

# Women and Church Leadership

*What Does Scripture Say About Women's Roles in the Church?*

---

A conversation comes up in nearly every Christian community at some point: *What does the Bible say about women and leadership in the church? Can women lead? Are women somehow "less than" in God's eyes?*

These are important questions that deserve honest, Scripture-based answers, not cultural assumptions or personal opinions. Whether you've wrestled with these questions for years or they've never crossed your mind, the goal of this resource is to walk through what God's Word actually says and to do so with both clarity and compassion.

## First Things First: You Are Deeply Valued by God

Before anything else, Scripture makes this unmistakably clear: men and women are equally created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Galatians 3:28 tells us that in Christ, there is neither male nor female when it comes to our standing before God. Your value, your salvation, your access to the Father are identical to any man's. Period.

This isn't a "nice thing pastors say to make women feel better." This is the bedrock of biblical theology. If anyone has ever made you feel like being a woman makes you less valuable in God's Kingdom, that message did not come from Scripture.

## What Does the Bible Say About Women and Church Leadership?

Several passages speak directly to the structure of church leadership:

### **1 Timothy 2:11–14**

The apostle Paul writes that he does not permit a woman to teach or assume authority over a man in the church assembly. Importantly, Paul doesn't base this on cultural norms or personal opinion. He roots it in the order of creation, pointing back to Genesis. This suggests this instruction reflects God's design, not a temporary rule for one specific church.

## 1 Corinthians 14:34–35

Paul gives a similar instruction regarding authoritative teaching within the gathered church assembly.

## Titus 1:6–9 and 1 Timothy 3:1–7

The qualifications for elders and overseers use male language throughout (“husband of one wife”). The office of elder/pastor is presented as a role for qualified men.

## Ephesians 5:22–33

The broader framework of male headship is tied directly to the relationship between Christ and the Church. The man leads sacrificially, as Christ leads. This isn’t about superiority, it’s a reflection of the gospel itself.

So the consistent teaching of Scripture is that the specific role of elder/pastor; the authoritative teaching and governing office over a congregation, is designated for qualified men. This is a specific structural role within the church, not a commentary on women’s abilities, intelligence, or value.

## Women God Used Powerfully Throughout Scripture

If you only read the passages above in isolation, you might get the wrong impression. So let’s look at the full picture, because it’s stunning:

**Deborah** — She judged the entire nation of Israel and led them to military victory (Judges 4–5). God placed her in one of the highest positions of authority in the Old Testament.

**Priscilla** — Together with her husband Aquila, she helped teach Apollos; an already eloquent preacher, the way of God more accurately (Acts 18:26).

**The Proverbs 31 Woman** — She was buying property, managing a household, providing for those in need, running what was essentially a small business empire, and being praised for her wisdom and strength.

**Phoebe** — Commended by Paul as a deaconess and a patron of many, including Paul himself (Romans 16:1–2).

**The Women at the Tomb** — In a culture where women’s testimony was not even legally valid, God chose *women* to be the first witnesses of the resurrection — the most

important event in human history. That wasn't an accident. That was God making a deliberate statement about how He sees women.

Throughout the New Testament, Paul commends numerous women who labored alongside him in ministry. Women taught, prophesied, served, disciplined, and were deeply influential in the early Church. God did not sideline women. He honored them, trusted them, and used them powerfully.

## Different Roles Don't Mean Different Worth

Our culture says that if you can't do everything, you're being limited or oppressed. But God's Kingdom operates on a completely different framework.

Consider this: Jesus Christ Himself submitted to the Father (Philippians 2:5–8). Does that make Jesus less than the Father? Absolutely not. They are co-equal in nature, distinct in role. The Son of God willingly operated within a role, and Scripture describes this as the ultimate expression of strength and glory, not weakness or inferiority.

If the Son of God operated within a role, there is zero shame in any of us doing the same. In God's economy, submission and distinct roles aren't punishments. They're part of His beautiful, intentional design.. a design that reflects the very nature of the Trinity.

## You Were Made on Purpose, With Purpose

Sisters in Christ, hear this clearly: God did not make you a woman as a limitation or an afterthought. He made you a woman **on purpose, with purpose**. The Church; both local and global, desperately needs what women bring. The nurturing, the wisdom, the strength, the compassion, the discernment, the courage. None of that is diminished by the fact that the pastoral office has a specific structure.

The question was never "Can women do important things?" — of course they can. Scripture proves that over and over. The question is whether we trust God's specific design for church leadership, even when the world tells us it's outdated. I believe that when we lean into His design rather than fighting it, we find more freedom and more purpose, not less.

I don't pretend to fully understand every reason God designed things the way He did. But I trust Him, because everything else He's designed has been good. And I trust that He sees you, knows you, and made you exactly who you are for a reason.

## A Note to the Men Reading This

If you're a man reading this resource, here's your takeaway: the biblical model of male leadership in the church is not a trophy. It's a weight. It's patterned after Christ, who led by washing feet, serving the lowly, and laying down His life. If the role of elder or pastor puffs you up rather than drops you to your knees, something has gone wrong.

Your job as a man in the church is to honor, protect, and champion the women around you — not to diminish them or lord authority over them. Headship in Scripture always looks like sacrifice, not superiority. Lead like Jesus did: with humility, with gentleness, and with a willingness to spend yourself for others.

## Key Scriptures Referenced

- **Genesis 1:27** — *Male and female created equally in God's image*
- **Galatians 3:28** — *In Christ there is neither male nor female*
- **1 Timothy 2:11–14** — *Teaching authority in the church assembly*
- **1 Corinthians 14:34–35** — *Authoritative teaching within the gathered church*
- **Titus 1:6–9** — *Qualifications for elders*
- **1 Timothy 3:1–7** — *Qualifications for overseers*
- **Ephesians 5:22–33** — *Headship as a reflection of Christ and the Church*
- **Judges 4–5** — *Deborah as judge and leader of Israel*
- **Acts 18:26** — *Priscilla and Aquila teaching Apollos*
- **Proverbs 31** — *The excellent wife — wisdom, strength, and enterprise*
- **Romans 16:1–2** — *Phoebe commended as deaconess and patron*
- **Philippians 2:5–8** — *Christ's submission to the Father as the model of humble leadership*

*“An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.  
She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.”  
— Proverbs 31:10, 26 (ESV)*