

May 2020

What Did Paul Really Mean?

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Recommended Citation

McCall, Kathryn A. (2020) "What Did Paul Really Mean?," *Diligence: Journal of the Liberty University Online Religion Capstone in Research and Scholarship*: Vol. 5 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/djrc/vol5/iss1/1>

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LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

What Did Paul Really Mean?

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of

2020 Spring 2020 RLGN 490-D01 LUO

Research and Scholarly Capstone

by

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April 18, 2020

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Introduction

Over and over one can see examples, in both the Old Testament and New Testament, where women are called on to use their giftedness as judges, prophets, teachers, and even preachers. Upon further investigation within the context of Scripture as a whole, it is quite clear that Paul's statements that women should not teach was not a God mandate for all women or for all time, but a specific instruction for specific issues of the churches he was addressing. It is imperative that the church, according to Paul in Ephesians 4:12-16, equip the saints to advance the Gospel and build up the Church. This equipping is to be done, not only through resources but through opportunities to use the Holy-Spirit given gifts, regardless of gender. It is understood, in any gender conversation within Scripture, that many have different views of women's roles in the church and their roles in the home. For the purpose of this research, the roles of women in the home are outside the scope of this paper.

In an effort to reconcile two of Paul's most controversial passages, 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-35, the research that follows will consider both the Complementarian and the Egalitarian perspectives and how they interpret these Scriptures. Also discussed is Genesis 1:26-31, as well as the fall of mankind in Genesis 3. The apparent mandates issued by Paul will be examined in light of the fall of mankind, the law, Jesus' fulfillment of that law, and the redemption He brought through His death and resurrection. There will be a comparison of the Scriptures with the interpretations offered by both theological perspectives mentioned above. Lastly, there are provided suggestions for God's people on how to live in the "now and not yet" of life on earth while awaiting Christ's return.

The Complementarian View

The first of the two perspectives to consider is that of the Complementarian. Many refer to this perspective as the traditional view. However, and perhaps rightly so, many who adhere to this perspective do not necessarily see themselves in this light. There are differences in that the older traditional view did not have any roles for women within the church structure outside of caring for children.

As stated in the original proposal, the definition of Complementarianism is the belief that men and women were created equally in the image of God, each having differences that are beneficial to one another. They fulfill different roles in home and church, with the man fulfilling the leadership roles in both areas. Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr. contends that male-female equality is defined with the understanding that “Man and woman are equal in the sense that they bear God’s image equally,” but he goes on to conclude “In the partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction.”¹

Concerning the preaching and teaching of women, and in light of 1 Timothy 2:8-15, Douglas Moo acknowledges that Complementarians believe there to be “two restrictions on the ministry of women: they are not to teach Christian doctrine to men and they are not to exercise authority directly over men in the church. These restrictions are permanent, authoritative for the church in all times and places and circumstances as long as men and women are descended from

¹ Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship Genesis 1-3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012). 95.

Adam and Eve.”² Moo, however, seems to speak on behalf of all complementarians, while there are some differences of opinion in what women can do in ministry. Judith K. TenElshof may be right in that some Christians have rejected Biblical teaching entirely because of the feminism movement and the hard stance of those like Moo. Even she concedes that she “could not say that the biblical picture of God’s design for the relationship of men and women was fully operational in most churches today.”³ She follows that answering the question of the Biblical role of women in the church today is to be done through the context of other matters related to church ministry, as seen in the New Testament.⁴ The major controversy within the church, though it began much earlier, emerged with more enthusiasm when the feminist movement came into being in the 1960s. There were some significant differences within the church and secular movements. However, the church also looked to patriarchy as the underlying problem, as well as looking at ways to overcome it, finding that some authors at the time were identifying the “source of women’s oppression as theological error.”⁵

The Egalitarian View

Egalitarianism is often associated with the term Biblical equality. It is the belief that because men and women are both created in the image of God, each has an equal opportunity for leadership within the home and the church and that gender has no determining factor. According to Ronald W. Pierce, after the 1984 Evangelical Colloquium on Women and the Bible,

² Douglas Moo, “What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2:11-15,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012). 180.

³ Robert L. Saucy, and Judith K. TenElshof, eds. *Women and Men in Ministry: A Complementary Perspective*. (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2001). 21.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

J.I. Packer acknowledged, “the burden of proof regarding the exclusion of women from the office of teaching and ruling within the congregation now lies on those who maintain the exclusion rather than on those who challenge it.”⁶ This statement does not mean, however, that Egalitarians have left the work of theological study to those with whom they disagree. It is often agreed that the modern Egalitarian perspective had come into play during the feminist movement. However, according to Pierce, “a theology of gender equality has been recovered from its nineteenth-century roots.”⁷ Some Complementarians view Egalitarians as non-evangelicals who have twisted Scripture in a way that says what they want it to say. However, Pierce implores that “A high view of Scripture has been an explicit part of evangelical egalitarian theology from the beginning. Despite accusations to the contrary, these conservatives have not dismissed the teaching of the Bible as “merely cultural”, nor have they developed a special hermeneutic to get around it, nor have they simply refused to submit to its authority.”⁸ While Pierce and his co-editors acknowledge the relevance of complementarity, they will cede no middle ground in the options for ministry and leadership based solely on gender.⁹

In the Beginning

Before looking at New Testament theology in this debate, it is essential to start at the beginning. The Old Testament, specifically God’s creation story, has much to speak into the argument.

⁶ Ronald W. Pierce, “Contemporary Evangelicals For Gender Equality” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005). 62.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

As with all things, Scripture should have the first voice.

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good (Gen. 1:26-31, NIV).

Genesis 1:26-28 is primarily cited when arguing Complementarian vs. Egalitarian. But, there is a remarkable fact found lacking in all arguments in the opinion of this author. All parties are in agreement that both men and women are created in the image of God, a most crucial point. Both sides even agree, for the most part, that both men and women are given the command to rule over all creation. Richard S. Hess describes the command to rule in this way, “Dominion is set in the context of the ideal world of Genesis 1 and is not altered with the sins of the following chapters (Gen. 5:1-3; 9:1-6). Rather its original context suggests a harmony.”¹⁰

However, neither side points out the fact that nowhere in the creation account do humans receive, from God, the command to rule over one another.

The Fall

There is much debate on this topic within the context of the fall. Who was at fault? Who was deceived? Who was rebellious? These are all relevant questions.

¹⁰ Richard S. Hess, “Equality With And Without Innocence” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005). 81.

Scripture says this:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it (Gen. 3:1-6).

It is here that the Complementarian perspective stakes much of their argument for a woman’s place both at home and in the church. Complementarians see the narrative’s information regarding the woman as proof that God wanted it known that the woman was deceived and therefore is not trustworthy in proclaiming God’s Word. However, Richard S. Hess believes there is another option. He suggests that if the snake had approached the man instead of the woman, there would not have been an association of guilt on the woman, and the following punishment by God would have seemed unjust.¹¹ He concludes that “The text wishes to make clear that both the woman and the man “who was with her” (Gen.3:6) participated in the guilt and both suffered the results, for both knew that eating the fruit was forbidden.”¹² The Egalitarian view is that the snake approached the woman to usurp the man’s authority over her.¹³ Yet, there is no mention in Scripture of the authority having been given. Hess further asserts where the ultimate direction of the serpent’s intentions lie when he says, “The challenge of the snake is not directed against the man’s authority. It is against God’s authority.”¹⁴

¹¹ Hess, “Equality With And Without Innocence” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, 89.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ortlund, Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship Genesis 1-3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, 106.

¹⁴ Hess, “Equality With And Without Innocence” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, 89.

What is known from Scripture is this, the serpent distorted what God said. Both Adam and Eve knew the command. She took the fruit, ate it, gave to Adam, and he ate it, as Scripture states, he was there with her. It is argued that though Eve was deceived, Adam was the one given the command, and perhaps she was not fully knowledgeable of the command. This argument is unlikely as it goes against the just and holy character of God to punish her if she was not aware of the command. The complementarian view is that Eve was deceived, not Adam. However, if Adam was not deceived, then he was blatantly rebellious, and one could argue that rebellion is a far bigger problem.

Some imply that the consequences of the fall are a permanent hierarchy of men over women. This argument, again, goes against the equality in that both man and woman are created in the image of God. Ortlund sees male dominion over women as a punishment.¹⁵ Another explanation that better aligns with the nature of God is that “This was a divine description of what would occur, not a mandate that obedient servants of God should attempt to carry out. Subordination is not enjoined here any more than it is mandated that women should suffer a maximum of pain in childbearing, or men a maximum of discomfort and toil in earning their living.”¹⁶ Again, in looking at this in light of women in preaching and teaching roles within the church, one has to look at all of Scripture, which includes determining if specific verses align with God’s nature, not merely seeing them in light of the outcome one would choose. Cynthia Long Westfall discusses the fall and its consequences in light of 1 Timothy 2:14 and the fact that it is the primary rationale for restricting women in the Church to preaching and teaching

¹⁵ Ortlund, Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship Genesis 1-3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, 95.

¹⁶ R. Nicole, “Woman, Biblical Concept of.” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001). 1282.

positions. Paul does not exclude gentiles from preaching and teaching even though he considered them more prone to deception, yet this is not found in the Complementarian perspective.¹⁷

Westfall proposes that “Humans, who were created to rule together in unity, became divided in hostility and embedded in patterns of oppression, which, according to the creation account, started with male and female and extended to include groups such as Jews, gentiles, slaves, and free person (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11).”¹⁸ Everything changed with the fall of mankind. God’s perfection was distorted.

The Law

With the fall of mankind, God’s law was an instruction to His people in an effort to bring them back to a right relationship with Him. Both Egalitarian and Complementarian alike agree that the culture, Greek and Roman influence, played a large part in the devaluing of women, their intelligence, and capabilities to humanity. R. C. and C. C. Kroeger argue “that the Greco-Roman social structures within which Christianity was nurtured explain both the ultimate shape of the church’s institutions and the eventual exclusion of women.”¹⁹ Based on Roman influence and law, first-century Jewish thinkers carried suit in their perspective of women being weaker.²⁰ One cannot merely ignore cultural influence when interpreting Scripture. The Scripture is divinely inspired, but it is also written through authors of specific times in history.

¹⁷ Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostles Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016).108-118.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁹ R. C. Kroeger and C. C. Kroeger, “Women, Ordination of.” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001). 1286.

²⁰ Aida Besancon Spencer, “Jesus’ Treatment of Women in the Gospels” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005). 139-140.

There has also been much conversation regarding the fact that women were never allowed to be priests within the Old Testament temple structure of leadership as a justification for not allowing it in New Testament settings. Ben Witherington III expresses that the ordinances of Leviticus 15 are instrumental in understanding why this is the case. He states, “According to these rules a priest had to be holy and ritually clean at all times in order to offer the sacrifice. Thus, the exclusion of women as priestesses in the cult was because of their “uncleanness” during their monthly menstrual period, and not because of any rabbinic prejudice aimed directly at women.”²¹ Complementarians claim that in the government of Israel, women were not installed as rulers due to the creation order and “the Davidic king as a type of Christ.”²²

However, according to 1 Samuel 8:1-5:

When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as Israel’s leaders. The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. But his sons did not follow his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice. So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, “You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.

Israel wanted a king like all the other nations. Once again, cultural influence had its effect. Not to mention that as one can see, the hereditary succession within the culture was father to son, as shown with Samuel and his sons.²³

²¹ Ben Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990). 9.

²² Thomas Finley, “The Ministry of Women in the Old Testament” in *Women and Men in Ministry: A Complementary Perspective* eds., Robert L. Saucy, and Judith K. TenElshof. (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2001). 76.

²³ *Ibid.*, 74.

The Law Fulfilled

As the fall wreaked havoc on the relationship between God and mankind, the law is put into place. But, the law was never to be permanent. Christ would come to fulfill the law and will eventually make all things new. Jesus reminded those in His day, “Don’t think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17). And as mentioned before, much of what was enforced in restraining women from teaching and preaching was tradition, yet seen as law.

When Jesus came, he modeled how women are to be treated. He did not continue to treat them as they had been treated. Many male-only leadership advocates look to Jesus’ inner circle and conclude that there were no women. However, according to Aida Besancon Spencer, Jesus “chose twelve Jews to serve as a synecdoche, representing the twelve tribes of Israel.”²⁴ The author goes on to point out the significance of the choice in that the new covenant would be built upon the old covenant, and the two covenant peoples would be joined at the end of time, as pointed out in Revelation 21.²⁵ In other words, the twelve disciples were representative of the twelve tribes, the twelve patriarchs. But, as for being apostles, the criteria that Scripture sets forth is that an apostle was a messenger who was sent, had been with Jesus, had been an eyewitness to Jesus resurrected, and had the commissioning to preach the message of God’s kingdom.²⁶ Without a doubt, this included women, and Spencer confirms that “Preaching (*kēryssō*) is never an action prohibited to women.”²⁷

²⁴ Spencer, “Jesus’ Treatment of Women in the Gospels” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, 135.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 135-136.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 137.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Jesus came to fulfill the law. He came to make all things new. He came to correct as only he could, the damage inflicted on the world by sin. And in doing so, the traditions that so many had become entrenched by, were disrupted. Witherington says it extraordinarily when he points out that “Jesus and his followers lived in a culture that was excessively patriarchal, but there were various reform movements about and one of them was early Christianity.”²⁸ In the beginning of this reformation, Jesus did more to appropriate the value of women than anyone in history, by making them the first to name Him as the God who sees (Gen. 16:13), the first to hear Him proclaim Himself the Messiah (Jn. 4:25-26), the first to see Him resurrected (Mk. 16:9). And it bears acknowledging that the women, whom so many felt were too prone to deception because of Eve, were the first to believe Jesus was resurrected, when the disciples they rushed to tell, did not (Mk. 16:10-11).

Redemption

In Eden, everything was lost. Innocence, trust, relationships, perfection, all lost. But Carolyn Custis James reminds us, “Whatever we lost in Eden, we find in Jesus.”²⁹ The sin affected not only human souls, but the entirety of God’s creation, which included mankind and the relationships that entailed, as well as the dominion given to mankind upon creation. The redemption was not dependent upon gender but upon faith in who He was. Spencer indicates that “for Jesus faith is the key determiner of one’s place in the new covenant—as it originally was of the old covenant. Thus women functioned as witnesses or “apostles” who had been with Jesus, were eyewitnesses of the resurrection and were sent by Jesus to proclaim the good

²⁸ Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, xiii.

²⁹ Carolyn Custis James, *Half the Church: Recapturing God's Global Vision for Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011). 69.

news.”³⁰ Pentecost brought the Holy Spirit, who gifted the men and the women to carry the good news to the world.

The Complementarian perspective, based on the Denver’s Statement, has several points that they feel affirm that it is God’s will for a gender-based hierarchy.³¹ The most notable here is their perspective on redemption. It states, “Redemption Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse...In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men.”³² This line of thinking is certainly not in line with what Jesus was bringing about. Cynthia Neal Kimball says it well when she speaks of the post-Pentecost community of believers. She proposes that “The new redemptive community that Christ wrought through the cross introduced us to the realization that all of God’s people—regardless of age, class or gender—have gifts and contributions to make in proclaiming his gospel, and we can’t ever go back to not knowing.”³³ Jesus did not die to redeem parts of this world. He died to redeem every single aspect of it.

Paul’s Statements

As done previously, when Scripture is discussed, it should speak for itself first, so it will do so here.

1 Timothy 2:11-15

³⁰ Spencer, “Jesus’ Treatment of Women in the Gospels” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, 137.

³¹ Alice Mathews, *Gender Roles and the People of God: Rethinking What We Were Taught About Men and Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017). 25-26

³² *Ibid.*, 26.

³³ Cynthia Neal Kimball, “Nature, Culture and Gender Complementarity” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005). 465.

“A woman is to learn quietly with full submission. I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; instead, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and transgressed. But she will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with good sense.”

Complementarian Interpretation

According to Douglas Moo and the Complementarian perspective, “Women are not to teach or to have authority over men. They are not to do so because of the order in which God created man and woman and because of how man and woman fell into sin.”³⁴ Complementarian opinion is this is a permanent order not only in the home but in the church as well.

Egalitarian Interpretation

Linda L. Belleville concludes that a correct interpretation would include looking at the broad context of the whole letter, the cultural significance involved, as well as an in-depth look at the grammar and translation of the passage. She submits that “The women at Ephesus (perhaps encouraged by the false teachers) were trying to gain an advantage over the men in the congregation by teaching in a dictatorial fashion. The men in response became angry and disputed what the women were doing.”³⁵ She claims the interpretation fits the broader text of the letter in that Paul is correcting behavior for both the men and the women.³⁶ Egalitarian opinion is this is a specific correction, in a particular time, and not for all women, in all circumstances,

³⁴ Moo, “What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2:11-15,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, 179.

³⁵ Linda L. Belleville, “Teaching and Usurping Authority” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005). 223.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

for all time.

1 Corinthians 14:33-35

“...since God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, the women should be silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but are to submit themselves, as the law also says. If they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home, since it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.”

Complementarian Interpretation

Opinions vary, and D. A. Carson admits the interpretation is a difficult one. He affirms that the complementarian interpretation holds that “The nub of the difficulty is that in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Paul is quite prepared for women to pray and prophesy, albeit with certain restrictions; but here, a first reading of the text seems to make the silence he enjoins absolute.”³⁷ As with the 1 Timothy passage, the Complementarian opinion is that the silence in the church, spoken of here, is absolute and permanent.

Egalitarian Interpretation

Craig S. Keener expresses the Egalitarian interpretation as “the view that women were interrupting the service with questions.”³⁸ Not to be overly simplistic, he goes on to explain that after reading Plutarch’s essay *On Lectures*, he learned that it was not unusual during lectures for

³⁷ D. A. Carson, “Silent in the Churches: On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012). 140.

³⁸ Craig S. Keener, “Learning in the Assemblies 1 Corinthians 14:34-35” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005). 165.

listeners to ask questions during the lecture.³⁹ It was, however, culturally shameful in Corinth, at that time, for a woman to speak in a public forum.⁴⁰ Paul was, perhaps, concerned with the reputation of the Church. As he was in 1 Timothy. Again, the Egalitarian view is this was a specific correction, for a particular situation, and not a global mandate for all time.

Summary of Paul's Statements

As with any reading of Scripture, understanding the text is critical. However, exegesis is not where the process end. The reader must make it a priority to understand the context. The historical and cultural context is critical in Scripture. For instance, many of the Complementarian views limit themselves to the creation order as their basis for these two passages. Without the historical and cultural significance considered, it is a statement out of context, and as all know, context is king. If one goes along with church tradition, only because it has always been thus, one must consider that even the early church fathers, influenced by the culture, considered women not only different but inferior.

It is also important to remember that 1 Timothy and 1 Corinthians were letters. Though not only for the initial recipient. Letters are generally personal, and that is evident in Paul's letters. Time and again, Paul's care and concern shown in his letters, give plenty of evidence that his encouragement and concerns were very personal. Duvall and Hayes say it perfectly when they state that 1 Timothy and 1 Corinthians, along with other New Testament letters, "were occasional or situational, meaning that they were written to address specific situations in the

³⁹ Keener, "Learning in the Assemblies 1 Corinthians 14:34-35" in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, 165.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 167.

communities that received the letter. The writers were most concerned with applying theology in practical ways to real-life situations.”⁴¹ This conclusion falls in alignment with Paul’s other writings, as well as all Scripture and the character of God throughout Scripture.

Living in the Now and Not Yet

The Church needs to be able to live well in the “now” while waiting for the “not yet” of Christ’s return, and the redemption of all things. Cynthia Neal Kimball maintains that “The view that a church holds will affect the way a girl or a woman is expected to behave and may affect her development as well.”⁴² The church needs to recognize that there is agreement that women and men see things and experience life differently. “For that very reason, it is helpful for both men and women to hear the gospel from the perspective of the other gender. It enlarges our understanding of God and of the gospel of Christ. The history of the church and the witness of Scripture show that God uses men and women alike to proclaim him and to serve as leaders in his kingdom work.”⁴³ In this waiting, the Church must take seriously the models in Scripture, as well as the commissioning of all disciples by Jesus. Carolyn Custis James writes that the words multiply, fruitful, rule, and subdue are foundational to humanity’s purpose. She goes on to say, “Historically, fruitful and multiply have been understood to mean physical reproduction or populating the earth—something necessary for survival.”⁴⁴ However, today that is not

⁴¹ J. Scott. Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping Gods Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012). 257.

⁴² Kimball, “Nature, Culture and Gender Complementarity” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, 477.

⁴³ Mimi Haddad and Alvera Mickelsen, “Helping the Church Understand Biblical Equality” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005). 488

⁴⁴ James, *Half the Church: Recapturing God's Global Vision for Women*, 68.

necessarily the case. James adds, “Rule and subdue do not usually form part of the Christian picture of a woman...The tendency of scholars to retain masculine nouns and pronouns in this part of the discussion sometimes leads female and male readers to assume God is only addressing men, when in fact he is addressing both of his image bearers.”⁴⁵ Perhaps, in Jesus’ statement in Matthew 7:20, that “You will recognize them by their fruit” and his commission to “Go, therefore, and make disciples” in Matthew 28:19, He is encouraging His image-bearers to be fruitful and multiply in the “now.” And in the “not yet,” His followers “wait for the end of decay, death, futility, and oppression at Jesus’ second coming. Dominion will be restored to both male and female in Christ, which is consistent with the mandate for dominion at creation.”⁴⁶ In the waiting, the question should not be if one is Complementarian or Egalitarian, or what denomination one might be. The question should only and always be, whether the Gospel is going out, and the world is being transformed.⁴⁷

Conclusion

The hermeneutic used in studying Scripture is always crucial. Even more so when determining whether difficult passages such as 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 are a permanent or situational command. Mathews compels readers to understand that “Our hermeneutic matters because a wrong hermeneutic—the hermeneutic of the Pharisees—can lead us to be letter-of-the-law perfect, and yet be dead wrong.”⁴⁸ Jesus, on several occasions in

⁴⁵ James, *Half the Church: Recapturing God's Global Vision for Women*, 68-69.

⁴⁶ Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostles Vision for Men and Women in Christ*, 71.

⁴⁷ Jackie Roese, *Lime Green: Reshaping Our View of Women in the Church* (Dallas, TX: HIS Publishing Group, 2015). 106.

⁴⁸ Mathews, *Gender Roles and the People of God: Rethinking What We Were Taught About Men and Women in the Church*, 29.

Scripture, teaches His disciples to look to the spirit behind the law, and not merely the law itself.⁴⁹ What Jesus taught to His original disciples, all disciples should do well to model.

Jesus was born of a woman. Many of the first to respond to Jesus' message were women and the first to be witnesses of the resurrected Jesus. Throughout history, more women than men have answered "yes" to the invitation of both the gospel message and the great commission. And even the great and climactic ending of Scripture, Revelation, represents God's Church, as a woman.⁵⁰ Though the family hierarchy of Scripture is outside the scope of this writing, it is worth stating that Jesus, while not undermining the family structure, gave credence in both Matthew 12 and Mark 3 to the most critical family, that of the spiritual family. And in doing so, acknowledged that the "spiritual household includes no "fathers," save the one sovereign Father God; and under the Father's authority, women and men serve together as equal kin."⁵¹

The general Complementarian perspective, and its hermeneutic, counts the specific statements of Paul as permanent mandates. They hold them in isolation from Paul's other teachings and modelings. They also give little, if any, significance to the whole of Scripture by devaluing both God's use of women as leaders in the Old Testament and Jesus' modeling of the importance of women in the New Testament. It is just as Philip B. Payne describes in his analogy of the avalanche when he states, "Such arguments that treat each piece of opposing evidence in isolation are like a person caught in an avalanche thinking, "I will jump out of the way of each rock or clump of snow as it comes, and none of it will hit me." But in an avalanche

⁴⁹ Mathews, *Gender Roles and the People of God: Rethinking What We Were Taught About Men and Women in the Church*, 30.

⁵⁰ Nichole "Woman, Biblical Concept of.", in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1286.

⁵¹ F. S. Spencer "Women" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 2nd ed., eds. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013). 1005.

the rocks and snow do not come in isolation. Just as the totality of the avalanche is inescapable, so the totality of the Scriptures' affirmations of women leading God's people is inescapable."⁵²

The whole of Scripture is always of the utmost importance in interpreting any of its parts.

The Egalitarian view, considering all Scripture, as well as the cultural and historical implications involved, assert that Paul's statements were not a God mandate for all women and for all time. They were specific instructions for issues taking place in churches in Corinth and Ephesus. Paul used his authority in dealing with the situation, knowing well the culture in which they lived, without veering away from a Christian way of living.

In light of the research and evidence as to what is most accurate, and who is or is not right, or evangelical enough, or Complementarian or Egalitarian, there is something greater at stake. The reputation of God's church. His male and female image-bearers are being watched by those who do not know Him. The whole reason for their creation is to bring Him glory, and in bitterness toward each other, there is no glory to God. Pierce offers that "The need to get beyond this impasse in order to demonstrate unity with diversity in the body of Christ is greater than ever."⁵³ Paul implores that all remember amid conflicts that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens" (Eph. 6:12). Satan is never happier than when the Church is struggling and fighting within itself. He wants to divide and conquer. He

⁵² Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009). 462.

⁵³ Pierce "Contemporary Evangelicals for Gender Equality" in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, 74.

must be beside himself with pride at the thought of more than one-half of Jesus' followers being constrained in using the gifts that the Holy-Spirit has given to fight the battle against him.

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