions concerning the government of His assemblies. Those instructions must stand whether the preacher is famous or unknown, wealthy or poor, male or female. Let every believer proclaim Christ faithfully. Let Christian women serve in the ministries Scripture commends. Let qualified men exercise pastoral oversight with humility, diligence, and sound doctrine. Let the church reject manufactured authority, false teaching, and religious spectacle masquerading as spiritual power. **A microphone does not make a pastor. A crowd does not make a prophet. A television program does not make an apostle. An ordination certificate cannot amend the Bible. And a faithful Christian woman does not need any of those things to serve Jesus Christ. The Lord gave the church His word, established the qualifications for its overseers, and supplied every believer with opportunities for faithful service. The final authority is not the platform, the personality, or the popularity. It is the Book. And the Book has already spoken.**

Conclusion — Women Pastors and Biblical Authority — What the Scriptures Actually Say

After ten studies examining the Scriptures concerning women pastors, biblical authority, spiritual gifts, prophetic ministries, church government, and the faithful service of Christian women, we have arrived at a conclusion that modern religion may not appreciate but the word of God has never been embarrassed to declare. **The pastoral office is not a religious popularity contest, a reward for public influence, or an honorary position that can be awarded whenever a congregation decides that biblical qualifications have become inconvenient.** The Holy Ghost established the responsibilities of church leadership, identified the qualifications for those entrusted with oversight, and recorded the different ministries through which believers serve Jesus Christ. Our responsibility is not to revise those instructions until they resemble whatever contemporary religious culture considers acceptable. Our responsibility is to believe them. First Timothy 3:1 declares, "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." Verse 2 continues, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife." That little word "must" has survived nearly two thousand years of religious arguments, denominational revisions, theological innovations, and ecclesiastical ambition. It remains exactly where God placed it. A committee may dislike it, a congregation may vote against it, and a celebrated religious personality may build an entire ministry around explaining why it no longer matters. But **a thousand religious opinions cannot cancel one divine requirement, and a church that places its preferences above the Scriptures has already surrendered the very authority it claims to represent.**

The first great distinction we established is that proclaiming the gospel and occupying the office of pastor are not identical responsibilities. Mark 16:15 records the Lord Jesus Christ commanding, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Acts 8:4 declares that believers scattered by persecution "went every where preaching the word." Romans 10:17 explains, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The gospel must be communicated because lost sinners cannot believe a message they have never heard. That responsibility does not belong exclusively to those occupying recognized church offices. A Christian woman may explain salvation to her neighbour, distribute the Scriptures, testify concerning Jesus Christ, and encourage another believer without assuming pastoral government. A Christian man may perform those same ministries without becoming a bishop. The authority of the gospel comes from God, not from the ecclesiastical standing of the messenger. **A woman does not have to become a pastor before she can tell a sinner that Jesus Christ died for his sins, was buried, and rose again the third day.** And any preacher who attempts to discourage faithful women from communicating that glorious message merely because they do not occupy his office

has confused the responsibility of witnessing with the qualifications for church government. God never required every believer to become a shepherd before permitting that believer to speak about the Saviour.

We also returned to Genesis, where the foundations later cited by the apostle Paul were established before there was a church building, denominational headquarters, or theological controversy concerning women's ordination. Genesis 2 records God forming Adam from the dust of the ground, placing him in the garden, giving him responsibility, and subsequently making Eve as an help meet for him. First Timothy 2:13 declares, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve." Paul did not appeal to a temporary religious fashion when explaining the order associated with teaching and authority. He appealed to creation itself. But we also examined the fall and discovered something that ought to silence every man who attempts to turn biblical headship into a declaration of masculine perfection. Eve was deceived, but Adam deliberately disobeyed. Romans 5:12 identifies the entrance of sin into the world through one man, and verse 19 contrasts Adam's disobedience with the obedience of Jesus Christ. **The man who uses Eve's deception to announce the spiritual superiority of men had better explain why the apostle Paul places the entrance of sin upon Adam.** Biblical headship establishes responsibility, not immunity from foolishness. God did not create woman as an inferior species, and He did not establish male responsibility so that men could boast about an authority they regularly fail to exercise faithfully.

The apostolic instructions concerning women and teaching authority were equally important. First Timothy 2:12 declares, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Paul then supplies his reasons from the creation of Adam and Eve and the circumstances of their transgression. The movement into chapter 3, where the qualifications for bishops appear, establishes the importance of understanding the restriction within the government and authoritative teaching responsibilities of the New Testament church. Yet the same apostle commands older women to be "teachers of good things" in Titus 2:3 and identifies their responsibility to instruct younger women in godliness. The New Testament also records Priscilla participating with Aquila in explaining the Scriptures more perfectly to Apollos. Those passages do not contradict one another when the different settings and responsibilities are respected. **The Bible does not forbid every Christian woman from teaching every biblical subject to every person under every circumstance. Neither does it permit every form of authoritative congregational teaching simply because somebody refuses to acknowledge the office involved.** A restriction established by the Holy Ghost must remain a restriction, and a ministry authorized by the Holy Ghost must remain an authorized ministry. The church has no right to loosen God's commandments to

accommodate rebellion or tighten them beyond His words to accommodate religious arrogance.

Then we examined the qualifications for bishops and elders, and the evidence became even more specific. First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 describe the overseer as the husband of one wife and require moral integrity, household responsibility, spiritual maturity, good behaviour, doctrinal competence, and a reputation consistent with Christian leadership. Acts 20 connects elders with overseers responsible for feeding the church of God. First Peter 5 commands elders to exercise oversight willingly, without greed or domination, remembering that the flock belongs to the Chief Shepherd. These passages do not describe a theatrical position designed to provide its occupant with public recognition. They establish a stewardship involving the care of souls purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. A congregation cannot replace those qualifications with a popularity contest, and an ordination certificate cannot manufacture eligibility where biblical requirements have not been satisfied. But let every man occupying the pulpit examine himself before congratulating himself too enthusiastically. **Being male is not the entire qualification for being a pastor. It is possible to possess the proper sex while lacking the proper doctrine, character, maturity, household responsibility, and spiritual discipline.** The man who celebrates the expression "husband of one wife" while ignoring "blameless," "sober," "patient," and "apt to teach" has apparently discovered a remarkable method of reading only the portions of Scripture that flatter him. Unfortunately for his argument, God wrote the entire list.

We also confronted the historical examples frequently introduced into this controversy, especially Deborah, Miriam, Huldah, and Anna. Deborah genuinely judged Israel, exercised significant national authority, and communicated God's direction to Barak. Huldah delivered the word of the LORD to representatives of King Josiah. Miriam was identified as a prophetess and participated prominently in Israel's deliverance from Egypt. Anna testified publicly concerning the Redeemer to those awaiting redemption in Jerusalem. These women were not imaginary figures, passive decorations, or unfortunate exceptions whose ministries ought to be concealed because they complicate a convenient religious slogan. God used them, and Scripture records their service without embarrassment. Yet their responsibilities belonged to identifiable historical settings. Deborah judged Israel during the period before the monarchy. Huldah prophesied in Judah under the Mosaic covenant. Miriam ministered during the Exodus, and Anna served during the closing period of Israel's history before the completed redemptive work of Christ. **A judge in Israel is not automatically a bishop in the Church, and a prophetess delivering God's revelation is not automatically the pastor of a New Testament congregation.** The honest interpreter acknowledges what those women actually did without inventing offices the Scriptures

never assigned them. Deborah's authority must not be denied, but neither should her office be renamed merely because somebody wants her biography to amend First Timothy 3.

The New Testament women were no less remarkable in their faithfulness. Priscilla and Aquila worked alongside Paul, risked their lives in the service of Christ, welcomed believers into their home, and helped Apollos understand the way of God more perfectly. Phebe was commended as a servant of the church at Cenchrea and a succourer of many, including Paul himself. Lydia responded to the gospel and extended hospitality to the servants of Christ. Dorcas was remembered for charitable deeds and the garments she had made for those in need. Lois and Eunice contributed to Timothy's spiritual foundation, while Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, Euodias, and Syntyche received recognition for their labour in the Lord. These women were not waiting around for permission to accomplish something useful. They were serving. **Some people seem to imagine that unless a woman receives a religious title, her work cannot possibly possess eternal significance. Paul apparently never received that particular theological announcement. He kept thanking women whose faithfulness had strengthened the work of the gospel.** The Bible honours what they accomplished, and we ought to do the same. Their contributions do not become less valuable because Scripture does not identify them as pastors. A faithful servant does not require an invented office to receive genuine recognition.

Consider again Priscilla and Apollos, because their meeting destroys foolish arguments from both directions. Acts 18:26 records that Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos unto themselves and "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." There was an eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures, who needed additional instruction. A faithful Christian couple recognized the deficiency and helped him understand the truth. Priscilla participated in that instruction, and the account does not condemn her. Neither does it announce her appointment as pastor over Apollos or the congregation at Ephesus. The record demonstrates that a woman can meaningfully contribute to a man's biblical understanding without assuming governing authority over him. It also exposes the foolish pride of a man who refuses sound biblical correction merely because a woman understands a particular passage more accurately than he does. **A man who would rather remain ignorant than learn something from a faithful Christian woman has confused spiritual leadership with masculine vanity.** Apollos possessed enough wisdom to receive instruction, and his subsequent ministry demonstrated the value of that correction. The Scriptures were the authority, the truth was the objective, and the people involved were servants participating in the work of God. Nobody needed to manufacture a pastoral appointment to make the event important.

We then addressed the difficult passages concerning women praying and prophesying, head coverings, spiritual gifts, and silence within the assembled church. First Corinthians 11:5 refers to a woman praying or prophesying while establishing principles of headship and proper conduct. First Corinthians 14:34 commands women to keep silence in the churches within a chapter regulating tongues, prophecy, interpretation, revelation, and congregational order. Acts 21:9 records that Philip had four daughters who prophesied, while Joel 2 and Acts 2 describe prophetic activity involving sons and daughters. Those passages must be compared rather than forced into a contest where one inspired statement must destroy another. The existence of women exercising genuine prophetic gifts during the apostolic period does not automatically establish their appointment to the continuing pastoral office. Neither does a command governing conduct in the assembly authorize a universal prohibition against every form of Christian speech by women. **The apostle Paul did not contradict himself between First Corinthians 11 and First Corinthians 14. The confusion begins when somebody insists that prayer, prophecy, teaching, judging revelations, and pastoral government must all be identical activities.** God established different responsibilities, and the interpreter must preserve those differences. A gift is not automatically an office, and a restriction concerning one responsibility must not be stretched until it abolishes another ministry the Scriptures recognize.

Another truth emerged with unmistakable force: **equality in Jesus Christ does not require identical responsibilities within the body of Christ.** Galatians 3:26 declares, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Verse 28 establishes the believer's unity in the Saviour, declaring that there is neither male nor female, "for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." That is a glorious statement concerning salvation and standing before God. A Christian woman does not receive an inferior righteousness, a weaker eternal life, or a smaller share in the grace purchased through the blood of Christ. But First Corinthians 12 explains that the body contains many members with differing functions. The eye is not the hand, and the ear is not the foot. Paul asks what would become of the body if every member performed the same function. Verse 18 answers that God has set the members in the body according to His pleasure. **The church is one body, not an ecclesiastical assembly line manufacturing identical officers.** A woman does not become spiritually inferior because she does not occupy the pastoral office, any more than a man becomes spiritually superior because he does. The Lord values faithful obedience to the responsibilities He actually assigns.

And now a word to the men who loudly defend biblical headship while quietly neglecting biblical responsibility. The Scriptures do not authorize a husband to become a domestic tyrant or a pastor to become the private dictator of a congregation. Ephesians 5:25

commands, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." First Peter 3:7 instructs husbands to honour their wives as heirs together of the grace of life. First Peter 5:3 specifically warns elders against becoming "lords over God's heritage." Those commandments are not decorative additions that may be ignored while a man enjoys quoting passages concerning submission. They establish obligations attached to authority. A husband who mistreats his wife, neglects his family, and demands unquestioning obedience to his personal whims is not demonstrating biblical headship. A pastor who intimidates believers, manipulates consciences, or treats the congregation as personal property is not following the Chief Shepherd. **The man who wants the authority of Christ without the sacrificial character of Christ has misunderstood the authority he claims to possess.** Biblical leadership is accountable leadership. The flock belongs to Jesus Christ, the home exists under God's authority, and no man is granted permission to turn divine order into an excuse for selfishness.

Nor can we overlook the condition of modern celebrity religion, where public personalities sometimes receive greater attention than the Scriptures they claim to represent. Television broadcasts, enormous audiences, impressive stages, bestselling books, dramatic religious manifestations, and elaborate ministry organizations can create an appearance of tremendous spiritual authority. Yet Second Timothy 4:2 commands, "Preach the word," and verses 3–4 warn of people who will not endure sound doctrine but will accumulate teachers according to their own desires. Matthew 7 warns against false prophets appearing in sheep's clothing, while First Thessalonians 5:21 commands, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." The Lord never commanded believers to accept a teaching because the speaker is famous, wealthy, entertaining, or surrounded by enthusiastic supporters. Claims of miracles, prophecies, extraordinary spiritual power, and divine appointments must be examined rather than swallowed whole. **A microphone does not make a pastor, a crowd does not make a prophet, and a television studio does not become an apostolic headquarters merely because somebody has learned to smile convincingly into a camera.** At the same time, biblical discernment does not require spreading rumours, inventing misconduct, or making accusations that cannot be established. False doctrine should be exposed through Scripture, not through gossip dressed in religious clothing.

We should also remember the danger of allowing religious spectacle to replace the sober instruction of God's word. First Corinthians 14:33 declares, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." Verse 40 concludes, "Let all things be done decently and in order." In the immediate context, Paul regulates genuine spiritual gifts operating within the Corinthian congregation. A tongue-speaker without an interpreter was required to remain silent, and prophets were instructed to exercise restraint and maintain order. If authentic gifts during the apostolic period were subject to divine

regulation, modern claims of extraordinary manifestations certainly do not possess automatic exemption from Scripture. A person trembling, shouting, collapsing, or making a dramatic religious declaration has not thereby established that God is responsible. Such events must be evaluated according to the facts and biblical teaching, not the excitement of the audience. **The Holy Ghost does not need theatrical confusion to demonstrate His presence, and the Scriptures do not become more authoritative because somebody has added dramatic lighting and a smoke machine.** Genuine spiritual ministry directs attention toward Jesus Christ and His truth. Religious performance that draws people away from the written word deserves examination, no matter how impressive the production appears.

But as this series closes, let us turn deliberately from the public spectacle to the faithful Christian women whose service rarely receives comparable attention. Think of the woman who spends her evening explaining the gospel to somebody desperately needing salvation. Think of the mother who teaches her children the King James Bible, the older sister who helps a younger believer understand sound doctrine, and the faithful woman who encourages a discouraged Christian to remain steadfast in the Lord. Think of those who distribute Scripture, assist families, strengthen ministries, and continue proclaiming Jesus Christ while others argue over titles. Their names may never appear on a television screen. Their homes may never become famous ministry headquarters. Their ordinary service may never receive a standing ovation. But their faithfulness matters to Almighty God. **The Lord does not require a woman to possess a bishop's title before her labour can bear eternal fruit. He does not need a denominational certificate before He can use a faithful sister to encourage a weary saint or bring the gospel to a lost sinner.** Some of the most valuable work in the body of Christ takes place far from the pulpit, carried out by believers whose reward is not the applause of men but the approval of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And to those faithful women who have followed this entire study, understand precisely what is being defended. We are not trying to take away your Bible, silence your gospel witness, discourage your service, or diminish your importance within the body of Christ. Keep studying the Scriptures. Keep proclaiming salvation through Jesus Christ. Keep encouraging believers, instructing your children, teaching where Scripture gives that responsibility, and helping others recognize truth from error. The Bible does not command ignorance as a virtue of Christian womanhood. It commands learning, godliness, sound conduct, and faithful service. The woman who knows her Bible well enough to recognize a false doctrine may possess considerably more spiritual understanding than a man who has spent twenty years behind a pulpit repeating religious traditions he never examined. That does not overturn pastoral qualifications; it exposes the importance of genuine biblical

knowledge. **Do not allow a controversy concerning unauthorized offices to convince you that authorized service is unimportant. God has given His people far more work than can ever be performed from behind a church pulpit.** The harvest is great, the needs are many, and every faithful believer should desire to serve the Saviour according to His word.

Finally, everything returns to the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel of His grace. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast. A pastor's office cannot save a sinner. A woman's ministry cannot purchase eternal life. Religious ordination, charitable service, doctrinal knowledge, public influence, and personal achievement cannot substitute for the finished work of Jesus Christ. Every saved man and woman stands before God through the same Saviour and upon the same righteousness. From that standing flows the responsibility to serve Him faithfully. Second Corinthians 5:10 reminds us that believers must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, where their works will be examined. That day will reveal considerably more about faithful service than any earthly collection of religious titles. **The Lord will not be impressed by a man's boasting that he possessed a pastoral office while neglecting its responsibilities, nor will He overlook the faithful labour of a woman merely because she never possessed one.** Every servant must answer for what was entrusted to that servant, and no earthly reputation can alter the final accounting.

So let this be the final word concerning *Women Pastors and Biblical Authority — What the Scriptures Actually Say*. We will defend the qualifications for bishops because God established them. We will honour faithful Christian women because the Scriptures honour them. We will reject religious tyranny because the Chief Shepherd forbids men to lord over His heritage. We will encourage gospel proclamation because lost sinners need to hear the message of salvation. We will examine every spiritual claim by the written word rather than surrender our judgment to religious celebrities, emotional performances, or popular opinion. And we will refuse to turn equality in Christ into an excuse for abolishing the differing responsibilities God established within His body. **A faithful woman does not need a pastor's office to be useful to Jesus Christ. A man does not become qualified to pastor merely because he is a man. A congregation does not receive authority to rewrite Scripture simply because its members agree upon the revision. And a religious personality does not become the voice of God merely because enough people applaud.** The church belongs to Christ. The gospel belongs to Christ. The authority belongs to Christ. The word of God remains the final standard for every man, every woman, every ministry, and every congregation. Let the men serve faithfully. Let the women serve

faithfully. Let the pastors meet the qualifications. Let the people examine the Scriptures. And let every religious opinion bow before the Book. **God never asked His church to improve upon His instructions. He commanded His people to obey them. The issue was never whether women could do great things for God. The Bible proves that they can, and that they have. The issue was whether the church would respect the offices and responsibilities God Himself established. After ten studies, the answer remains where it stood before the controversy began: not in the applause of a crowd, not in the authority of a denomination, not in the title of a celebrity preacher, but in the plain words of the King James Bible. And when God has spoken, the church's responsibility is not to take a vote. It is to believe Him.**

