

The Role of Women in Christian Ministry

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1. Introduction

A number of issues relating to the role of women will be assessed, especially exegesis of the pertinent passages and the meaning of key words. A summary of the biblical teaching and its application in today's situation will also be attempted. While differing views will be mentioned lack of space prevents a comprehensive rehearsal of the opposing arguments.

In grappling with this issue it is important to note a number of more fundamental factors which will influence one's approach. Some of these are discussed briefly where necessary in commenting on texts below; however they are raised here as anyone reading in this area will soon realise their importance and the variety of approaches they can engender. For an example of the way these issues play into the discussion, and can dominate it, see Giles' article and the responses.¹ It may well be that the whole debate will move more to these areas than discussion of the texts in question.

- Hermeneutics

Particularly important factors are:

- the accuracy with which background settings of letters can be determined and the extent to which they should affect our reading of the letter;
- the extent to which the cultural embodiment of a biblical principle and the principle itself can be distinguished;
- the effect of difficult verses within some of the texts in question²: here we find the difference between saying we may not understand all of a passage fully and saying we therefore cannot understand/apply any of it.

- Systematics

There is great variation in the way different texts are synthesised: some arguments turn on asserting which are the more 'fundamental' texts and reading all others in their light. Typically this involves either taking Gal 3:28 as fundamental and reading equality of roles from it into other texts, or pitting the descriptive texts of what women did against the didactic texts prohibiting ministry.

- Today's culture

It is very easy for the changes in today's culture with regard to the role of women to affect our view on this subject – and this cuts both ways. One side can think that any restrictions on the role of women today are simply hangovers of ignorant male chauvinism, and the other side can see any consideration of change as bowing to liberal feminism. Yet, others see application of biblical principles as being radically determined by our cultural setting.

- Related issues

Clearly one's overall view of Biblical teaching on personhood and sexuality, and also about male-female relationships in marriage come into play in this discussion.

2. Meaning of 'Head'

NOTE: this section involves a more technical discussion. Some readers may wish to move directly to the summary in 2.6.

¹ K. Giles, 'A Critique of the "Novel" Contemporary Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 Given in the Book *Women in the Church*', Part I *EQ*, 72:2, (2000), pp151-167, and Part II, *EQ*, 72:3, (2000), pp195-215. Replies: A. Kostenberger, 'A Response', *EQ*, 73:3, (2001), pp205-224, and K. Giles, 'A Rejoinder', *EQ*, 73:3, (2001), pp225-245.

² Usually 1 Cor 11:10, and 1 Tim 2:15

2.1 Introduction

This is an important issue for understanding 1 Cor 11 (and also Eph 5). The main debate is whether κεφαλη carries a meaning of leader/superior and hence 'authority over' or a meaning of 'source', especially 'source of life', with no connotations of authority. Understanding of Paul's meaning should come from (a) his own use by examination of each context, (b) examination of the LXX which is the most determinative document for lexical studies outside of the NT, and (c) extra-biblical literature from as close to NT period as possible.

[NOTE: There are no other occurrences of κεφαλη in the NT in other than a literal sense outside of the Pauline literature.]

2.2 Pauline literature

There are seven passages in which Paul uses κεφαλη. These are shown in the table below. Examination of these shows that authority is a common theme to least some of them. It is true that others have an element of 'source of life' which needs to be acknowledged. However this is both not as dominant as some claim, and is also a 'both/and' rather than an 'either/or' situation. Arnold has demonstrated that the references in Ephesians and Colossians are most probably drawn from a physiological understanding of the head functioning as the leader/authority and the source of growth/nourishment.³

Text	Summary	Comment
1 Cor 11:3	Christ head of man; man head of woman; God head of Christ	Passage does involve discussion of origin (v8), but also involves issues of authority
Eph 1:22	God placing all things under Christ's feet and making him head over everything	Superiority and authority are clear from context
Eph 4:15	Growth of the body up into the head who is Christ	The idea of growth is present but so is that of leadership
Eph 5:23	Husband is head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church	Leadership/authority is clearly present but so is source of nourishment
Col 1:18	Christ is head of the church	Firstborn gives idea of supremacy and original source
Col 2:19	From Christ the head the whole body grows	Source of growth is clear but so is leadership

2.3 LXX

Ro'sh is used of a leader/superior 180 times in the LXX; this is often translated as αρχον (60%) but another 13 words are used to translate it including κεφαλη (18 times)⁴. Of these 6 are variant readings, 4 preserve a head/tail contrast and 8 are definite examples.

Hence it is claimed by one side that this is an unusual translation so rare that that the metaphorical use of κεφαλη to mean leader/superior is without support.⁵ Given the restriction of most of the occurrences to one section of Judges (10:18; 11:8, 9, 11), it is further claimed to be the result of one particular scribe who was unaware of this inappropriate use.⁶

In response:

- The dismissal of variant readings should not be allowed: while the variants clearly exist they still demonstrate that κεφαλη was used of a leader/superior; nothing more than their presence in some manuscripts, and their meaning in that context, is being claimed.

³ C. E. Arnold, 'Jesus Christ: "Head" of the Church (Colossians and Ephesians)' in *Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ*, edited by J. B. Green and M. Turner, (Paternoster, 1994).

⁴ The exact figure is debated depending on who is counting but it only differs by 1-3.

⁵ G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, (Eerdmans, 1987).

⁶ P. B. Payne, 'Response', in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, edited by A. Mickleson, (IVP, 1986).

- Ruling authority may still be present in the head-tail contrast; examination of the context suggests that it is.
- The small fraction of translations of *ro'sh* by κεφαλη is actually to be expected unless the translators were to preserve a metaphorical meaning every time. Instead they chose words for which the normal meaning was 'ruler'. This does not demonstrate they thought κεφαλη was inappropriate, only that they did not seek to use a metaphor in the majority of passages.
- Some of the other words than αρχον are used to translate *ro'sh* meaning leader/superior are found only a handful of times, but no one questions whether the same meaning is intended.
- No LXX examples of κεφαλη meaning 'source' are found. Given the normal rules of lexical study the fact that 18 examples of one interpretation but none of another are found is decisive.

2.4 Extra-biblical sources

From biblical and extra-biblical material Grudem cites 49 metaphorical uses of κεφαλη where a person of superior rank is meant. This includes 12 from the NT and 18 from the LXX, leaving 19 extra-biblical occurrences.⁷ These findings have been challenged from different quarters:

- Payne gives extra-biblical examples where κεφαλη is claimed to mean 'source'.⁸
- Fee says of Grudem's examples that there are 'serious exegetical questions as to whether the authors intended a metaphorical sense of "authority over".' Instead Fee says that all the evidence demonstrates is that metaphorical usage as 'leader' can be found but that this is the exception that proves the rule. He concludes that Paul's readers would most naturally have understood him to be referring to κεφαλη as source. Fee draws mainly on the work of Payne in this analysis.⁹
- Cervin also criticised Grudem's work saying many of the extra-biblical examples were ambiguous or false.¹⁰
- C. Kroeger quotes many examples from Classical and Patristic writings where κεφαλη is seen to mean source; in fact Kroeger concludes that any meaning as authority/leader is completely absent.¹¹

Grudem replies¹² that:

- The examples given by Payne either do not appreciate the full context and/or are ambiguous.
- The examples given by Kroeger are either the same ones as suggested by Payne which Grudem has replied to, or they simply do not demonstrate what she claims. In fact her conclusions are quite misleading as material from the Apostolic Fathers and early Patristic writers demonstrates that use of κεφαλη as leader is common. This data shows that such a meaning could easily have been intended at the time of writing the NT.
- Grudem's response to Cervin concedes one or two examples but demonstrates the inadequacy of the overall criticism.

Hence Grudem concludes that there are no *unambiguous* examples of κεφαλη meaning source, and only a few possible examples. Where these occur the idea of authority is usually also present.

These conclusions are supported by the independent work of Fitzmyer who concludes that the meaning ruler/authority is part of the normal metaphorical usage for κεφαλη and that a meaning of source cannot be adequately demonstrated.¹³

⁷ W. Grudem, 'Does Kephale Mean "Source" or "Authority Over" in Greek Literature', *Trinity Journal*, 6, (1985), pp35-59.

⁸ P. B. Payne, 'Response', in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, edited by A. Mickleson, (IVP, 1986).

⁹ G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, (Eerdmans, 1987).

¹⁰ R. S. Cervin, 'Does Kephale Mean "Source" or "Authority Over" in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal', *Trinity Journal*, 10, (1989), pp85-112.

¹¹ C. Kroeger, 'Head', in *Dict of Paul and His Letters*, (IVP, 1993). See also fuller article in G. G. Hull, *Equal to Serve*, (SU, 1987).

¹² See both W. Grudem, 'The Meaning of Kephale ("Head"): A Response to Recent Studies', in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by W. Grudem and J. Piper, (Crossway, 1991); and 'The Meaning of κεφαλη ("Head"): An Evaluation of New Evidence, Real and Alleged', *JETS*, 44, 1, (2001), pp25-68.

Further support comes from the study of Max Turner.¹⁴ He discusses the existence of homonyms for the word αρχη - primarily that of 'beginning' and 'ruler'. As homonyms these would have been thought of as independent words. However Bedale's influential article first suggesting that κεφαλη could mean 'source' fails to recognise how separately these words would have been conceived, and instead relies on their being confused. Turner also brings linguistic rules to bear on the subject which draw further into question those possible occurrences where κεφαλη might mean 'source'. He concludes that there is no good evidence of κεφαλη meaning 'source' in the public domain of Paul's day. He ends with: 'Those who wish to protest that that "head" as "authority over" is relatively rare should at least be prepared to admit that "head" as "source" is considerably rarer (probably to the point of vanishing altogether).'¹⁵

2.5 Other interpretations

Thiselton¹⁶ suggests a meaning of 'pre-eminent, foremost and synecdoche for a representative role'. I.e. he wants to allow multiple meanings and include an element of 'leadership' without following what he sees as Grudem's narrow reading. Cervin¹⁷ and Liefeld¹⁸ suggest similar meanings. Grudem's response is simply that such a meaning is not found in the literature of the time or in any of the speciality lexicons. That is not to say that ideas of pre-eminence are not present as the connection between eminence and leadership/authority was very strong. However it does mean that to argue for a meaning of pre-eminence without any concept of authority is wrong.

2.6 Summary

It has to be said of this debate that much turns on the interpretation of the researcher in question: what to one is a clear example of κεφαλη used as 'source', is ambiguous to another, or even an example of 'authority' to another. Hence it can come down to claims by both sides as to which is the 'majority' and 'rare' usage. The situation is worsened by apparently sloppy (or even fraudulent) scholarship on occasions, and by great overstatements of the evidence in popular books.¹⁹ This is unfortunate for the lay person who ends up not knowing which side to believe. My opinion on examining a great deal of the evidence and reading portions of the primary sources is for κεφαλη carrying an 'authority/leader' meaning, but on occasions also involving a 'source of life/nourishment' element in addition. This is only ever an *additional* component and whether it is present should be determined contextually.

3. 1 Corinthians 11

The above discussion on meaning of head is extremely influential (but not determinative) on the interpretation of 1 Cor 11:2-16.

3.1 Head as 'source'

If head as 'source' is used then the argument of v3 must be as follows:

- Christ is the source of man in creation
- Man is the source of woman in creation
- God is the source of Christ in eternity OR in the incarnation

¹³ J. Fitzmyer, 'Another Look at *Kephale* in 1 Corinthians 11:3', *NTS*, 35, (1989), pp503-511; and '*Kephale* in 1 Corinthians 11:3' *Interpretation*, 47, (1993), pp52-59.

¹⁴ Turner M. 'Modern Linguistics and the New Testament', in *Hearing the New Testament*, edited by J. Green, (Eerdmans, 1995).

¹⁵ Turner M. 'Modern Linguistics and the New Testament', in *Hearing the New Testament*, edited by J. Green, (Eerdmans, 1995), p172.

¹⁶ A. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGNT, (Eerdmans, 2000).

¹⁷ R. S. Cervin, 'Does *Kephale* Mean "Source" or "Authority Over" in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal', *Trinity Journal* 10, (1989), pp85-112.

¹⁸ W. L. Liefeld, 'Women, Submission and Ministry in 1 Corinthians', in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, edited by A. Mickleson, (IVP, 1986).

¹⁹ For example G. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, (Baker, 1990), claims that there is not a single use of κεφαλη as 'authority' in the NT or the extra-biblical literature.

This is the position of most egalitarians who usually conclude that nothing in this passage suggests subordination of women.²⁰ The requirement for a head covering is usually seen as a culturally appropriate sign of respect for one's husband. Hence the biblical principle is taken to be 'mutual respect' only, and not 'respect of male leadership'.

As well as the debate over semantic range many disallow the meaning of 'superior/authority' here because of what they see as a heretical subordinationist Christology (see especially C. Kroeger²¹). However this is not appreciate the distinction between functional and ontological subordination and many do not perceive that to say that God is the source of Christ in eternity is to run close to the same risk – some almost say Christ is God's first creation.

Others (e.g. Meir) say that source of existence is in view but that the order of creation necessarily involves subordination. [Interestingly this was the view of Bedale's influential article in 1954 which first suggested the meaning of source; he stated that the consequence of man being the woman's source in Paul's thought was the subordination of the women, but has been rather selectively quoted since.²²]

3.2 Head as 'leader/authority'

If head as leader/authority is used then the argument is:

- Christ is the leader/authority of man
- Man is the leader/authority of woman
- God (the Father) is the leader/authority of Christ

This is not set up a four tier hierarchy (God-Christ-Man-Woman) but rather is considering 3 pairs of relationships. The relationship of headship between man and woman mean it is inappropriate for a woman to pray/prophesy (publicly) without a head covering. While the exact meaning of head coverings continues to be debated it is most probable that within the culture of the day to do so was an act of insubordination to her husband and hence shamed him.

3.3 Argument from creation

Paul gives further arguments as to why a head covering is required for a woman but not for a man. It is debated as to whether these are complementary to the concept of headship or constitutive of it; but the flow of argument suggests the later.

Verse 7 states that man is the image and glory of God but woman is the glory of man. Again this is not creating a three tier hierarchy but establishing two sets of relationships. The idea of 'glory' is dominant and is best interpreted as 'giving honour to', hence man should give honour to God and woman should give honour to man. This is not to deny that women are to honour God, rather within God's created order one of the ways they do so is by honouring their husband.

This concept is further explained by the order of creation – man being created first – and also in the reason for the creation of woman – she is created *for* man (v8-9). These comments are not expanded but in the context are an argument for male leadership and hence suitable dress in public meetings. Paul's argument of the chronology of creation is also seen in 1 Tim 2 and hence should be seen as a fundamental plank in his thinking about male-female relationships. This is probably drawing on the notion of primogeniture where the firstborn has an elevated status and becomes head of the house.

The comment on woman being made for man is best taken as Paul's comment on Genesis 2:18 ('a helper suitable for him'). While this must not be taken to regard Eve as no more than Adam's aide (the meaning of 'helper' gives the sense of rescuing Adam as God rescues his people), Paul clearly reads it to support his argument with regard to male headship.

Verse 10 has caused much discussion and received little by way of a satisfactory answer. The first issue is whether the 'authority' referred to is the women's or not; the most usual reading of the Greek

²⁰ E.g. C. S. Keener, Paul, Women and Wives, (Hendrickson, 1992).

²¹ C. C. Kroeger, 'The Classical Concept of Head as Source', in G. G. Hull, Equal to Serve, (SU, 1987).

²² C. L. Blomberg, 'Neither Hierarchalist nor Egalitarian', in Two Views on Women in Ministry, edited by C. L. Blomberg & J. R. Beck, (Zondervan, 2001).

suggests it is ('she should have authority on/over her head')²³. However the flow of argument from earlier could mean it is the husband's authority being referred to – i.e. 'authority on her head' is Paul's compressed way of referring back to the head coverings already discussed. It is this reading that justifies the NIV's addition of 'a sign of authority'. A good argument is made for this by Schreiner.²⁴

However even if this verse does refer to the women's authority it cannot be made to mean, as some suggest, that Paul is referring to the women's 'right' to prophecy and pray. That is to run against the flow of argument which focuses on *how* women are to go about these activities, not that they have the right to do them (which is simply presumed). Some readings along this line have to take Paul to be vacillating in his thought here rather than presenting a coherent argument. Others suggest that Paul is asserting the woman's right to wear whatever she likes on her head, but that earlier he wants her to show respect by wearing the appropriate covering. Against this though is that the language is that of obligation – Paul is saying the woman 'ought' to have authority on her head. Probably the best way of understanding the argument if the 'authority' is the woman's, is that 'control' of one's head is being referred to. I.e. Women should exercise voluntary control of their heads (by using the appropriate covering) so as to recognise the leadership of men.²⁵

The additional reason (because of the angels) is probably best explained by the reference in the Qumran documents to angels being guardians of appropriate worship.²⁶ There are also numerous other interpretations. However understanding this reference to angels is not necessary to follow the flow of Paul's thought through the chapter.

3.4 Affirmation of equality and dependence

In 11:11-12 Paul appears to give a balancing comment in case the preceding argument be over interpreted. This affirms that there is a mutuality between man and woman. This is expressed by saying one is not 'without' the other ($\chi\omega\pi\rho\iota\alpha$), and that the woman is 'from' man ($\epsilon\kappa$), but man is 'through' woman ($\delta\iota\alpha$). Hence he appears to want to affirm the equality and mutual dependence of men and woman, while also insisting on male headship. Some egalitarians use these verses to assert that Paul negates any role differences, but this to read Paul against himself and not accept he can hold both equality and differentiation together.

4. 1 Corinthians 14

The context of this passage is the church gathering. It is clear from here, as well as from chapter 11, that women played a part in this gathering – there is the expectation that they will prophesy and pray, and in 14:26 is the expectation that each person brings something to contribute to the meeting (no comment on gender restrictions being made).

The restriction in 14:34-35 is in the context of evaluating prophecies (v29), and it is only prohibition from this part of the meeting that makes sense given the expectation of woman's involvement.²⁷ The command is for the women to keep silent ($\sigma\iota\gamma\alpha\omega$) which is the normal word for remaining silent while others speak – previously in v28 and 30. Instead they are to be subject ($\u03c5\u03c0\omicron\tau\alpha\sigma\omega$) which Paul uses for being under the control or authority of another – it has previously been used in v32 with reference to the 'spirit of the prophets' being under the control of the prophets themselves (see further references under the 1 Timothy 2 discussion).

The reason given for this command is 'the law'. This is almost certainly a reference to the creation narrative which Paul sees as teaching male headship – there is no reference within the Mosaic law to women remaining silent in public gatherings. Egalitarians often suggest that 'the law' refers to Jewish tradition which is thought to require the silence of women, and hence this is an accommodation to the surrounding culture (reference is often made to Paul voluntarily putting himself under the law in 1 Cor

²³ This was first suggested by M. D. Hooker, ['Authority on Her Head: An Examination of 1 Corinthians xi. 10', *NTS*, 10, (1966), pp410-416] and has been followed by various commentators since including Gordon Fee.

²⁴ T. Schreiner, 'Head Coverings, Prophecies and the Trinity', in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by W. Grudem and J. Piper, (Crossway, 1991).

²⁵ C. L. Blomberg, 'Neither Hierarchalist nor Egalitarian', in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, edited by C. L. Blomberg & J. R. Beck, (Zondervan, 2001).

²⁶ J. Fitzmyer, 'A Feature of Qumran: Angelology and the Angels of 1 Cor xi. 10', *NTS*, 4, (1957), pp48-58.

²⁷ D. A. Carson, 'Silent in the Churches', in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by W. Grudem and J. Piper, (Crossway, 1991).

9).²⁸ However when Paul uses 'the law' (ο νόμος) he is always referring to the OT canon. Alternative suggestions that Paul is here quoting the teaching of his opponents in Corinth and opposing their view²⁹ are quite unpersuasive.³⁰

Any questions the women have must be directed to their husbands at home. This is the most unusual part of Paul's instruction: given that women did speak in the meeting it is strange that they might not ask questions of clarification regarding the prophecies and their evaluation. It has been suggested that the questioning referred to carries a strong sense of interrogation (επιμαρτυρία). This could imply questioning in such a way as to influence the evaluation process or questioning the authority of those conducting it. However it is unclear how this attitude would then be allowed with regard to their husbands at home.

Any suggestion that the problem being addressed was women 'chattering' in church and disrupting the meeting has to be forcibly read into the passage. The word for speaking is the normal word for ordinary speech (λαλέω). It is often claimed that Paul gives this prohibition because women were interrupting teaching with questions – they interrupted more than men because of their relative lack of education.³¹ This view has to its credit a good interpretation of Paul's instruction about asking questions at home, but it falters on several counts:

- The relative understanding of those listening to Christian teaching is far more likely to relate to how long they have been converted and in the church than their formal education.
- There is no hint in the passage that interrupting the flow of teaching was an issue.
- Paul relates this prohibition to what 'the law says', but this view has no convincing explanation for such a grounding.
- Paul nowhere hints that this prohibition should be relaxed once these women are more educated as proponents of this position suggest he does.

[It is not uncommon for some to excise this passage altogether on text critical grounds e.g. Fee³²; however see Carson for a discussion and rebuttal.³³]

5. 1 Timothy 2

5.1 Context

The context appears to be that of the gathering of the church (indicated by 2:8) and involves specific instructions for men and women as to how they are to behave. Presumably these instructions are chosen because of the Ephesian situation.

5.2 Structure

The instructions to the women fall into two categories: that of their 'adornment' and that of activities with respect to men. This is then followed by a rationale in v13-14 and finally what is presumably an encouragement in v15.

The passage has a key word tying it together: propriety (σωφροσύνη) occurs in v9 and 15 and is hence a key idea in regard to the overall attitude and conduct Paul expects. In addition there is a balanced structure to the commands in v11-12:

v11	Learn in silence (11a)	in full submission (11a)
v12	Not to teach (12a)	not to exercise authority (12b) to be in silence (12c)

²⁸ C. S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, (Hendrickson, 1992).

²⁹ As argued by G. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, (Baker, 1990).

³⁰ See D. A. Carson, 'Silent in the Churches', in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by W. Grudem and J. Piper, (Crossway, 1991), for a full discussion.

³¹ See this view argued by C. S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, (Hendrickson, 1992).

³² G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, (Eerdmans, 1987).

³³ D. A. Carson, 'Silent in the Churches', in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by W. Grudem and J. Piper, (Crossway, 1991).

Hence silence/teaching and submission/authority form two pairs, and in addition the repetition of 'silence' forms an inclusio.

5.3 Learning in silence

The word use for 'silence' (hjsucia) can mean silence, quietness, or a peaceable attitude. Hence it may convey a sense of deference to those teaching and listening to them, without requiring absolute silence.

Some have taken this as a command 'to learn' and hence deduced that the problem was uninformed women who shouldn't teach. However 'to learn' is the expectation not the command; rather the focus of the command is the manner of learning.

5.4 Being in full submission

The word for submission (ujpotagh) is given a superlative sense by the addition of 'full/all' (πα"). The use of the noun elsewhere in Paul is seen in the table below.

Text	Summary	Comment
2 Cor 9:13	The submission that accompanies your confession	Obedience to a higher authority/allegiance is in view
Gal 2:5	Paul and his companions not submitting to the false brothers	Not giving in to a false authority
1 Tim 2:11	Woman being in full submission	Contrasted with having authority
1 Tim 3:4	Children of the overseer submitting to their father	Obedience to parent

The use of the verb (ujpotassw) in Paul is also illuminating as it appears to have great overlap in its semantic range. It is often used of the submission required to God/Christ; however when used of submission between people/groups of people the following are seen in the table below.

Text	Summary	Comment
Rom 13:1, 5	Submission to the governing authorities	Clear order of authority in view
1 Cor 14:32	The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets	Control over the spirit by the individual
1 Cor 14:34	Women are not allowed to speak but must be in submission	Submission shown by remaining silent during evaluation of prophecy
1 Cor 16:16	Submit to the household of Stephanas and to everyone who labours in the work	Submission and respect of those who lead to the church; or are involved in its ministry
Eph 5:21	Submit to one another; women to husbands	Mutual submission in the church, but reference to wives submitting to husbands and husbands loving wives
Eph 5:24	The Church submits to Christ so wives to their husbands	Parallel between submission to Christ and husband
Col 3:18	Wives submit to your husbands	Repeat of Eph command with parallel being husbands loving wives
Titus 2:5	Wives to be taught to be submissive to their husbands	Repeat of Eph and Col command in context of teaching younger women
Titus 2:9	Slaves being subject to their masters	Clear authority structure in view
Titus 3:1	Submission to the governing authorities	Clear order of authority in view

In light of Paul's consistent use of this word it is extremely hard to not to admit that he is speaking of submission to a higher authority in 1 Tim 2:11. This is opposes the (minority) view of some egalitarians who claim $\mu\lambda\upsilon\tau\alpha\sigma\sigma\omega$ means 'to identify with'³⁴ or 'to defer'.³⁵

5.5 Not to teach

The word for teach is the normal word in Paul's letters ($\delta\iota\delta\alpha\sigma\kappa\omega$) which is always used of positive instruction. This prohibition has traditionally been taken to limit women's teaching role in some way (discussed further below). The main egalitarian response is that this verse refers to a prohibition on women teaching false doctrine. This is dependent on attempts to reconstruct the situation in Ephesus and say that women were propagating false teaching. The content of such teaching is usually assumed to contain such elements as encouraging women to dominate men and repudiate traditional roles such as marriage and childbearing.

Some elements of this are accepted by all: for example that the false teaching had a specific influence on women is suggested by the reference in 2 Tim 3. However there are numerous reasons why this reading of the prohibition is not persuasive:

- There is no mention made of the women propagating this heresy themselves but only men.
- It is unlikely that all women should be prohibited from teaching just because some were influenced by heresy – Paul doesn't silence every man.
- There is no mention of women propagating false teaching as a reason for the prohibition in 2:9-15; the reference to Eve is with regard to her deception, not to her teaching Adam falsely (although it is possible to read the whole fall account as Adam being influenced by Eve).
- This interpretation requires paraphrasing Paul as saying 'women are not permitted to teach a man false doctrine'. If so it is remarkable that Paul would use this phrasing given it allows the possibility he would permit false teaching in another context.
- When referring to false teaching elsewhere Paul uses different language which makes expressly clear that he is doing so.

5.6 Not to have authority

The word for 'authority' ($\alpha\upsilon\theta\epsilon\nu\tau\epsilon\omega$) is only used here in the NT. Debate has raged over its meaning from extra-biblical sources. However it seems clear that its normal meaning is 'authority over'. Attempts to make it a negative concept i.e. domineering authority, fail both with regard to the lexical studies³⁶, and the immediate context. In particular Kostenberger has shown that the joining of the two infinitives (to teach ... to have authority) by $\omicron\upsilon\delta\epsilon$ requires both words to have either a positive or a negative sense.³⁷ Given the positive sense of 'to teach' one cannot then attribute a negative sense to 'authority'.

Those egalitarians who take on board the issue of sentence structure argue that both $\delta\iota\delta\alpha\sigma\kappa\omega$ and $\alpha\upsilon\theta\epsilon\nu\tau\epsilon\omega$ have a negative meaning.³⁸ This is only achieved by making $\delta\iota\delta\alpha\sigma\kappa\omega$ refer to 'false teaching' – see the discussion above.

Other suggestions as to the meaning of $\alpha\upsilon\theta\epsilon\nu\tau\epsilon\omega$ e.g. to proclaim oneself the originator of another (C. Kroeger) have not received any acceptance.³⁹

It is often suggested that Paul chose this comparatively rare word because the meaning he intended was not given by others i.e. the rarity of the word chosen suggests a specific and rare meaning. This

³⁴ For example Hull, *Equal to Serve*, (Revell, 1987).

³⁵ J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, WBC, (Word, 1988).

³⁶ H. S. Baldwin, 'A Difficult Word', in *Women in the Church*, edited by A. J. Kostenberger et al, (Baker, 1995). It is particularly important in this regard to note the differences found between the verb and noun. The later does have a very negative force in some contexts, even referring to murderers, but the verb never has such a strong force before the 10th century. Only one example of a negative domineering has been found from Chrysostom and this is where the word is used in a hyperbolic sense.

³⁷ A. J. Kostenberger, 'A Complex Sentence Structure in 1 Tim 2:9-15', in *Women in the Church*, edited by A. J. Kostenberger et al, (Baker, 1995).

³⁸ See for example I. H. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ICC, (T&T Clark, 1999).

³⁹ R. C. Kroeger and C. C. Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman*, (Baker, 1992).

is not an insignificant point but the most commonly used other word for exercising authority (εφξουσιαζω) is only used four times in the NT, twice with reference to positive use of authority and twice with reference to negative domineering use of authority.⁴⁰ Purely statistically therefore it could be argued that Paul chose this 'rare' word to avoid the more ambiguous use of εφξουσιαζω. All this shows is that with such limited usage claims of 'rare' words carry little weight.

5.7 Rationale for the prohibition

Paul gives two reasons for the prohibition: (a) Adam's being created first, and (b) Eve's being deceived rather than Adam. The first of these corresponds to his reasoning in 1 Cor 11 and as is the case there is not expanded beyond a simple statement. However it is hard not to see Paul reading something of a authority/leadership concept out of the fact that Adam was created first.

The second reason revolves around deception. Some have taken this to indicate a greater degree of gullibility by women as the reason that they should not teach. However that is both not a necessary reading of Paul's words and would not fit with their role in teaching described below.⁴¹ In addition this view has to regard Eve as sinning by being deceived, and Adam sinning wilfully, whereas Paul elsewhere uses the example of Eve as a warning to *all* Christians, male and female, not to be deceived (2 Cor 11:3).

It is better to take this as a reference to the order of creation being overturned. Rather than the women following her head (the man) she follows one of the creatures, and Adam rather than acting as head, follows his wife. Note that in Genesis 3 God's words to Adam particularly condemn him for 'listening to his wife.'

Many egalitarian views see the rationale presented as responding to an element of the false teaching. For example countering the idea that women were the source of men (Kroeger) or a taking the 'myths and genealogies' to involve human origins (Marshall). Both these views then see the reference in v13 as Paul setting the record straight on this misunderstanding. However for this to make sense in the context one has to again regard the teaching of v12 as false teaching, and to have Paul change tack to the content of the teaching with no indication that he has done so.

Another approach of egalitarians is to say this refers to uneducated women – they should not teach but they should *learn* presumably so that they can then teach. This view sees the rationale in v13-14 as saying that Eve was created after Adam and so did not receive the command not to eat from a certain tree from God i.e. she was uneducated and so deceived.⁴² However this is to read far more into Paul's reference to the Genesis account than is there, and to presuppose a great deal about the Ephesian context.

If the understanding suggested of this rationale for the prohibition is correct then it has a grounding that surpasses any factors specific to the Ephesian situation. Rather it is part of the created order which should be reflected today just as much as in any situation in Paul's day.

5.8 Saved through childbearing

Exegesis of verse 15 has generally fallen into two camps, neither of which significantly affect the above discussion. It is taken to be either a reference to the birth of Christ (so Knight⁴³ and Stott⁴⁴) or simply to child-bearing generally (so Marshall⁴⁵ and Moo⁴⁶). In the later case it clearly cannot mean that children are actually necessary for salvation, but rather it is to stress the attendant circumstances of salvation which should involve 'normal' feminine roles. Given that virtually all of the women on the receiving end of the letter would have been married it is not unreasonable to choose child-bearing as the single most differentiating factor to stress a role difference between men and women. The idea of 'suitable role accompaniments' is also given by the repetition of propriety (σωφοσυνη) first

⁴⁰ Used in 1 Cor 7:4 (twice) positively; Luke 22:25 and 1 Cor 6:12 negatively.

⁴¹ As women are clearly to teach younger women it would be strange to say that the gullible are to teach the even more gullible.

⁴² See for example C. S. Keener, Paul, Women and Wives, (Hendrickson, 1992).

⁴³ G. W. Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, NIGTC, (Eerdmans, 1992).

⁴⁴ J. R. W. Stott, The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus, BST, (IVP, 1996).

⁴⁵ I. H. Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, ICC, (T&T Clark, 1999).

⁴⁶ D. Moo, 'What Does it Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?', in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, edited by W. Grudem and J. Piper, (Crossway, 1991).

mentioned in v9. However correct understanding of this verse is not necessary to follow the argument up to this point.

5.9 Application of the prohibition

Overall application is discussed below but this passage raises several issues that should be discussed here.

Some take 'to teach' to refer to no teaching whatsoever: this is clearly untenable given the reference to women teaching in Titus 3:2. Instead the reference is to not teaching a man (*ανδρος* is the subject of both infinitives). Some take this to mean no teaching by a woman of a man; others take the teaching in question to be 'authoritative' teaching of some sort. This clearly depends on (a) how the two prohibitions are combined, (b) contextual factors within 1 Timothy, and (c) synthesising the prohibition with examples and instruction elsewhere.

- a) With regard to combining the two prohibitions they should probably be taken as distinct functions but which are extremely closely related. Kostenberger's analysis of the syntax gives comparable constructions elsewhere in the NT. In many cases the two elements are virtually synonymous e.g. 'do not be unsettled or alarmed' (2 Thess 2:2), whereas in others they are distinct but related ideas e.g. 'do not teach error or pay attention to myths' (1 Tim 1:3-4). In the case of 1 Tim 2:12 the precise prohibitions of teaching and authority are distinct enough to be separated (rather than treated as synonyms). However the two concepts are closely connected – so the elder/overseer is one who teaches and has authority, but he uses his authority in teaching – prohibiting false teaching and promoting truth.
- b) Other factors within 1 Timothy:
 - The word for 'teach' can be taken to relate to the passing on of the authoritative teachings/traditions. In some contexts the verb is used in relation to this (e.g. 1 Cor 4:17; Eph 4:21; Col 2:7; 2 Thess 2:15), and a cognate noun refers to authoritative traditions (*διδασκαλία*). However this is not demanded by the word itself which can refer to a wide range of teaching including specific instructions to Timothy (1 Tim 4:11; 6:2), and believers teaching one another (Col 3:16).
 - The word for 'not permit' here is the same as in 1 Cor 14:34 (of only 3 uses in the Pauline corpus, the remaining one of which is with regard to God in 1 Cor 16:7). This might indicate a similar prohibition as in view as in 1 Cor 14 and so strengthen the idea of only limiting authoritative teaching.
 - The repeated reference to 'silence' (*ησυχια* – see 'Structure' above) suggests that Paul is giving two instructions which both relate to something within the public meeting.
 - The next verses in the letter discuss the qualifications for an overseer who is clearly someone who is to teach and to have authority to manage/rule the congregation. The transition can be read as Paul continuing on a theme he has already started in 2:9-15.
- c) Other examples and instruction are discussed below.

These factors lead us towards an understanding of the prohibition to be against an 'authority position' of teaching, rather than a blanket prohibition of any women ever teaching any man. The influence of examples and instructions to women to teach in some capacity will strengthen this conclusion – see below.

6. Examples of and Instructions for Women's Ministry

A variety of passages either give examples of women ministering in some context⁴⁷ or give an instruction that can reasonably be taken to apply to women as well as men. These give us more of a positive picture of what was happening / was expected to happen. An attempt to synthesise these elements with those covered already will be given in the next section.

⁴⁷ See especially A. Kostenberger, 'Women in the Pauline Mission', in *The Gospel to the Nations*, edited by P. Bolt & M. Thomsen, (IVP, 2000).

Text	Summary	Comment
<i>Prophecy</i>		
Acts 21:9	Philip's daughters are prophetesses	Prophecy expected from women
1 Cor 11	Instructions for head covering in public prophecy and prayer	Public prophecy and prayer expected from women
<i>Teaching</i>		
Titus 2:3-4	Older women are to be teachers of what is good to the younger women	Women are to teach other women
1 Cor 14:26	Each person comes to the church gathering with a hymn, a teaching, a revelation, an interpretation	No gender limitation given so some contribution from women expected including a 'teaching' (διδασχειν)
2 Tim 1:5 & 3:14	Timothy probably being taught by his mother and grandmother	Women teaching children
Col 3:16	Teach one another	No indication of restriction to men but note that the idea of 'one another' (αλληλους) can refer to an activity within a group rather than between every individual of the group
Acts 18:26	Priscilla and Aquilla explaining the way of God more accurately to Apollos	A women seen involved in teaching a man (in a private setting with her husband)
<i>Fellow-workers</i>		
Rom 16:3	Priscilla and Aquilla called fellow-workers with Paul	Great involvement in the work of the gospel – no indication as to whether this involved teaching.
Rom 16:12	Tryphena, Tryphosa and Persis all work hard in the Lord	Great involvement in the work of the gospel – no indication as to whether this involved teaching.
Phil 4:2-3	Euodia and Synteché contended at Paul's side in the cause of the gospel	Great involvement in the work of the gospel – no indication as to whether this involved teaching.
<i>Deacons</i>		
1 Tim 3:8,11	Most likely a reference to female deacons	Involvement in service but not teaching or ruling the church
Rom 16:1	Phoebe a deacon/servant on the church at Cenchrea	Probably example of a female deacon

The most difficult of these references are those referring to prophecy because here we have an activity we know women can and should take part in, but we are less clear what the activity is. However it seems reasonable to suppose that prophecy has overlap with other of the 'word' ministries.⁴⁸ It is very unlikely that it is purely predictive in nature (despite some predictive examples in Acts) as a predictive prophecy cannot be 'weighed'. The result of prophecy is the building up of the church in encouragement and comfort (1 Cor 14:3); most notably prophecy results in instruction and learning (1 Cor 14:18, 31). Hence it is not unreasonable to presume an overlap with teaching, and perhaps, as is often suggested, prophecy often involves insights relating to the application of gospel truth.

Some egalitarians interpret 1 Tim 5:2 as referring to women elders and Rom 16:7 as to female apostles in the same sense as the apostolic circle. However 1 Tim 5:2 clearly refers to older women; and on Rom 16:7 (a) it may/may not refer to a woman; (b) it may say either that they are outstanding among the apostles OR in the eyes of the apostles; and (c) it probably uses 'apostle' in its non-technical sense of 'messenger' or 'missionary' (e.g. 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25)

⁴⁸ D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, (Baker, 1987).

In addition some attempt a syllogism as follows:

- A. Paul says to respect and submit to all those who labour as his fellow-workers (1 Cor 16:15-16)
- B. Various women are referred to as Paul's fellow-workers who labour (see table above)
- C. Therefore these women must be respected and submitted to.

However this is to require Paul to have a far more specific meaning by these terms than he does. Those in 1 Cor 16 are probably leaders who Paul commends submission to, but that does not mean that everyone he regards as a fellow-worker is a leader.

Deborah acting as a judge of Israel (Judges 4) is often quoted as an example of a female leader figure. However there are several factors which should make us hesitate before drawing too much from it. Most importantly Deborah doesn't lead Israel out of battle as do the other (male) judges; rather she hands over leadership to Barak.

In summary these examples and instructions certainly suggest women should be very much involved in the life of the church – considered fellow-workers in the cause of the gospel. This will presumably take a variety of forms depending on gifting. However some teaching element seems to be present (especially suggested by Col 3:16 and 1 Cor 14: 26, and by our understanding of prophecy).

7. Conclusions

The above discussion leads us to conclude:

a) We assert both:

- the equality of men and women, and
- the differentiation in role in the church between men and women, stemming from creation.

The equality means that the differentiation in role is never to imply a demeaning of personhood.

b) We affirm both:

- the valuable and necessary role of women in the church, and
- that they are prohibited from certain activities within the church.

The prohibition from certain activities must never be taken to demean the value of women's contribution.

c) We see that women *should* teach and train younger women and children.

d) We see that women *should* have a part in the public meetings of the church and that this can contain a teaching element.

e) We see that women *should not* have the decisive role of weighing prophecy, or giving authoritative teaching in the church, which is to be the role of male elders.

It is statement (d) that is most controversial to some complementarians who would wish to restrict the role of women further. The conclusion of allowing women a teaching function in the church is arrived at by the following reasoning:

The restriction in 1 Timothy 2 is seen to be referring to the authoritative teaching of the church such as is seen in weighing of prophecy. This role is linked with (and perhaps should be identified with) that of elders/overseers whose primary role is teaching and governing the congregation; two functions which go hand in hand. A variety of factors (discussed above) suggest that this is a likely interpretation of the prohibition rather than a blanket statement about any woman and any man in any situation.

In addition it is this interpretation that best fits Paul's prohibition in 1 Tim 2 and the mass of data which indicates that women contributed to public meetings in a way that included elements of teaching (esp. Col 3:16 and 1 Cor 14:26).

Some outstanding questions remain, especially that of what current day prophecy is. In addition we are challenged by this study as to how closely our current church gatherings approximate to those described in the NT, especially with regard to (a) contribution from many people, and (b) weighing of contributions by the leaders.

8. Application

Application will depend greatly on the practices of the church in question. However looking at the common elements of a church we could suggest the following:

- Only male elders where an eldership is present.
- Only male preachers at Sunday services on the basis that these are usually uncontested proclamations of authoritative teaching. These should be done by the elders of the church or under their supervision. However this restriction turns greatly on the way in which preaching is perceived within the congregation. It would also be possible for a woman to teach publically under the authority of the elders where that was appropriately understood.
- Contribution of other sorts to Sunday services by men and women. These should/could include prayer, reading Scripture, giving testimony of lessons learnt or God's action in one's life, introducing songs etc.
- There is also a place for contributions which are 'between' public preaching and leading a service. For example contributions following an exposition which suggest particular applications or relevance. These should be welcomed by women as well as men.
- Male and female leading of Bible study discussion groups but preferably with an elder present, or at least under some kind of elder supervision.
- Male and female leading of seminars/talks with questions where an elder chairs the meeting and the opinions given are seen to be open to debate.

This is not to presume any kind of infallibility for elders of a congregation – indeed their teaching should be questioned by the congregation – but it is to expect a respect for their teaching and leading which is not accorded to others.