

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT WOMEN AS PASTORS?

What does the Bible say about a call to ministry? A call to ministry is important to discern. All Christians are called to the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18) and to be equipped for such work through their local church (Ephesians 4:12). Every Christian has a call to bear witness to Gospel truth and love in both familiar and unfamiliar relationships through evangelism and discipleship (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8). Here are some biblical truths to consider in evaluating God's call for you to serve within His kingdom: www.trustworthyword.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-a-call-to-ministry

What are the biblical offices within a church? While all Christians are spiritually gifted by God for ministry work (Romans 12:6-8, Ephesians 4:11, and 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 28) "for the common good", pastors and deacons are the two offices within the church. The term pastor is used synonymously with overseer, elder, and bishop across the Bible to describe the same role (example: Acts 14:23, Acts 20:17, 28). Their qualifications and purposes are listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The qualifications and calling of deacons are listed in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The office of pastor is distinguished from the office of deacon in function by the call for pastors to be the teachers and authoritative leaders over a local church. Here are some biblical truths to consider about the offices of pastor and deacon: www.trustworthyword.com/pastors-deacons

Does gender matter? Are gender and sex different? What does it mean to be made male and female? God has created our gender identity and gender purpose in line with our biological sex. Men and women are equal in value and worth but distinct in particular aspects of their roles, purposes, and responsibilities.

Some have attempted to redefine gender by arguing that gender is a separate concept of cultural influence or personal choice. Others have resisted the differences God has created between genders, instead arguing that no distinctions or boundaries should be placed on either gender in any setting.

What is egalitarianism and complementarianism?

Egalitarianism argues accordingly that there should be no limitations on the service of women within the church, to include the position of pastor.

Complementarianism is the biblical position and argues that God clearly creates men and women as equal in value and worth while laying out particular differences and responsibilities for men and women within the family, church, and society. The bible teaches specifically that the role and functions of the pastorate are designed and ordered for men.

Genesis 1:27 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (ESV)

Isn't complementarianism misogynistic and hateful towards women?

Complementarians hold to the biblical understanding that men and women are equal in value, but different in role and function. It is extremely loving and views highly the roles and calling of women.

Is it ok to call a woman in ministry “pastor” as long as she doesn’t teach men or exercise leadership authority over men? (i.e. Children’s Pastor, Women’s Pastor, etc.?). It is confusing and unhelpful to use a title that does not correspond most accurately with the functions and office with which it is biblically connected (teaching and authoritative leadership over the church).

Isn’t it chauvinistic and misogynistic to not allow women to serve equally in the church? Does denying women ordination or service in the office of pastor deny or belittle their personhood?

Women are equal in value and worth, with undeniable gifting from the Lord, however God has designed them to have different roles within marriage and the church. Christians cannot be true believers and have hatred or condescension towards women. There is no place for chauvinism in the church, even if the culture surrounding it condones such practice. In many cultures and seasons of history, women have (and continue to be) mistreated and disrespected. It is a wicked lie to believe, teach, or treat women as inferior to men.

We need to treat women with respect, created in the image of God with equal value and worth as men. We need women and need them to use their God-given gifts within the church. The bible gives countercultural prominence to the value, worth, & purposes of women and so should we. See the amazing ways God uses and speaks about women in the Bible: www.trustworthyword.com/women

What does the Bible say about a woman serving as a pastor/overseer/elder/bishop?

The Bible is clear that this office is reserved for men and rooted in God’s order for creation and Consequences of the Fall. www.trustworthyword.com/pastors-deacons

What does the Bible say about a woman serving as a deacon?

Some churches and denominations teach that as long as this office does not connote teaching and authoritative leadership over men, it may be open to women (a “deaconess”). Both biblical and early church evidence do not support or model the practice of women serving as deacons.

What about women who feel the desire and “calling” to serve?

Many define their calling by their subjective feelings and experiences rather than by the objective truth of the Scripture. The Bible must be our guide and authority on such questions and issues.

What about Phoebe in Romans 16:1? Isn’t she called a “deacon”?

When Paul calls Phoebe a “διάκονος” (in Greek) in Romans 16:1, the word must be understood in its context. Just preceding this statement, in Romans 15:8, Paul also calls Jesus a “διάκονος.” It is important to note that the word “διάκονος” can be understood to mean “servant” and not exclusively as a referral to the church office of deacon.

What about “there is no male or female” in Galatians 3:28?

Galatians 3:28 is commonly misinterpreted. It says “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” This verse is not talking about different roles, responsibilities, and functions within the church. This passage is speaking about our union together with Christ in salvation.

Can women serve in ministry or function ministerially?

What does the Bible say about a woman serving as _____?

The Bible is clear that every Christian, male or female, is called to serve the Lord ministerially in proclaiming the Gospel message of reconciliation. They have been placed by God into homes, workplaces, churches, and in missions settings in order to be purposeful in making disciples.

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2 Corinthians 5:18-20 “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ... [20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

Although the offices of pastor and deacon are clearly set aside within the Scriptures for men, other roles within the church may be places that women are both gifted and called for ministry. Different churches have varying perspectives on whether or not women should be in various positions based on the amount of teaching and leadership influence each role would have over adult men. 1 Timothy 2:12-14 and Titus 2:3-5 are particularly helpful to consider when evaluating roles within the church. While some may argue that this was a cultural practice, this passage explains that the foundation of this command is trans-cultural and rooted in both the Creation and the Fall.

- 1 Timothy 2:12-14 “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. [13] For Adam was formed first, then Eve; [14] and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.”
- Titus 2:3-5: “Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, [4] and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, [5] to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.”

All Christian women are called to serve in ministry with the gifting, time, relationships and resources that God has given them. Their place of ministry may be at home, in the workplace, in their local church, or in the mission field.

A helpful resource in considering specific positions within a church is *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* by John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Section IV helps covers some areas of application and implication that would be helpful to study. A free PDF is downloadable here: <https://document.desiringgod.org/recovering-biblical-manhood-and-womanhood-en.pdf>

What is the difference between serving in ministry and pastoral ministry?

Can women be ordained or serve in pastoral ministry?

Isn't this just an issue of different interpretations and understandings of Scripture?

Women are ordained by many churches and denominations, but the greater question is not contemporary practice, but what the biblical qualification is for teaching authority within the church. The office, role, and function of the pastorate is distinguished by its teaching and leadership authority over men within the local church. That functionally means that men are called by God to be the pastoral leaders and teachers within a church body. The Bible is extremely clear on the issue, demonstrating that this is not merely an issue of differing opinions, understandings or interpretations.

Aren't these just cultural descriptions common to that period of time?

Paul is clear to explain that it is not his mere contextual application or understanding, but that “the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37). Paul also follows God's truths within 1 Timothy 2 with the connection being back to the creative plans of God and to the consequences of the fall of man when he concludes that “For Adam was formed first, then Eve; [14] and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (1 Timothy 2:13-14). Paul then continues explaining the high calling of women by highlighting one of their many particular giftings, blessings, and responsibilities in the example of motherhood (1 Timothy 2:15).

Do these passages mean women can speak at all? Can't even pray in churches?

No. In fact in 1 Corinthians 11, verses 5 and 13 references are made to women praying and prophesying within a church context. The issue is not sharing a heartfelt prayer to God or speaking a comment or impression from the Lord on a particular teaching. The issue at hand in the above passages involved women who would usurp the God-assigned male role and authority of the pastorate. The covering of a woman's head is merely a cultural symbolic means of demonstrating their biblical submission to their husband's and pastor's authority.

Top Bible Passages to Read, Study, and Consider

- **1 Timothy 2:8-15** "I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; [9] likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, [10] but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. [11] Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. [12] I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. [13] For Adam was formed first, then Eve; [14] and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. [15] Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control."
- **Titus 2:3-5** "Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, [4] and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, [5] to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled."
- **Romans 16:1** "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae,"
- **1 Corinthians 11:3,8, 11-13, 16** "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. ... [8]For man was not made from woman, but woman from man... [11] Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; [12] for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. [13] Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? ... [16] If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God."
- **1 Corinthians 14:33-35** "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, [34] the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. [35] If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church."
- **1 Timothy 3:1-7** "The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. [2] Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, [3] not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. [4] He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, [5] for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? [6] He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. [7] Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil."
- **Titus 1:5-9** "This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— [6] if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. [7] For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, [8] but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. [9] He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it."

Helpful Resources to consider:

- **WATCH: “Can women be pastors or deacons?”** By Stephen Wellum www.youtube.com/watch?v=zicoQ6foE_8
- **WATCH: “Should women preach in church?”** by Albert Mohler www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDezFVoJWQw
- ***Men and Women in the Church*** by Kevin DeYoung
- **“Where Can Women Teach: Eight Principles for Christian Churches”**
www.desiringgod.org/articles/where-can-women-teach
- **Women Teaching Men - How Far is too Far?** www.desiringgod.org/articles/women-teaching-men-how-far-is-too-far
- **“A Challenge to Women”** - <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/a-challenge-to-women>
- **50 Crucial Questions about Manhood and Womanhood** www.desiringgod.org/books/50-crucial-questions-about-manhood-and-womanhood
- ***Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*** - <https://document.desiringgod.org/recovering-biblical-manhood-and-womanhood-en.pdf>
- **The Danvers Statement - CBMW** <https://cbmw.org/about/danvers-statement/>
- **“What does the Bible say about a call to ministry?”** www.trustworthyword.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-a-call-to-ministry
- **“Essential and Indispensable: Women and the Mission of the Church”** <https://www.9marks.org/article/essential-and-indispensable-women-and-the-mission-of-the-church/>
- **“Can Male Elders Serve the Whole Congregation?”** www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/male-elders-serve-congregation
- **“What Does the Bible say about women as pastors?”** www.trustworthyword.com/women-pastors
- **“What Does the Bible say about a call to ministry?”** www.trustworthyword.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-a-call-to-ministry
- **“What Does the Bible Say About divorced men serving as deacons?”**
www.trustworthyword.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-divorced-men-serving-as-deacons
- **“What Does the Bible Say About Pastors and Deacons?”** www.trustworthyword.com/pastors-deacons
- **“What Does the Bible Say About Marriage Roles?”** www.trustworthyword.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-marriage-roles
- **Complementarianism - A Moment of Reckoning (several helpful articles):** <https://www.9marks.org/journal/complementarianism-a-moment-of-reckoning/>
- **Complementarianism As a Second Order Doctrine** (“that frequently implicates first order doctrines”): <https://www.dennyburk.com/complementarianism-as-a-second-order-doctrine/>

Helpful resources from GotQuestions.org

- **“What does the Bible say about women pastors?”** www.gotquestions.org/women-pastors.html
- **“Complementarianism vs. Egalitarianism - which is biblically correct?”**
www.gotquestions.org/complementarianism-vs-egalitarianism.html
- **“What does it mean that women are the `weaker vessel` (1 Peter 3:7)?”** <https://www.gotquestions.net/Printer/weaker-vessel-PF.html>
- **What roles can women fill in ministry?** <https://www.gotquestions.org/women-in-ministry.html>
- **“Why do women have such a small role in the Bible?”** <https://www.gotquestions.org/women-in-the-Bible.html>
- **Do women have to remain silent in church?** <https://www.gotquestions.org/women-silent-church.html>

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