

# PRISCILLA

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# Papers

"PRISCILLA AND AQUILLA  
INSTRUCTED APOLLOS MORE  
PERFECTLY IN THE WAY OF THE LORD"  
(ACTS 18)

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## Editor's Ink

### The News: Both Good and Bad

Do you have a copy of the new Today's New International Version translation? If so, you are already enjoying a familiar translation in updated, "gender accurate" form. But if you've heard contradictory statements about the veracity and value of this new work related to the familiar New International Version (NIV), you will welcome this issue's lead article by John Kohlenberger, a member of CBE's board of directors. John has followed the development of the TNIV since the inclusive version of the NIV, published in Great Britain in 1995/95, was summarily rejected—under pressure—for publication in the U.S. several years ago.

John describes the route traveled to publication now of the TNIV, and he provides not only reasons for translation choices, but also many examples comparing most of the translations of recent years. I found the article not only informative, but also immensely helpful. I hope you will too.

Following the enthusiastic response to articles in the last issue about women in the early church and first-century synagogues, we present here further ground-breaking work, this time by Rebecca Groothuis. She takes on 1 Timothy 2:11-15, that oft-confusing portion of the apostle Paul's writings. Her careful study of a troubling passage gives new understanding that you are sure to welcome.

And don't miss William Spencer's delightful Mother's Day meditation on the scriptural passage read most often on this popular day honoring our mothers. Evelyn Bence's accompanying personal Mother's Day retrospective will be appreciated by all, and especially other single women who, like Evelyn, sometimes find this a difficult holiday.

Finally, I would be remiss not to mention my disap-

pointment at the ever-expanding repression of Southern Baptist women, and in particular those engaged in ministry. Actions taken last January by both international and North American mission boards serve to create further frustration for many, both women and men. In action eerily reminiscent of that taken in the wake of changes to the Baptist Faith & Message statement of faith in 1998—which calls for a wife to "submit graciously to the servant leadership of her husband"—led to either resignation or dismissal of a number of faculty members at Southern Baptist institutions of learning who were unable to sign that statement with a clear conscience, Missionaries are now faced with a similar dilemma. Though many have objected to this suddenly imposed requirement, most complain that the statement of faith is being treated as a creed, to which they object most strenuously. Yet, one wonders what effect this will have on the women involved. Will we ultimately see more resignations, this time from ministry on the mission field?

The North American board has issued its own revised statement to the effect that it will no longer endorse women who have been ordained: they may not serve as chaplains, nor as pastors. If this disturbs you, please make it a point to read "An Honest Column," by John Phelan, president and dean of North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago. You will take heart from his unwavering support of women in ministry.

One of my new friends in Florida is a Presbyterian chaplain in a retirement community. This woman recognized a call to ministry early in life, but it wasn't until the age of 60 that she entered seminary to begin the process that would allow her finally to fulfill that call—and very effectively, I might add. Things are changing—but they still take time.

CAROL R. THIESSEN, *editor*

# What About the “Gender Accurate” TNIV?

*A review of the recently published Today’s New International Version.*

JOHN R. KOHLENBERGER III

“I would rather be torn in pieces by wild horses than permit any such translation to be forced upon poor churches. The new edition infuriates me. I require it to be burned.”

**S**ound like the latest salvo in the current flap over the release of Today’s New International Version (TNIV)? Actually, with some archaisms updated, it is a quotation from Hugh Broughton, who in 1612 published a scathing review of the newly released Authorized or King James Version (KJV).<sup>1</sup> Four centuries and hundreds of millions of copies later, we no longer hear such criticisms of the KJV. Ironically, we now hear such venomous language used by those who believe the KJV is the only divinely inspired Bible and that all other versions are the work of the Devil.

Such King-James-Only advocates have taken a personal preference, elevated it to a theological absolute, and used it to divide liberals from conservatives, believers from unbelievers, servants of God from minions of Satan. Critics of inclusive language in Bible translation are doing the very same thing with their reckless, blanket denunciations of the TNIV.

Earlier issues of PRISCILLA PAPERS<sup>2</sup> have addressed well the inclusive-language controversy, which became a media frenzy in 1997. And, although most opponents of recent inclusive-language versions label these Bibles and their translators as “feminists” (using that term as a pejorative and antonym to “Bible believers”), the first books published in defense of such translations were by scholars—D. A. Carson and Mark L. Strauss—who were self-described as “traditional” or “complementarian” in their views of male-female roles in church and home.<sup>3</sup> The only major work opposed to Carson and Strauss is also by “complementarian” authors: Vern S. Poythress and Wayne A. Grudem.<sup>4</sup> These resources deal with the controversy in detail.

## Some background to the TNIV

The first inclusive-language edition of the New International Version (NIV) was published in the United Kingdom by Hodder & Stoughton in 1995 and 1996. Apparently British evangelicals were so desirous of an inclusive-language NIV that the International Bible Society (IBS), which owns the copyright to the NIV, and the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT), the scholars responsible for the maintenance and ongoing revision of the NIV, were willing to allow a preliminary revision of the NIV to be published in England, though they wanted to wait for the full revision of the NIV for the North American audience.

Following David Scholer’s celebratory review of the New International Version: Inclusive Language Edition (NIVI) in 1996,<sup>5</sup> events that were precipitated from the

inclusive-language controversy made it seem as though there never would be a revision of the NIV for the North American—or any other—audience. On May 27, 1997, IBS “. . . announced today that it will forgo all plans to develop a revised edition of the NIV. . . . IBS has abandoned all plans for gender-related changes in future editions of the New International Version (NIV).”<sup>6</sup> While trying to mitigate the ferocity of the controversy and avoid censure and boycotts by such powerful groups as the Southern Baptist Convention and Focus on the Family, IBS effectively abandoned the original vision of keeping the NIV ever up-to-date and broke faith with CBT, the independent body responsible for the development and maintenance of the NIV.

But the controversy did not go away. Nor did critics of the NIVI continue to support the IBS and the unaltered NIV. In fact, the Southern Baptist Convention sponsored a new translation of the Bible through Broadman and Holman Publishers: The Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB), of which the NT appeared in 2000. Other critics served as advisers, reviewers, or “translators” of an evangelical revision of the Revised Standard Version (RSV), published in 2001 as the English Standard Version (ESV). Ironically, both of these versions use inclusive language more frequently than the NIV! Some of the most strident voices demeaning the TNIV are associated with these new versions—a situation many translators and publishers consider a conflict of interest.

In light of these developments, interaction with evangelical scholars supportive of a revised NIV (including the CBT), and a reassessment of the original vision for the NIV, the new leadership of IBS has taken the steps necessary to honor that original vision while honoring their commitment not to change the NIV. The results were announced on January 28, 2002: The 1984 edition of the New International Version will remain the NIV and will stay in print for as long as there is demand. The revision, though identical to



the NIV NT by more than 93 percent, bears a new name and acronym: Today's New International Version (TNIV), which shows its relation to the "classic" NIV but also sets it apart as the offspring of the NIV that will undergo regular revision to keep in step with advances in biblical scholarship and changes in English idiom.

The official TNIV Web site ([www.tniv.info](http://www.tniv.info)) has the following explanation in "An Open Statement About the TNIV from the International Bible Society and Zondervan":

#### Clarification Regarding Colorado Springs Guidelines

IBS, Zondervan and the Committee on Bible Translation agreed to endorse a document now referred to as the Colorado Springs Guidelines (CSG). The document contained two sections. The first, titled Statement on Gender-Related Language in Scripture, dealt with the philosophical principles associated with Bible translation. We unequivocally support the tenets set forth in this section, including:

- We agree that the overarching concern in Bible translation is to preserve the sanctity of the truth of sacred Scripture.
- We agree that the goal of all translation should be to render the most accurate translation possible.
- We agree that Bible translation should not be influenced by illegitimate intrusions of secular culture or by political or ideological agendas.
- We agree that there are limited times when the use of gender-accurate language enhances the accuracy of the translation, but overuse can become an instrument of distortion.

The second component, titled Guidelines for Translation of Gender-Related Language in Scripture, contains some very specific guidelines that those present generally agreed with or, at the time, were willing to endorse. However, upon further review and consideration, and in consultation with a broader group of evangelical scholars, IBS has determined that many of the technical guidelines are too restrictive to facilitate the most accurate possible text in contemporary English idiom.

As a result, IBS, after much prayer and consideration of their highest mission of reaching the world with accurate and clear translations of the Bible, withdrew its endorsement as a matter of integrity. The guidelines that have served the CBT for decades and those of the International Forum of Bible Agencies (IFBA) continue to guide their work. IFBA is a large body of translators including Wycliffe, Summer Institute of Linguistics and others who are responsible for 90 percent of Bible translation work.

As an outcome of that gathering in Colorado Springs, IBS and Zondervan made a commitment to continue publishing the NIV without changes or updates. Indeed, we will continue to publish the NIV without changes or updates, and we will continue to earnestly promote the NIV.<sup>7</sup>

#### TNIV principles of translation and revision

The twofold goal of keeping the NIV—or any translation—up-to-date is described in "A Word to the Reader":

There is a sense in which the work of translating the Bible is never finally finished. This very fact has prompted the Committee to engage in an ongoing review of the text of the NIV with the assistance of many other scholars. The chief goal of this review has always been to bring the text of the NIV abreast of contemporary biblical scholarship and of shifts in English idioms and usage. Already in 1978 and again in 1984 various corrections and revisions to the NIV

text were made. In Today's New International Version (TNIV) the Committee offers to the reading public the latest fruits of this review.<sup>8</sup>

This review will summarize key changes in the TNIV resulting from "contemporary biblical scholarship" and from "shifts in English idioms and usage.

**The underlying text of the TNIV.** Like the NIV, the TNIV is "an eclectic one,"<sup>9</sup> informed by the latest editions of the Nestle-Aland and United Bible Societies texts.

Because most modern translations are based on Greek texts older and geographically more diverse than those used by the KJV translators, 16 verses and dozens of words and phrases in the KJV are not in these modern translations because they are not in the most ancient Greek texts. Most modern versions, the NIV included, translate these verses and many phrases in footnotes, acknowledging their significance in the history of the English Bible, while rejecting them as original to the Greek NT.

The TNIV goes further than most versions, omitting twelve of these verses even from the footnotes. Matthew 17:21; 18:11; Mark 7:16; 9:44, 46; 11:26; 15:28; Luke 17:36; 23:16; Acts 24:6b-8a; 15:34; 28:29. John 5:3b-4; Acts 8:37; Romans 16:24 and 1 John 5:7b-8a remain in footnotes. Any omitted verse number is now included in brackets in the text; for example, at Matthew 17 "20[21] He replied . . ." and 18 "10[11] See that . . ."

More dramatic is the treatment of the so-called "Longer Ending" of Mark 16:9-21 and the story of the adulteress in John 7:53-8:11. These passages were marked off in the NIV with horizontal ruling lines and subheads that noted the verses were not in the "earliest manuscripts and some other ancient versions." In the TNIV the ruling lines and subheads remain, but the text is now italicized and reduced in size.<sup>10</sup> A few other text-critical changes of interest include Matthew 27:16-17; Mark 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:12; and 1 Thessalonians 2:7.

**Word pattern changes (other than inclusive language).** Several words and phrases have undergone pattern changes throughout the TNIV as a result both of advances in scholarship and changes in English idiom. These changes sometimes improve clarity, avoid misunderstanding, and sharpen the historical context.

"*Christ*" to "*Messiah*." A frequent and notable change mentioned in the TNIV preface involves the Greek word *christos*, ". . . where the term is clearly used to designate the God-sent deliverer of Jewish expectation (primarily in the Gospels and Acts), it was judged more appropriate to use "*Messiah*." However, where this sense seems less prominent (primarily the Epistles), the transliteration of the Greek word (*Christ*) has been retained."<sup>11</sup>

The TNIV has *Messiah* 68 times where the NIV has it only twice (John 1:41; 4:25); conversely, the TNIV has *Christ* 468 times where the NIV has it 530 times. Here is one example:

#### Mark 8:29

NIV: "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered. "You are the Christ."

TNIV: "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered. "You are the Messiah."

*saints to Goa's people, people of Goa, believers, and so on.* Another pattern of change seeks to avoid the familiar word "saints" in light of its usage in Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions to indicate a special class of believer.<sup>12</sup>

Some passages that might have been easily misinterpreted include Acts 9:32; 1 Corinthians 6:2; and Revelation 5:8. The NIV has *saints* 45 times, while in the TNIV *saints* remains only 9 times (Rom. 1:7; 15:26; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2; Rev. 8:4; 18:20).

"*Jews*" to "*Jewish leaders*." The plural form of the Greek word *ioudaios* is usually translated "Jews" in the NIV and TNIV. However, in eighteen contexts in John and Acts, it is clear that "the Jews" refers to a subgroup within the Jewish people that is antagonistic to Jesus and his followers. In these contexts the TNIV translates *ioudaioi* contextually as "Jewish leaders" (John 1:19; 5:10, 15, 16; 7:1, 11; 9:22; 18:14, 28, 36; 19:12, 31, 38; 20:19; Acts 13:50; 21:11; 25:2; 28:17). Since Jesus and his early followers were all Jews, this translation makes it clearer that one subgroup within the Jewish people was antagonistic to another subgroup within the Jewish people. Take, for example, the case of Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Council—both a "Jew" and a "Jewish leader":

**John 19:38**

NIV: Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews.

TNIV: Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders.

*Spirit-emphasizing renderings of "pneumatikos."* In the NIV the Greek adjective *pneumatikos* is always rendered "spiritual" or "spiritually." In light of recent research, especially by Gordon Fee, this adjective is rendered in ways that more clearly emphasize that what is described by *pneuma-tikos* is of the Holy Spirit. For example:

**1 Corinthians 2:15**

NIV: The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment;

TNIV: The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments.

Other significant passages include 1 Corinthians 2:13; 12:1; Galatians 6:1; and Ephesians 5:19.

**Word pattern changes involving inclusive language.**

The revisions that have made the headlines since January are, however, those that involve gender-oriented language. Although the NIV in 1997 and the TNIV in 2002 have been singled out in the inclusive-language controversy, the reality is that these versions are just two of at least twenty revisions and new translations that have appeared since 1985 and—with the exception of the 1995 revision of the NASB—all of these versions have used inclusive language far more frequently than the NIV! These include the de-facto standard in the academic world, the NRSV (1989); the most-used Roman Catholic translations, the New American Bible (NAB, 1986, 1991) and the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB, 1985, 1990); and the best-selling simple-English version, the New Living Translation (NLT, 1996). I can only surmise that the TNIV is

receiving the most criticism because it is the largest target and many of its critics have their own recent translations.

The main points of contention involve masculine nouns—*man, brother, father, son*—and third-person masculine singular pronouns—*he him, his*—all of which have traditionally been used in an inclusive sense. For decades studies have shown that these so-called masculine inclusive terms are heard as exclusively masculine terms by the majority of test subjects.<sup>13</sup> So it would seem most desirable—especially to communicate to seekers and young people—to avoid masculine terminology when the biblical text is clearly inclusive.

This is what William Tyndale must have thought when in 1526 he translated Matthew 5:9 as "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Some manuscripts of the Wycliffe version of 1390 even have "children" in this text instead of "sons," the masculine translation of the masculine Greek word *huios*. In fact, all of the sixteenth-century English translations of the NT followed Wycliffe and Tyndale, culminating in the KJV of 1611. It wasn't until the late nineteenth century with the English Revised Version (RV, 1881, 1885) and the American Standard Version (ASV, 1901) that peacemakers became "sons of God." These literalistic translations abandoned much of the *ad sensum* inclusive language of Tyndale and the KJV in favor of a more formal-equivalent translation style and a more limited list of English glosses. The RV and ASV strongly influenced the styles of the midtwentieth-century translations that many of us grew up with: the RSV, NASB, NIV, and NKJV, all of which use inclusive language less frequently than Tyndale and the KJV.

The so-called Colorado Springs Guidelines for Translation of Gender-Related Language in Scripture were assembled in 1997 as an attempt to promote "masculine inclusive" language as the only accurate way to translate the Bible. The guidelines are well critiqued by Strauss,<sup>14</sup> Carson,<sup>15</sup> Spencer<sup>16</sup> and Leigh.<sup>17</sup> Suffice it to say that the guidelines represent a preference for "masculine-inclusive" language and formal-equivalent translation style but do not represent the range of language that has characterized the history of English Bible translation. No translation yet—including the ESV and HCSB—follows the guidelines consistently, so why should their proponents criticize any translation that departs from the guidelines?

Only two guidelines are needed for the accurate rendering of gender-oriented language in Bible translation:

1. When the biblical text is clearly gender inclusive, translate it with English that is clearly gender inclusive.
2. When the biblical text is clearly gender specific, translate it with English that is clearly gender specific.

The TNIV Web site offers the following explanation of CBT's dealing with gender-oriented language:

Updates include:

- Generic language where the meaning of the text was intended to include both men and women. For example,

*It would seem most desirable especially to communicate to seekers and young people to avoid masculine terminology when the biblical text is clearly inclusive.*

“sons of God” becomes “children of God,” and “brothers” becomes “brothers and sisters” when it is clear the original text never intended any specific gender reference.

- The TNIV is not merely a gender-accurate edition of the NIV. More than 70 percent of the changes made were not related to gender.
- The TNIV retains male terminology, as present in the original text, for all references to God without exception.
- All gender-related changes in the TNIV are made to update masculine terminology that, in view of the immediate context, is often misunderstood and clearly used with generic intent. The changes do not have any doctrinal impact upon the text of Scripture.
- The TNIV sometimes uses a generic plural pronoun in the place of a masculine singular pronoun, making it more consistent with contemporary English practice.

“Man/men” to “people,” “human beings,” and so on. Every Greek-English lexicon and theological dictionary published in the twentieth century agrees that the Greek words *anthropos* and *aner* can mean “any human being” as well as “male”; only the context can determine whether these words should be glossed as “man” or “husband,” “person” or “people.” The sources agree that the only Greek word that always means “male” is *arsen*, a word not addressed in the Colorado Springs Guidelines, and always translated “male” or “men” in the NIV and TNIV.

One massive improvement in the TNIV, and in many other modern versions, is the rephrasing of passages dealing with salvation to clearly include women and not just men. In the following extracts from 1 Timothy 2, the words in bold type are highlighted to assist comparison (there is no bold type in the translations as published):

- KJV: 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for **all men**;
- RSV: 2:1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for **all men**,
- NASB: 2:1 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of **all men**,
- NIV: 2:1 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for **everyone**—
- NRSV: 2:1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for **everyone**,
- NJB: 2:1 I urge then, first of all that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving should be offered for **everyone**,
- NAB: 2:1 First of all, then, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for **everyone**,
- NLT: 2:1 I urge you, first of all, to pray for **all people**. As you make your requests, plead for God’s mercy upon them, and give thanks.
- HCSB: 2:1 First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for **everyone**,
- ESV: 2:1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for **all people**,
- TNIV: 2:1 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for **everyone**—

The gender language in 1 Timothy 2:1 in the TNIV is identical to the NIV, since the NIV was already clearly inclusive, as are the NRSV, NJB, NAB, NLT, NJSB, and ESV in contrast to the KJV, RSV, and NASB.

KJV: 2:4 Who will have **all men** to be saved, and to come

unto the knowledge of the truth.

- RSV: 2:4 who desires **all men** to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
- NASB: 2:4 who desires **all men** to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
- NIV: 2:4 who wants **all men** to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.
- NRSV: 2:4 who desires **everyone** to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
- NJB: 2:4 he wants **everyone** to be saved and reach full knowledge of the truth.
- NAB: 2:4 who wills **everyone** to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.
- NLT: 2:4 for he wants **everyone** to be saved and to understand the truth.
- HCSB: 2:4 who wants **everyone** to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
- ESV: 2:4 who desires **all people** to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
- TNIV: 2:4 who wants **all people** to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

In 2:4, the TNIV improves on the NIV’s “masculine inclusive,” in agreement with the same seven recent versions.

- KJV: 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and **men**, the **man** Christ Jesus;
- RSV: 2:5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and **men**, the **man** Christ Jesus,
- NASB: 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and **men**, the **man** Christ Jesus,
- NIV: 2:5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and **men**, the **man** Christ Jesus,
- NRSV: 2:5 For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and **humankind**, Christ Jesus, himself **human**,
- NJB: 2:5 For there is only one God, and there is only one mediator between God and **humanity**, himself a **human being**, Christ Jesus,
- NAB: 2:5 For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the **human race**, Christ Jesus, himself **human**,
- NLT: 2:5 For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and **people**. He is the **man** Christ Jesus.
- TNIV: 2:5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and **human beings**, Christ Jesus, himself **human**,
- HCSB: 2:5 For there is one God / and one mediator between God and **man**, / a **man**, Christ Jesus,
- ESV: 2:5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and **men**, the **man** Christ Jesus,

In 2:5, the TNIV improves on the NIV’s “masculine inclusive,” in agreement with five recent versions. For some reason, the HCSB and the ESV use unnecessary masculine terminology here, though the Greek words are the same as in verses 1 and 4 (*anthropos*). It is clear that Jesus’ humanness—not his gender—is in view here, but these unfortunate renderings will surely be misheard by many as asserting reconciliation with God is mediated by males.

- KJV: 2:6 Who gave himself a ransom for **all**, to be testified in due time.
- RSV: 2:6 who gave himself as a ransom for **all**, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time.
- NASB: 2:6 who gave Himself as a ransom for **all**, the testimony given at the proper time.
- NIV: 2:6 who gave himself as a ransom for **all men**—the testimony given in its proper time.
- NRSV: 2:6 who gave himself a ransom for **all**—this was attested at the right time.

NJB: 2:6 who offered himself as a ransom for **all**. This was the witness given at the appointed time,  
 NAB: 2:6 who gave himself as ransom for **all**. This was the testimony at the proper time.  
 NLT: 2:6 He gave his life to purchase freedom for **everyone**. This is the message that God gave to the world at the proper time.  
 HCSB: 2:6 who gave Himself—a ransom for **all**, / a testimony at the proper time.  
 ESV: 2:6 who gave himself as a ransom for **all**, which is the testimony given at the proper time.  
 TNIV: 2:6 who gave himself as a ransom for **all people**. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.

In 2:6, the TNIV—and all the versions cited—improve upon the NIV’s unnecessary use of “men” in translating the Greek word *pas* (“all”). If we were to read on in 1 Timothy 2:7, we would note that the TNIV and all other translations render this gender-specific verse as instructions to “men” and also render the gender-specific instructions to and comments about “women” in 2:9–15. This is true in all gender-oriented changes in the TNIV: when the context is gender inclusive, the English is gender inclusive; when the context is gender specific, the English is gender specific. Such language is increasingly referred to as “gender accurate”; the English clearly matches the context and intent of the original.

“Brothers” to “brothers and sisters,” “believers,” and so on. As in the cases of *anthropos* and *aner*, all the Greek-English lexicons and theological dictionaries agree that *adelphos* can mean a literal biological “brother” as well as a member of a class or group of either gender. Although the sources do not all specify the inclusiveness of *adelphos* in the singular, they are all clear about the plural. Note especially the comments in *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, clearly not written by “feminists”: “In translating it should be carefully noted that *adelphoi* (pl.) can also mean ‘sibling,’ that is, ‘brothers and sisters.’”<sup>19</sup> In keeping with this nearly universally acknowledged semantic domain, the TNIV regularly renders *adelphos* (singular) as “brother or sister” or “believer” and *adelphoi* as “brothers and sisters” or “believers.”

**2 Thessalonians 3:6**

NIV: In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.  
 TNIV: In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.

Note that the same translation technique had already been used on occasion in the NIV in its first edition, 1973:

**Acts 1:15**

NIV: In those days Peter stood up among the believers\* (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty)  
 \*In (1984 edition): 15 Greek brothers  
 TNIV: In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty)

*Language is referred to as “gender accurate” when the English clearly matches the context and intent of the original*

“Fathers” to “parents,” “ancestors,” and so on. Again, the sources agree that the Greek word *pater* can mean a biological male parent, “father,” as well as referring inclusively to parents and ancestors. Even the ASV, NASB, RSV, NIV, HCSB, and ESV agree with the KJV’s inclusive rendering of Hebrews 11:23, recognizing that Moses was not hidden by his “fathers”:

KJV: By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.

The TNIV follows this same principle, rendering *pater* with clearly inclusive terminology when the context is clearly inclusive:

**2 Peter 3:4**

NIV: They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”  
 TNIV: They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”

In some contexts where inclusiveness is not as certain, the TNIV offers an inclusive rendering in a footnote:

**Ephesians 6:4**

TNIV: Fathers,\* do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.  
 \*fn: 4 Or Parents

It should be noted that in keeping with their commitment to preserving masculine terms in God-oriented language, God is always “Father”—not “Parent” or “Mother-Father”—in the TNIV.

“Son” and “sons” to “child” and “children.” The rendering of the Greek word *hios* as “child” in the singular and “children” in the plural is common in Tyndale and the KJV, though it fell out of style in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The TNIV follows the consensus of modern Greek-English resources in returning to the *ad sensum* renderings of the sixteenth century:

**Matthew 5:9**

NIV: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.  
 TNIV: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

In some inclusive contexts, the TNIV has retained “sonship” language with a new footnote about the cultural significance of the term:

**Romans 8:15**

NIV: For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship.\* And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”  
 \*fn: 15 Or adoption  
 TNIV: The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.\* And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”  
 \*fn: 15 The Greek word for *adoption to sonship* is a term referring to the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman culture.

Interestingly, even in this “sonship” context, Paul goes on in verse 16 to speak of believers as “children” (*tekna*)—not “sons” (*huiioi*)—of God.

Again, in keeping with their policy concerning God-oriented language, Jesus is always the “Son,” unless the Greek uses the neuter term *paidion* (“child”), such as in Matthew 2:8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 20, 21; Luke 2:40; and so on.

*Third-person singular to third-person plural or second person.* Some recent translations render the single words mentioned above with inclusive terms in inclusive contexts, yet prefer to stay more formally equivalent in rendering the third person masculine singular with grammatically identical English terms: *he, his, him*. It should be noted that most passages that use the third-person singular in a generic or inclusive sense are proverbial or “gnomic” sayings. In such cases, the meaning is not dependent on number or person: the saying includes anyone who hears and all who hear. Therefore a meaning-oriented translation (often called “dynamic equivalent” or “functional equivalent”) can justifiably change the form of the original to communicate the meaning of the original.

In Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus, he twice speaks of the New Birth in the third-person singular. Though differently worded than the NIV, the TNIV preserves the form of the original without masculine nouns or pronouns:

**John 3:3**

NIV: In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”

TNIV: Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born again.”

**John 3:5**

NIV: Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.”

TNIV: Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.”

Remarkably, when Jesus quotes these third-person singular statements in John 3:7, he quotes himself in the *second-person plural*, a fact noted in both the NIV and TNIV.

**John 3:7**

NIV: You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You\* must be born again.’

\*fn: 7 The Greek is plural.

TNIV: You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You\* must be born again.’

\*fn: 7 The Greek is plural.

As stated in its preface:

While a basic core of the English language remains relatively stable, many diverse and complex cultural forces continue to bring about subtle shifts in the meanings and/or connotations of even old, well-established words and phrases. Among the more programmatic changes in the TNIV is the removal of nearly all vocative “O”s and the elimination of most instances of the generic use of masculine nouns and pronouns. Relative to the second of these, the so-called singular “they/their/them,” which has been gaining acceptance among careful writers and which actually has a venerable place in English idiom, has been employed to fill in the vocabulary gap in generic nouns and pronouns referring to human beings. Where an individual emphasis is deemed to be present, “anyone” or “everyone” is generally

used as the antecedent of such pronouns.<sup>20</sup>

**Matthew 6:27** (third person masculine singular to second person)

NIV: Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

TNIV: Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

**Matthew 11:15** (third person masculine singular to indefinite singular followed by third person plural)

NIV: He who has ears, let him hear.

TNIV: Whoever has ears, let them hear.

**Significant passages involving women.** *Romans 16.* English translations, following centuries of traditional interpretation, have been slow to recognize the names and titles of women in key texts. The TNIV follows many other translations and commentaries in remedying some of these situations. Notable in Romans 16 are the cases of Phoebe—now a “deacon” and a “benefactor”—and Junia—now a woman (not “Junias”) and an “apostle”:

**Romans 16:1-2**

NIV: I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant\* of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.

\*fn: 1 Or *deaconess*

TNIV: I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon\* of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of God’s people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

\*fn: 1 Or *servant*

**Romans 16:7**

NIV: Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

TNIV: Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

*1 Timothy 2–3.* The TNIV translates the difficult vocabulary in 1 Timothy 2:12 exactly as does the NIV; however, additional footnotes identify other interpretive options:

NIV: I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.

TNIV: I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over\* a man;\*\* she must be quiet.

\*fn: 12 Or to *exercise authority over*; or to *dominate*

\*\*fn: 12 Or *her husband*

In dealing with the leadership qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:11, the TNIV switches text and note with the NIV:

NIV: In the same way, their wives\* are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

\*fn: 11 Or *way, deaconesses*

TNIV: In the same way, women [who are deacons]\* are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

\*fn: 11 Or *way, [deacons] wives*

The use of half-brackets around “who are deacons” follows the NIV and TNIV practice of marking uncertain renderings: “To achieve clarity the translators have sometimes supplied words not in the original texts but required by the



context. If there was uncertainty about such material, it is enclosed in brackets."<sup>21</sup>

*Roles in church and home.* The key texts dealing with male and female "roles" and "offices" in home and church are not matters of translation; but of interpretation. Egalitarians do not generally contest the use of words such as *head* and *submit*; they do contest how the terms are defined and worked out by many traditionalists who promote male superiority and leadership over mutual submission.

It is not surprising then that "man" is still "head of the woman" in 1 Corinthians 11:3 and that "the husband is the head of the wife" in Ephesians 5:23. Wives still submit themselves to their own husbands in Ephesians 5:22, 24; Colossians 3:18; and 1 Peter 3:1. The qualifications for the "overseer" (footnote "bishop") are still stated in masculine terms in 1 Timothy 2:1-7, as are those for the "elder" and "overseer" in Titus 1:6-9. These passages make it clear that the TNIV is not promoting an egalitarian or "feminist" agenda, as so many critics carelessly allege.

### Conclusions

What is promoted in the gender-oriented language of the TNIV is what "complementarians" claim they have in common with egalitarians: that women and men are equal in standing before God and are fully included in the community. Male and female roles are not changed in the TNIV, only the language of community. Women are no longer hidden in such masculine terms as "men," "fathers," "sons," and "brothers"; they are now fully included in terms such as "people," "parents," "children," and "brothers and sisters." How can there be any real objection to such language, most of which has been with us for six hundred years of English Bible tradition?

The King James translators gave us what is undoubtedly the finest introduction to an English version in their "Translators to the Reader." Though this invaluable document is no longer printed in most editions of the KJV, it is available in facsimile and in modern paraphrase from the American Bible Society.<sup>22</sup> In speaking of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures most often quoted in the NT, they note:

It is certain, that that translation was not so sound and so perfect, but that it needed in many places correction; and who had been so sufficient for this work as the apostles or apostolic men? Yet it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to them to take that which they found (the same being for the greatest part true and sufficient) . . . <sup>23</sup>

What the KJV translators believed of the flawed Greek Septuagint, I believe of our many flawed English translations: they are "for the greatest part true and sufficient." I urge critics of the TNIV and other recent translations to adopt this same attitude. If you don't like the TNIV, don't use it—use the translation you prefer. But don't condemn the TNIV as heretical; acknowledge it as "true and sufficient," even if it doesn't render all verses with your preferred vocabulary.

Far from considering the TNIV merely "true and sufficient," I feel it is the best NT translation we have—an excellent combination of accuracy and readability in a much more contemporary idiom than its excellent forebear, the NIV. Since it is at least 93 percent identical to the NIV, the TNIV can be used in any church or educational context where the NIV is the current standard. Most verses will be identical and those which are different are all improvements, whether from the perspective of biblical scholarship or of English idiom. As IBS and CBT are committed to completing the TNIV by 2005, Zondervan is committed to adapting its most significant Study Bible formats and reference books to serve the TNIV as they have the NIV.

Please consult the TNIV Web site at [www.tniv.info](http://www.tniv.info) for further information and to read the TNIV on line. And be sure to send an e-mail to thank the leadership of IBS and the hard-working scholars of CBT for the long and difficult path they have traveled to bring this new treasure to the church of the twenty-first century. n



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### Notes

1. Quoted in F. F. Bruce, *History of the Bible in English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 107.
2. PRISCILLA PAPERS, Volume 10, Number 4, pp. 1-2; Volume 11, Number 4, the entire issue.
3. D.A. Carson, *The Inclusive Language Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), see p. 11; Mark L. Strauss, *Distorting Scripture? The Challenge of Bible Translation & Gender Accuracy* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1998), see p. 25.
4. Vern S. Poythress & Wayne A. Grudem, *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy: Muting the Masculinity of God's Words* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000), see p. 4 and notes.
5. PRISCILLA PAPERS, Volume 10, Number 4, 1-2.
6. *Ibid.*, 1.
7. <http://www.tniv.info/resources/openstatement.php>
8. Today's New International Version: New Testament Preview Edition (Colorado Springs: International Bible Society, 2001), v.
9. *Ibid.*, vi.
10. *Ibid.*, vii.
11. *Ibid.*, vi.
12. *Ibid.*, vii.
13. Strauss, 140-46.
14. *Ibid.*, throughout.
15. *Ibid.*, 111-33.
16. PRISCILLA PAPERS, Volume 11, Number 4, 18-19.
17. PRISCILLA PAPERS, Volume 11, Number 4, 20-25.
18. <http://www.tniv.info/quickfacts.php>
19. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, eds. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), vol. I, 30.
20. *Ibid.*, vii.
21. Today's New International Version: New Testament Preview Edition (Colorado Springs: International Bible Society, 2001), vi.
22. Erroll F Rhodes and Liana Lupas, eds. *The Translators to the Reader: The Original Preface of the King James Version of 1611 Revisited* (New York: American Bible Society, 1997).
23. *Ibid.*, 35.

# Leading Him Up the Garden Path

## *Further thoughts on 1 Timothy 2:11–15.*

REBECCA MERRILL GROOTHUIS

<sup>11</sup>Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. <sup>12</sup>I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. <sup>13</sup>For Adam was formed first, then Eve; <sup>14</sup>and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. <sup>15</sup>Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

—1 Timothy 2:11–15 (NRSV)

EVER SINCE I SET FORTH A MORE-OR-LESS REPRESENTATIVE egalitarian interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11–15 in *Good News for Women*, I have felt somewhat dissatisfied with this approach. Although I found it considerably less problematic than the traditionalist interpretation, still it left me with some nagging questions. For instance, if women at Ephesus were not to teach or to have authority in the church because they were deceived or unschooled, why were they specifically prohibited only from teaching or having authority over men? And if Paul were addressing women and men in general, why did he speak in terms of “a woman” and “a man”?

### **If Paul were restricting women’s ministry simply as a temporary expedient because of the doctrinal confusion of the Ephesian women, then why does he recite the story of Adam and Eve?**

It has seemed to me that the peculiar wording of the prohibition holds important clues to Paul’s original intent in writing these words to Timothy at Ephesus. I have also suspected that the reference to Adam and Eve is not merely illustrative, but integral to the meaning and purpose of the prohibition. Both the standard egalitarian and traditionalist interpretations fall short of resolving these questions and concerns.

#### **Problematic interpretations**

Egalitarian interpretations of this text typically argue that Paul was provisionally barring women from teaching and leadership ministries because he did not want them to teach false doctrine or to exercise or usurp authority inappropriately or abusively (e.g., in a dominating or controlling manner). Presumably, women at this church at this time were not theologically equipped to teach accurately or lead appropriately in the church’s ministries. This interpretation is plausible, but it seems to fall short of being persuasive.

Surely not all the women, or only the women, were

deceived or unfit to teach or lead. Why, then, should this text restrict the ministry of all women—and of only women? Furthermore, if the women were deceived, uneducated, or otherwise unfit for ministry, they should have been prohibited from teaching or having authority over anyone, not just men. Finally, if Paul were restricting women’s ministry simply as a temporary expedient because of the doctrinal confusion of the Ephesian women, then why, instead of stating this rationale, does he recite the story of Adam and Eve? It all seems a bit cryptic and circuitous.

Turning to the supposedly “plain reading” of the text offers no mitigation of difficulties. The usual traditionalist interpretation—that Paul is setting forth a timeless, universal rule that a woman is not to be an elder (or, by extension, a pastor) of a local church—also falls short of the mark. If the statement that a woman is not to teach or have authority over a man is taken at face value, it doesn’t rule out merely the ministry of pastor or elder for a woman, but also many of the ministries to which women were clearly called and

blessed by God in the Bible. It goes beyond the text’s plain meaning to insist that “to teach or to have authority over a man” necessarily, exclusively, and specifically refers to the duties of a pastor or elder.

Why would Paul say a woman must not teach or have authority over “a man” if he meant “the entire church”? A straightfor-

ward reading of this text (which traditionalists claim to hold) would seem to permit a female pastor to shepherd the women in a church while a male pastor shepherds the men—thus apportioning the balance of power equally between men and women. Traditionalists would likely object to such a copastoring arrangement not simply because it would be awkward to administer, but because it would violate the fundamental principle that they believe is clearly set forth in this text, namely, that God has ordained that in the church a woman must be in submission to the spiritual authority of a man. Yet the text does not plainly read that women are required to submit to male authority.

Traditionalists claim that Paul’s appeal to the sequence of Adam and Eve’s creation (v. 13) demonstrates that women must be silent and submissive precisely because a hierarchy of male authority was ordained by God at Creation. Yet there is nothing in the Genesis account that stipulates such an arrangement, and nothing in the mere temporal priority of the man to demand it.<sup>1</sup>

In order to read Paul’s reference to the sequence of creation (v. 13) as a reference to a creationally ordained princi-

ple of male authority, one must assume that in verse 12 Paul forbids a woman to have authority over a man because God created man to have spiritual authority over woman. Only then does verse 13 appear to read as a statement confirming the divinely ordained authority of man over woman. But this assumption begs the central exegetical question of the text. In other words, one must first assume universal male authority before one can assert the evidence for universal male authority.

Many traditionalists seek to shore up such question-begging argumentation by claiming that Paul intended verse 13 to be understood in light of the ancient Middle-Eastern law of primogeniture, which granted special privileges (primarily inheritance rights) to the firstborn male in a family. However, the rights accorded the firstborn did not include the right to exercise authority over his siblings; therefore, it does not provide an analogy to the alleged right of the man (who was “formed first”) to exercise authority over the woman (who was formed later). Furthermore, the idea that the first is the best is a construction of human culture; it is not a God-given moral principle. Nor was it specifically a law of the Israelites (although Israelite law regulated the conventional practice of primogeniture according to moral principle).<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, Scripture is replete with accounts in which God intentionally overturned the cultural custom of primogeniture in order to accomplish his own purposes. For example, God chose Isaac over Ishmael; Jacob over Esau; Ephraim over Manasseh; the tribe of Judah over that of Reuben, the eldest; Joseph over all his older brothers; and David over all his older brothers. As Rushdoony notes, “the exceptions [to primogeniture] are almost the rule. In the Biblical record, inheritance by primogeniture without moral qualification is rare. Again and again, the firstborn is set aside because of moral failure.”<sup>3</sup> It appears that the practice of primogeniture in the Old Testament offers scant hermeneutical support for a doctrine that insists a woman’s moral qualifications for spiritual leadership can *never* overrule the fact that she was not born a man.

In addition to these and other exegetical and theological problems with using primogeniture to establish male authority at Creation, there is a logical problem. The logic of the argument forms a series of assertions, each one serving as a premise for the assertion that follows. But notice that the argument is circular; the conclusion merely rephrases the initial premise: (1) Primogeniture is the key to interpreting Paul’s divinely inspired reference to the sequence of creation; (2) Therefore, being formed first entails a certain God-ordained superiority or privilege; (3) Therefore, 1 Timothy 2:13 states that men have authority over women because man was created prior to woman; (4) Therefore, God ordained male authority in the pre-Fall Garden; (5) Therefore, primogeniture explains God’s intent in forming Adam first, then Eve.

To put the problem less formally: Unless you can get

God-ordained superiority out of being formed first, you cannot derive a universal principle of male authority from 1 Timothy 2:12–13; so you must invoke primogeniture as the divinely inspired way to interpret the sequence of God’s creation. Unless you can derive a universal, creational principle of male authority from this text (through invoking primogeniture), you cannot get male authority from the Genesis account of Creation. Unless you have male authority in the pre-Fall Garden, you have no reason to believe that when “Adam was formed first, then Eve,” God intended this to be understood in terms of the “first is best” principle of primogeniture.<sup>4</sup>

The case for God-ordained male authority from the creation order is a circular argument, in which divine endorsement of the culture-bound construct of primogeniture serves as both premise and conclusion—without clear biblical warrant. But primogeniture itself assumes patriarchy (it being an integral feature of the ancient patriarchal social order), so to invoke primogeniture to prove patriarchy creates another circular argument. It seems 1 Timothy 2:13 does not serve as compelling proof that Paul is mandating female subordination to male authority as a timeless Creation ordinance.

Moreover, if Paul *were* forbidding women to teach or lead men because of a creationally ordained principle of male authority, there would be no reason to limit the purview of this principle to the leadership of the local

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## **The idea that the first is the best is a construction of human culture; it is not a God-given moral principle.**

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church. It should rather be operative in every area of human endeavor throughout all of God’s kingdom and creation. (The church did not even exist in the Garden!) Yet traditionalists commonly hold that this passage mandates male rule only in the local church, thus permitting women to teach and perhaps even to have authority over men in other contexts (although they disagree as to which contexts are permissible).

Further problems ensue from the traditionalist understanding of verse 14. If the fact that Eve was deceived serves as reason to bar all women for all time from teaching or having authority over men, then what is the causal connection? Is it because Eve’s deception indicates a universal female propensity for being deceived (the historical, traditional view of this verse)? If so, then why should women be forbidden only to teach men and not also women and children (who, presumably, would be even more likely than men to be led astray by false teaching)?

Even when traditionalists reject the historically traditional interpretation of verse 14, they often do not cease to insist that the reference to Eve’s deception is somehow a reference to why women are innately unfit for pastoral ministry. The efforts of Thomas Schreiner and Daniel Dorani provide a case in point.<sup>5</sup> They claim that verse 14 does

not mean women are intellectually deficient or less capable of discerning doctrinal error; rather, because of the “gentler and kinder” inclinations of the female nature, women are more likely than men to overlook deception in others and less likely to take a stand for doctrinal truth. This, then, disqualifies women from authoritative church teaching but not from all teaching.

However, if the intent of 1 Timothy 2:11–15 is to bar from church leadership those whose gender inclines them to tolerate deception and heresy, and if (as these men assert) the transgressions of the first man and woman indicate the different proclivities of men and women in general, then it is men, not women, who should be denied positions of church leadership. Tolerating deception in another is precisely what Adam did, not Eve. Adam sinned in going along with woman’s doctrinal error and failing to stand for what he knew directly from God to be true. It was the man, not the woman, who did the very thing a church leader must not do: he overlooked deception and declined to judge the error of someone whose favor he wanted to retain. Exemplifying what Doriani and Schreiner regard as typically “female” behavior, the first man chose relational harmony over doctrinal purity—and the entire human race was plunged into sin and alienation from God.

Although Doriani and Schreiner deny that their rationale entails women’s intellectual inferiority, there can be no denying that a moral deficiency is evident in one who

As Paul looks at the situation in Ephesus, where false teachers have been deceiving women into believing a twisted understanding of God’s word (see 1 Tim 1:3–7; 5:11–15, 2 Tim 3:6–7), he sees a potential replaying of the story of the fall of Adam and Eve. Eve submitted to satanic instruction concerning God’s word and then prevailed upon Adam to go along with the false view of God’s word that she had heard from the serpent. A woman must not do as Eve did, Paul declares. Rather, she must submit to instruction in true doctrine.

In the preceding verses (1 Tim. 2:8–10), Paul had been discussing behavior appropriate for “men” and “women”; then in verse 11 he begins talking about “a woman” and “a man.” This continues until the middle of verse 15, when he switches from the singular “she” (i.e., Eve) back to the plural “they” (i.e., women in the church at Ephesus). It seems that Paul speaks of “a woman” and “a man” in verses 11 and 12 because he is thinking in terms of the story of the first woman and man, which he proceeds to recount in verses 13 and 14.<sup>6</sup>

Some of the women in the church at Ephesus (like Eve) were being deceived, and (like Eve) may also have been persuading some of the men to accept the false doctrine. Paul’s point in verse 12 is that he doesn’t want the women in the Ephesian church to follow the fatal error of Eve. This is the behavior that Paul will “not permit.”

Even if Ephesian women were not actually teaching men at this time, there evidently was imminent danger of deceived women leading men into heresy. Paul’s warning to the women at Ephesus not to do to a man what Eve did to Adam would be apropos even if these women had not been teaching men in the church. (Indeed, there is no explicit evidence that women were in such positions.) After all, Eve had no position of teaching authority, yet she exercised a powerful—and damaging—influence on Adam. Paul’s concern is that deceived women at Ephesus not do likewise.

Because Paul sees the Ephesian situation as reminiscent of the fall of Adam and Eve, he retells the story of the first man and woman in light of the men and women at Ephesus. The entire passage (2:11–15) consists of one integral, unitary thought, wherein Paul’s instructions concerning “a woman” and “a man” connect with and collapse into his recalling and recounting of the story of the first woman and man.

As he plays out the analogy between Adam and Eve and the men and women at Ephesus, Paul seems to be flipping back and forth in his mind between the two situations. Thus his argument proceeds rather elliptically (but not illogically). We should bear in mind that arguments do not necessarily flow in a perfectly direct and linear fashion. A point that is made later may be pivotal to understanding a point presented previously. Paul often digresses in his letters (writing as he did without benefit of word processor).

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## **We cannot understand what Paul was prohibiting and why unless we can grasp the sense in which he saw the Genesis account as applicable.**

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sees error in the church and fails to exercise responsibility to take a stand for the truth. If such behavior does, in fact, occur naturally in women—or if for any reason Eve’s moral failing should be regarded as typifying women in general—then women are, by virtue of their female nature, morally and spiritually defective (despite oft-heard traditionalist protestations to the contrary).

### **A new look at the text**

In light of these various difficulties and unanswered questions, Paul’s use of the Genesis story to support and clarify his prohibition deserves fresh scrutiny. I am persuaded that we cannot understand what Paul was prohibiting and why he was prohibiting it unless we can grasp the sense in which he saw the Genesis account as applicable to the situation he was addressing. As I have pondered this, it has seemed to me that the story of the first woman and man in verses 13 and 14 serves to delineate the meaning and purpose of the instructions regarding woman and man in verses 11 and 12. The thing that happened between Adam and Eve in the Garden is the very thing that Paul wants to keep from happening with respect to the men and women in the church at Ephesus.

It is not implausible that, after stating his specific instructions (vv. 11–12), he should proceed to elucidate the context and substance of these instructions (vv. 13–14). The Genesis story serves as the context in the sense that it is the conceptual frame of reference according to which Paul perceives and addresses the situation at Ephesus. It is the substance in the sense that the error of Eve is what he seeks to prevent or remedy with respect to the women at Ephesus.

If, indeed, the instructions in verses 11 and 12 are given with a view to the events described in verses 13 and 14, then perhaps we can perceive Paul's line of thought more clearly if we also look at these verses in reverse order: Eve was deceived and led Adam to join her in sinning against God. Adam, however, was not deceived by the serpent; having been formed first, he (we may surmise) had become sufficiently familiar with God's word to know full well that the serpent's message was wrong.<sup>7</sup> A woman must not do what Eve did, which was to induce a man to accept and act upon false teaching concerning God's word; rather, a woman should submit to instruction in true doctrine from sound teachers.

Paul's reference to "the childbearing" in verse 15 seems to evoke the promise of redemption God gave to Eve in Genesis 3:15. While the woman Eve was deceived by Satan when she failed to submit to God's true word, the woman Mary heard and believed the word of the Lord to her, and so through her the Christ child was brought into the world. Thus Paul concludes his stern warnings regarding Eve and the Ephesian women on a more positive, encouraging note.

Typically, both traditionalists and egalitarians approach this text with the understanding that in verse 12 Paul is prohibiting women from holding some sort of teaching or leadership position in the church. Each camp then interprets verses 13 and 14 according to what each believes to be the scope of the prohibition in verse 12. Traditionalists say the scope is transcultural, and so interpret verses 13 and 14 as providing the timeless, creationally ordained rationale for the prohibition. Egalitarians say the scope is temporally and culturally limited, and so interpret verses 13 and 14 as illustrating why the prohibition was relevant for the church at Ephesus. In neither approach does Paul's recounting of the Genesis story elucidate the sense and substance of the prohibition. Rather, verses 13 and 14 are seen as supporting the directives set forth in verses 11 and 12, the meaning of which is deemed apparent quite apart from the recitation of the Genesis story that follows.

I suggest we set aside the assumption that verses 13 and 14 simply reinforce (in some sense) a prohibition against women's participation in some or all of the church's ruling and teaching ministries (whether locally or transculturally). Instead, let us allow Paul's remarks concerning Adam and Eve in verses 13 and 14 to inform our understanding of what Paul is requiring in verses 11 and 12. Accordingly, we

see the Adam and Eve story not as merely illustrating the reason for the prohibition, but as signifying the very behavior that is prohibited: a woman must not do as Eve did, namely, lead a man to accept false teaching.

An understanding of the prohibition as forbidding a woman to do to a man what Eve did to Adam accounts for the use of *authentēin* here. The term does not refer to having or exercising authority in the ordinary way (as it is typically rendered in modern translations), but rather to influencing or prevailing upon someone to go along with a specific agenda or engage in a particular activity. Andrew Perriman's study of *authentēin* yields a similar conclusion. Following his view of *authentēo* as having "more to do with 'authorship' than with 'authority,'" he goes on to argue "that the use of the curious word *authentēin* here presupposes in a quite specific way the story of Adam and Eve as it is told in verses 13–14."<sup>8</sup> In that "Eve 'took the initiative' or 'exerted influence' in causing Adam also to sin," she acted as "an instigator or perpetrator in the fall."<sup>9</sup>

So when Paul wrote *oude authentēin andros* ["nor to have authority over a man"] . . . he was thinking specifically of what Eve did to Adam; and Eve did not have authority, but *in her action became* responsible for—became the cause of—Adam's transgression. She exerted an influence over him in a particular situation and as a result he also sinned. In the overlapping of the two contexts—that of the scriptural 'type' and that of the contemporary situation at Ephesus—*authentēin* refers both to what Eve once did by persuading

## **The exhortation not to be deceived or to lead others to accept false doctrine applies, in principle, to anyone.**

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Adam to eat and to what women now should not do by exercising a damaging teaching role.<sup>10</sup>

Further, the use of *authentēin* qualifies the kind of teaching that is prohibited. As Linda Belleville notes, the clauses "to teach" and "authentēin a man" are linked by the "neither/nor" (*ouk/oude*) construction of verse 12. In biblical Greek, this correlative construction is a literary device that pairs related or similar ideas.<sup>11</sup> There are several different ways in which "neither/nor" ideas can be correlated in the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 2:12 the conceptual relationship appears to be that of defining a related purpose or goal. A similar usage is found in Matthew 6:20, "where thieves neither break in nor steal" (which is to say, break in *so that they may steal*).<sup>12</sup> Putting all this together, we may conclude that Paul does not permit a woman to instruct a man in such a way that she persuades or prevails upon—and, in a sense, causes—him to disobey God's word (as Eve did with respect to Adam).<sup>13</sup>

Although Paul's prohibition relates to women's conduct in the church body, it need not pertain directly or exclusively to women functioning in a particular church office or ministry. In the spirit of the preceding exhortations in 1 Timothy, which focus on keeping the faith, proper

demeanor in prayer, and general godly behavior, Paul's concern in 2:11–15 appears to be with the process whereby a person becomes deceived into believing a satanically twisted view of God's word and then proceeds to teach this view to another, thereby leading the other into disobedience to God. This is what Eve did to Adam. This is evidently what some women were doing (or were in danger of doing) to some of the men in the church at Ephesus. And this is what Paul will not permit.

The exhortation not to be deceived or to lead others to accept false doctrine is, in principle, applicable to anyone. In chapter one of 1 Timothy, Paul indicates his disapproval and suppression of men who had been teaching the church false doctrine. In 2 Corinthians 11:3, Paul warns both men and women in the church not to be led astray by the sort of deception into which Eve had fallen. In 1 Timothy 2:12 the prohibition is directed specifically against a woman leading a man into false doctrine because it arises out of Paul's concern that the church at Ephesus might be replaying the tragic roles of the first woman and man. Although the sin of Eve is not characteristic of women in general, it seems it was a particular problem for a number of the women at Ephesus.

### In conclusion: Paul's remedy

The story of Adam and Eve appears to be the lens through which Paul perceives and prescribes the remedy for the deception of women in the church at Ephesus. He states his case in terms that are somewhat allusive, elliptical, and analogical, because his words regarding the women and men at Ephesus flow out of the picture in his mind of what happened long ago between the first woman and man in the Garden of Eden.

Thus, Paul does not bar women from ministries that involve teaching and/or having authority over men (whether locally or universally). Rather, when Paul says that a woman must neither teach nor *authentain* a man, he has in mind what the first woman did to the first man. It is the repetition of the error of Eve that Paul disallows, not a woman's faithful exercise of her teaching and leadership gifts in the church body. <sup>14</sup> <sup>n</sup>



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### Notes

1. See chapter five of my *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997).
2. I owe several of the above insights to Richard S. Hess.
3. Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1973), 182.
4. Some traditionalists argue that divinely ordained male authority is apparent from the Genesis creation account because the ancient Middle Eastern mind would have understood the creation account in terms of the law of primogeniture. This does not fol-

low. Even if the Genesis account would have been seen in this light (which is doubtful, given that the parallel between male authority and primogeniture is fallacious), the issue is divine intent as to creation order, not the assumptions and proclivities of the ancient Middle-Eastern mind. For an example of such reasoning, see Thomas Schreiner in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 203. For additional discussion of the primogeniture argument, see my *Good News for Women*, 219–21.

5. Andreas J. Kostenberger, Thomas Schreiner, H. Scott Baldwin, eds., *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 145–46, 262–67.

6. Andrew Perriman (*Speaking of Women: Interpreting Paul* [Leicester, England: Apollos/InterVarsity Press, 1998], 164 n64) also sees in this text the “strong impression . . . that in changing from the plural in verses 8–10 to the singular in verses 11–12 Paul has adapted his argument to the terms of the Genesis narrative.”

7. Or, perhaps Paul's “first Adam, then Eve” comment has no particular meaning other than to begin the story at the beginning, before moving on to the main point in verse 14. Interestingly, traditionalists see verse 13 as presenting the main point, and then have difficulty figuring out what to make of verse 14. See discussion in my *Good News for Women*, 222–24.

8. Perriman, 156, 161.

9. *Ibid.*, 169, 171.

10. *Ibid.*, 169–170; emphasis in original. Perriman's remarks should be qualified by the observation that, although Adam sinned consequent upon Eve's initiation and influence, Adam's sin was nonetheless his own act and his own responsibility.

11. Linda Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 176.

12. *Ibid.*, 177.

13. It should be noted that neither Perriman nor Belleville hold exactly the view that I am proposing here. I am drawing on Perriman's study of *authentain* and Belleville's study of *ouk/oude* constructions to support an interpretation of this text that I arrived at before either Perriman's or Belleville's exegetical work had been published. I did, however, “steal” the title of this essay from Perriman's chapter on 1 Timothy 2:11–15.

14. I am grateful to Douglas Groothuis, Alan Padgett, Craig Keener, I. Howard Marshall, and Linda Belleville for their comments on earlier versions of this essay.

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# Diamond or Diamond Mine?

## *A meditation on Proverbs 31.*

WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER

**M**OTHER'S DAY IS A SPECIAL DAY, ONE OF THE MOST important days of the year. It is the day we celebrate all the women of the church: the literal mothers who have actual children; and then all the women (daughters, sisters, mothers) from our newest arrivals, to those distinguished senior mothers. So important are women in the Bible that Proverbs, the Book of God's wisdom, ends with a celebration of what a faithful reverent woman should look like: Proverbs 31:1–31.

Proverbs 31 is inspired female advice taught by a Queen Mother to her son.

*The words of King Lemuel. An oracle that his mother taught him:*

*No, my son! No, son of my womb!*

*No, son of my vows!*

*Do not give your strength to women,  
your ways to those who destroy kings.*

*It is not for kings, O Lemuel,*

*it is not for kings to drink wine,  
or for rulers to desire strong drink;*

*or else they will drink and forget what has been decreed,  
and will pervert the rights of all the afflicted.*

*Give strong drink to one who is perishing,  
and wine to those in bitter distress;*

*let them drink and forget their poverty,  
and remember their misery no more.*

*Speak out for those who cannot speak,  
for the rights of all the destitute.*

*Speak out, judge righteously,  
defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

—Proverbs 31:1–9 (NRSV)

Whenever we read any Scripture, it's always important to see the context for it. Verse 1 tells us this is an *oracle*, which is a communication or revelation given to a person directly from God. God gave this revelation directly to King Lemuel's mother to be recorded in the Bible.

### Who is Lemuel?

Do you remember who King Lemuel was? No? Neither do I. Lemuel is not listed in either 1 or 2 Kings or 1 or 2 Chronicles, the Hebrews' record of their monarchs. Is Lemuel, perhaps, some ruler from some other country?

The rabbis didn't think so; they had an explanation. They pointed out that the name *Lemuel* means "devoted to God." They saw it as a nickname for Solomon himself. After all, Solomon, who was blessed with God's wisdom, was unlikely to let someone else have the last word in his book! Instead, if the rabbis are correct, he would have reserved the last word for his own mom, Bathsheba. Seeing this as the wisdom of Queen Bathsheba, written down by her son Solomon, certainly puts an interesting perspective on these words. Wasn't Bathsheba the woman stolen away from her Hittite husband by Solomon's dad, David, and

made an adulteress by order of the king? You can read the account in 2 Samuel, chapters 11 and 12.

If the rabbis are right, that would explain the really passionate tone of her advice. See, what she is saying is "Son, don't do what your dad did." What's that exactly? Verse 3 tells us: Don't dissipate with a bunch of loose women or, as in David's case, collect many wives, because promiscuous sexual relationships distract and destroy leaders as surely as any addiction does—for example, the way alcoholism ruins your life as verses 4–7 point out. Having many wives certainly destroyed David's rule.

### Needed: One capable wife

So, Bathsheba is saying in verses 8 and 9, "Look, your calling as king is to lead righteously, to concentrate your energy on being champion of the downtrodden, uplifting the poor, judging righteously, and defending the rights of the poor, needy, the marginal, and the disenfranchised." "What you need," says Solomon's mom, "is one solid, capable wife.

That is exactly what any married man needs if he's going to amount to anything in life: a wife who is devoted to looking out for his well-being, not a debilitating distraction. If Solomon's dad, David, had stuck with only one wife, he would have had one clear heir reared specifically to assume the throne. Instead, he had a miserable plague of court intrigue among his wives, each one jockeying to get her kid on the throne. Eventually, those competing heirs began to kill each other off, leaving one miserable, grieving dad. Finally, only Solomon survived, and so David ended up with one son anyway. And did Solomon do the best job for Israel? Honestly, probably not.

Solomon's problem was that, although he was gifted with the good advice of his mom and the perfect advice of God, he simply didn't take all that good advice to heart. He didn't act on it. He was the wisest man who ever lived, but he didn't live by his godly wisdom. Instead of defending the rights of the poor and needy, as his mom told him to do in verses 8 and 9, he taxed his subjects overbearingly, he turned his whole nation into a kingdom of servants to himself, and he built far too many buildings on the backs of his people.

Further, Solomon disregarded his mom's advice and God's commands by marrying too many women. Therefore, since he didn't follow his mom's advice he fell into the very trap she warned him to avoid. He gave his spiritual and emotional strength to all his pagan wives. He ended up embracing all their gods, trying to honor them as well

***Though gifted  
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mom's good  
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advice,  
Solomon  
simply didn't  
take it to  
heart.***



as the Lord in order to please his wives. And he made God angry with him.

Look at 1 Kings 11:1–8 and see how Solomon loved many foreign women from the nations of whom God had said: “You shall not enter into marriage with them.” Verses 9–12 of 1 Kings 11 tell us:

*Then the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this matter, that he should not follow other gods; but he did not observe what the Lord commanded. (NRSV)*

“Therefore, the Lord said to Solomon, ‘Since this has been your mind and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant’” (v. 11).

And that’s exactly what happened. Solomon’s pagan wives reared their sons in pagan worship, and they abandoned God just as Solomon did.

Further, 1 Kings 12:8 tells us Solomon’s ruling son disregarded the good advice the seasoned counselors gave him and he lost the kingdom. Like Solomon, Solomon’s son was told just what to do; but, like Solomon, he disregarded God’s wisdom, and he lost God’s blessing and everything else. Remember: Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. But, by itself, wisdom is nothing without obedience to God. *Knowing* the right thing to do is not the same as *doing* the right thing.

### Good advice is meant to be followed

Now, what should Solomon have done, way back in the beginning, before he made a mucky mess of his home, his

family, his heir, his kingdom and ended up losing everything? He should have followed his mom’s advice and married the one capable woman described in Proverbs 31:10-31.

Let’s look at this passage, with a practical eye so that, for men, we can avoid the ruin that destroyed Solomon, or, for women, we can avoid destroying a Solomon.

*A capable wife who can find?  
She is far more precious than jewels.  
The heart of her husband trusts in her,  
and he will have no lack of gain.  
She does him good, and not harm,  
all the days of her life.  
She seeks wool and flax,  
and works with willing hands.  
She is like the ships of the merchant,  
she brings her food from far away.  
She rises while it is still night  
and provides food for her household  
and tasks for her servant-girls.  
She considers a field and buys it;  
with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.  
She girds herself with strength,  
and makes her arms strong.  
She perceives that her merchandise is profitable.  
Her lamp does not go out at night.  
She puts her hands to the distaff,  
and her hands hold the spindle.  
She opens her hand to the poor,  
and reaches out her hands to the needy.  
She is not afraid for her household when it snows,  
for all her household are clothed in crimson.  
She makes herself coverings,  
her clothing is fine linen and purple.  
Her husband is known in the city gates,*



## Faith of Our Mothers

EVELYN BENCE

I HAVEN’T GONE HOME FOR MOTHER’S DAY IN years—a conscious decision. My mother’s delight in my presence hasn’t measured up to the comfort I’ve received by attending my own predictably liturgical church, tied to the lectionary that marks milestones of Jesus’ life, without regard to the secular calendar. Except for a one-line prayer of thanksgiving for our collective mothers, my church leaves the May commemoration in the hands of the family—breakfast in bed or dinner on the town.

But back home my pastor father ran a different kind of church, with God as a frame around home or country holidays, Mother’s Day being chief among them. Deep down, my patriarchal father knew he owed his very life to his mother, and his stable home—which facilitated a smooth career—to his wife. Deep down, he knew they and other women deserved recognition for their years of service at home, in the church. Consider the gold

watches they’d never get (their wedding bands and someday their golden wedding anniversary receptions having to suffice). Consider the church offices they could never expect to hold. I say this annual Mother’s Day tribute was a guilt offering, and it grew grander as he approached his retirement.

When I was very young, every mother present received a long-stemmed carnation at the end of the service. I stood guard over the galvanized pails, making sure everyone knew the rules: Only one flower, only to mothers, white if her own mother was dead, red if alive. My mother brought her scarlet flower home and set its spindly stem in a clear-glass bud vase in the middle of the dining room table.

As for his personal commemoration, some years Dad gave Mom a rose bush, which he added to the thorny garden gradually taking over the parsonage yard. She enjoyed the blossoms; he enjoyed the digging and prun-

ing. One year he brought her a case of pork and beans, a purchase he justified by figuring that opening a can of precooked food, rather than cooking up dried beans from scratch, would save her time in the kitchen.

Early in June, the church Dad pastored celebrated Family Sunday, presumably a holiday of his own making. The sermon praised fidelity and solidarity. Outside the main door every family, upon leaving church, could choose a rose bush to take home and plant in its suburban yard. The more roses gracing the neighborhood, the better.

When he moved to a smaller town (we children grown, no longer lined up on the front pew, Mother anchoring the side aisle), Family Sunday got assumed into a bigger and better Mother’s Day celebration. A potted plant—a rose bush if the price was right—handed to every mom.

Dad’s last full-time pastorate was in a rural hamlet—a dozen houses and a church, no store, not even a quart of milk for sale. Dad knew his congregation well, and one year was confident that every woman

*taking his seat among the elders of the land.  
 She makes linen garments and sells them;  
 she supplies the merchant with sashes.  
 Strength and dignity are her clothing,  
 and she laughs at the time to come.  
 She opens her mouth with wisdom,  
 and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.  
 She looks well to the ways of her household,  
 and does not eat the bread of idleness.  
 Her children rise up and call her happy;  
 her husband too, and he praises her:  
 "Many women have done excellently,  
 but you surpass them all."  
 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,  
 but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.  
 Give her a share in the fruit of her hands,  
 and let her works praise her in the city gates.*

—Proverbs 31:10–31 (NRSV)

These are words for everyone to take to heart. These are words to memorize; words to dwell on, and words to build one's life upon. Here we have a chance to make our lives different from theirs. We too have the advice, and we have a chance to follow it. Every woman reading this should strive to become the virtuous woman God blesses, the one described here in Proverbs 31. Every man needs to encourage the virtuous women among us. For guys who are seeking a wife, here's your check list, right from the mailroom of heaven. This is God's prescription for what will nourish your life and bring you joy.

### The woman God honors

So, what does God honor in a woman of faith? The check-list starts in verse 10 with a summarizing word. Literally, it

says: *issha hayil*—that is, a woman of power, strength, valor, military force, army, wealth, virtue, and honesty. Who can find her? In other words: "What lucky guy can find a *hayil* type of woman?"

This is no simpering, little hothouse flower, some clinging vine, a fragile bit of paste jewelry, all glitter but easily chipped and demolished. This is not one of those "Oh, dear, I'm the perfect Christian woman. I can't do jack, unless my big strong husband does it for me. I'm just ornamental, well-trained in charm school." Not on your life!

*Hayil*, capable, is a military term. It describes a powerful force that marches on in the cause of goodness and industry. She's God's tough Amazon, so to speak, to win within a tough world.

This kind of woman, God says, is more precious than gemstones. Why is that? Because jewels are static; they just sit there. Their value may be great, but it appreciates mainly according to inflation. A regular 24-carat diamond is valuable, but it won't exceed the value of a 24-carat diamond, within the market's economic context. But the *hayil* woman is a source of wealth. Her shrewd industry earns many jewels. In other words, *she is not simply a diamond, she's a diamond mine*—spiritually and practically. And look how the spiritual and the practical balance off against each other in the rest of the passage.

Verse 11 : "The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain." She is trustworthy (spiritually) and she makes money (practically).

Verse 12 : "She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life." "She does only good and no harm to her family."

in church on Sunday would indeed be a mother—that is, until I, about thirty-five, unmarried, and childless, called on short notice and said I was coming home. "Wonderful!" my mother said. I'm not sure my father—who in church five years earlier had referred to me as a "maiden lady"—was as glad to hear of my impending arrival. Here's what he had planned: A tribute and prayer, with all mothers marching to the front, lining the altar rail. A special tribute to the oldest mother, the one who'd come the farthest, the one with the youngest baby. A mother's trio. The congregation singing "Faith of our mothers, living still / In cradle song and bedtime prayer . . .," a song used this once and only once a year, Mom pointed out to me, as if I hadn't figured it out for myself. A sermon extolling motherhood. Give-away potted petunias. From start to finish, the service breathed blessing on she who had borne and raised children. On Saturday afternoon Dad asked if I would take part in the service. "Maybe you could read from that article you wrote. . . ."

A magazine had recently published a pointed guest editorial of mine, titled "The

Family Isn't Always the Answer" (reprinted in PRISCILLA PAPERS, Summer 2000, p. 20). The tag line told the story: "Some of the most godly leaders—Joseph, Moses, and Samuel—didn't have neat and tidy family lives." Was my

*How could I refuse  
 a request when my  
 writing had made  
 it clear that  
 being left out  
 was not tenable?*

father kidding? That he wanted me to get up and read this in church, on *this* Sunday set aside to honor the hands that rocked the cradles? "There are eight million more women than men in the U.S. . . . The traditional family simply can't be God's plan for every godly woman."

"What are you thinking, Dad?" I asked, not with any incredulous accent on a specific word, but with steady phrasing, looking for clarification, hoping he'd say something that would let me justify saying, No, I can't, I won't get up there in front of everyone and humiliate myself.

"Well, you had some good points. And it's presenting another side of the issue. I'd like you to be part of the service. . . ." As I suspected, he was trying to be helpful. He was trying to broaden his narrow frame. And how could I refuse a request—as out of place and awkward as it seemed to be in the grand picture—when my writing had made it clear that being left out was not tenable? I gave myself a few hours to think about it, swallowed hard, and said, "Okay, I will read," though I wasn't sure why. To make him feel good about being magnanimous? To educate the congregation? To claim some place for myself in the only serious tribute given to women the whole year long? Probably all. So Sunday morning, pretending I was someone and somewhere else, I walked to the pulpit on cue, and spoke my piece.

Verse 13 tells us that she succeeds in business. Look at all the businesses this woman is engaged in. Verse 13 tells us she's involved in the textile business, specifically clothing manufacturing.

Verse 15 tells us she is the executive manager of her staff. Verse 16a tells us she's involved in the real estate business. Verse 16b tells us she's involved in agriculture.

What about her personal habits? Verse 17 says, "She girds herself with strength, and makes her arms strong." In other words, she exercises regularly and keeps herself in great shape. You know—abs of steel! This woman works out.

Verse 18 notes she produces a high quality product and that it's built to last. There is no planned obsolescence here. It doesn't punk out when the consumer gets it home after store hours. It's a dependable product.

According to verse 20, she's a philanthropist. She generously provides for the underprivileged. But, verses 21 and 22 tell us, she does not serve others at the expense of the well-being of her own family. She lives well and helps others live well too. Like the industrious little ant, praised in Proverbs 6:6, she prepares for the future. While the loafer's family is freezing in the winter, her family is comfy and in style. We're told in verse 21 her household is clothed in crimson and in 22 in fine linen and purple.

Crimson and purple clothing were affordable only to the rich in ancient times. This woman is so virtuous, industrious, and successful under God's blessing of her hard work that her whole family is decked out in good stuff. She's like Lydia, in Acts 16, who was such a successful purple merchant that she financed Paul's ministry.

Here, too, because of her success, her husband is an honored leader in government. He can afford to serve in civic government because he partnered with his wife and helped her become all that she could be. After all, behind every successful woman is a supportive man. He hasn't said to her, "Now, Honey, don't worry your pretty head about business, it's far too tough for you." or "Gee, you shouldn't really try to compete with Abdul's Fifth Century B.C. Real Estate Brokerage Firm, should you?" or "Why don't you leave textiles to Peniel's Purple Emporium for Appealing Apparel?"

No; he says, "Go, Girl! You can do it!" And she does, big time. Verse 24 tell us she's the one who supplies Peniel with his purple apparel. And Abdul's business depends on her patronage. As verse 25 puts it, using a metaphor from her business, "Strength and dignity are her clothing and she laughs at the future." In other words, she regards the days to come with pleasure, not fear, because she's built a firm foundation for herself, her family, her staff, and the downtrodden who depend on her help.

But does she stop there? Is a woman's place in the business world only? Not at all! As verse 26 tells us, she becomes a teacher. The Hebrew word *hokma* used in verse 26 means wisdom, knowledge, experience, intelligent insight, and judgment that comes from a life of doing good work as well as good works. In its verb form it means "to become wise through experience and then to teach others." Substantively, it is used to signify a philosopher; the philosophers were the professors of the ancient world. And, when she teaches, she fulfills the directives of Paul in Ephesians 4:15, "She speaks the truth in a spirit of love," or

The service continued as planned. I survived, though I never again went home for Mother's Day. The church survived, even soon enlarging their sanctuary. And my parents stayed on; within a few years buying a house for retirement on the hamlet's upper road, where Dad tore up the lawn and planted roses.

That might be the end of the story but for a serendipitous stop at the high-steeped, red-door church in Bath, New York, where Mother now lives in a nursing home. One Sunday morning in October, four months after Mom's stroke, I said good-bye to Dad, drove the eighteen miles east to see Mom. I told her I'd slept well, read her a page from a devotional book, and prayed. Getting ready to leave, I asked if she wanted me to position her geri chair so she could look out the window or toward the hallway.

"The hall."

It wasn't what I'd wanted to hear. "But Mom, don't you want to see the tree?"—the immediate view outside her second-story window.

"I saw it yesterday."

I turned her toward the hallway and kissed her. We exchanged farewells: "I love you. I'm praying for you." In tears, mourning mother's days, I returned to my car to head south, to Virginia.

Not ready to face the fast four-lane, I drove down the main street of town, past that church with the red door. I looked at the church sign and at my watch. I was only five minutes late for the 10:30. *Great! A liturgical service. No surprises. I know the predictable words bridging heaven and earth: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth." The phrases and the gifts—they'll help me put my world in order. Just what I need. Get me settled for the ride.*

I opened the church door and settled into a pew near the back. There was nothing remarkable about the service. I might not have marked it but for its one surprise, after the sermon and before the Eucharist: an "extra" congregational hymn and one I'd never discovered, buried in the "Christian Life" category of the *Episcopal Hymnal 1982*.

In the first verse, Linda Wilberger Egan's lyrics summarized Gabriel's birth announce-

ment to Mary, noting: "Blessed is she who believes in the Lord."

A second verse, about the Samaritan woman, ended: "Blessed is she . . . who perceives."

Long before we got to the third verse, pronouncing blessing on behalf of three female witnesses to Jesus' resurrection, I sank, sobbing, to the pew and let myself be overwhelmed by the blessing of belief.

For my mother, whose faith remained true to her and would, I prayed, till death.

For me, suddenly able to perceive myself fully within the Lord's welcomed company.

Trying to calm my emotions, a woman sitting behind me, in the back row, placed her hand on my heaving shoulder. Feeling her touch, I widened my claim of grace: For her and all the faithful women whose belief, like a thorny rose, blossoms fragrantly in the yard. n



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as Proverbs 31:26b explains, "The teaching of kindness is on her tongue."

She can accomplish all these things, verse 27 says, because she has managed her own life well, invested it in worthwhile activities and not wasted it in idleness.

Verse 28 tells us her reward is that she is honored by all. Her reputation is that of a wise woman. In the Bible, the wise woman is a unique category of leader. Even the kings traveled from all over to consult the wise woman. Whole cities were saved by wise women (e.g., Judges 9:53); the whole nation was saved by Deborah. These were more than the Dear Ann or Dear Abby or Dr. Joyce Brothers of their day. They had godly insight. The Proverbs woman is like these.

So her children bless her, and her husband praises her, as verse 29 states it: "Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all." Each husband praises his wife according to her unique accomplishments. So we praise our wives. And for women without husbands, we also all together praise each of your accomplishments today as well. And finally, verses 30–31 put the cap on it: "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her a share in the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the city gates."

Those simpering little hothouse flowers may look cute, and their line, "Oh, you're such a big, strong man, you do it," may work for a while, but that gets old fast—and so do they. But a woman whom God is blessing improves with age; like a good Dutch cheese or an aged New York steak, the flavor goes through. She's mighty, like a rose bush or a tulip or a crocus; a hearty, strong, durable flower. Her inner beauty glows out gloriously with the years. She's built for eternity, and the hand of God is on her. Because she honors God, God honors her, and so she earns and deserves praise from everyone. As she grows through life's seasons, she garners more and more honors. Verse 31 tells us she ends with a comfortable legacy to pass on and a great reputation among all who know of her.

These are the kind of women we encourage in church: hardworking women who honor God and bring glory on themselves, their family, on their church and on the faith itself. Therefore, we honor our powerful, wonderful, *hayil* women. Let us all take this Proverbs 31 passage to heart.

Sisters, continue to strive to be the reverent, hard-working women of God's ideal. This earth is your Olympic arena; go for the gold! May God bless you with success. Brothers, we've just studied the inspired words of God. Forget the diamonds, seek the diamond mine. Assist your wife in becoming such a prosperous, joyful, fulfilled woman. The payoff is big time, temporally as well as eternally.

To all of us, no husband or wife should ever be in competition with the other. As a wife or husband succeeds, the glory reflects on the spouse. When I see a truly successful man or woman who honors God, I always automatically respect the supportive spouse. It takes a mature person to help his or her spouse to steward God's gifts and become all that he or she can be.

And note that the final message in Proverbs ends the way the Book began. Fear—that is, profoundly respect and completely follow—the Lord's commandments, because that is the beginning of all wisdom. All who act wisely will end up being praised and honored by those whose opinions really count, God's and the saints'.

So, happy Mother's Day! We salute you. We honor your accomplishments. And we pray God's blessings on you as you lead and support God's work among us. You are a credit to our God and to us all. n



William David Spencer is Pastor of Encouragement at Pilgrim Church, Beverly, Massachusetts. This article is adapted from a sermon he preached at Pilgrim Church on Mother's Day 2001. He and his wife, Aida Besançon Spencer, are members of CBE's Board of Reference.



## Books Mentioned in This Issue

These may be purchased through CBE's Book Service or online Book Store ([www.cbeinternational.org](http://www.cbeinternational.org))

- D. A. Carson, *The Inclusive Language Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998)
- Mark L. Strauss, *Distorting Scripture? The Challenge of Bible Translation & Gender Accuracy* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1998)•
- Today's New International Version: New Testament
- Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997).
- James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg, eds., *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001).
- Andrew Perriman, *Speaking of Women: Interpreting Paul* [Leicester, England: Apollos/InterVarsity Press, 1998].
- Linda Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000)
- Bence, Evelyn, *Prayers for Girlfriends and Sisters and Me* (Servant-Vine, 1999).

# The Subordination Challenge: #3

*Proponents of female subordination are herein asked to prove their case from the Bible.*

GILBERT BILEZIKIAN

## Challenge #3

**Cite a text from the Bible that defines the headship of Christ to the church as a relation of authority or of leadership.**

**T**HE CHALLENGE ABOVE IS THE THIRD OF TEN BEING PRESENTED here to prompt Christians to grapple with biblical facts rather than accept unquestioningly traditional assumptions about female roles and, by so doing, blindly follow institutionalized misreadings of Scripture.

### The Facts

The New Testament defines the headship ministry of Christ to the church as a servant relationship designed to provide the church with life and growth. This headship is never presented as an authority or lordship position.

*Ephesians 1:22–23.* Christ is supremely and universally sovereign, but as head for the church, it is not said that he rules over it. Instead, he provides his body with the fullness of him who fills all in all. He causes the church to grow and flourish.

*Ephesians 4:15–16.* Christ as head provides the body with oneness, cohesion, and growth. This is a servant-provider role, not one of rulership.

*Ephesians 5:23.* Christ is head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. His headship to the church is defined as saviorhood, which is biblically defined as a servant, self-sacrificing function, not a lordship role.

*Colossians 1:18.* Christ is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead. As its head, Christ is the source of the church's life.

*Colossians 2:19.* Christ is the head from whom the whole body grows, because it is nourished by him. He is servant-provider of life and growth to the church.

Obviously, Christ is Lord of all and therefore Lord of the church. But never does the New Testament define Christ's relation to the church as its head in terms of lordship, authority, or rulership. As head to the church, Christ is always the servant who gives the church all she needs to become his radiant Bride. So is the husband to his wife (Eph. 5:25-30), within a relationship of mutual submission (v. 21).

The word *head* used figuratively in

the English language refers to boss, person in authority, leader. It never has that meaning in New Testament Greek. There are hundreds of references in the New Testament to religious, governmental, civic, familial, and military authority figures. Not one of them is ever designated as "head."

Even Christ, as "head" of all rule and authority, remains their original giver of life and fullness (Col. 2:10; 1:16). Similarly, Christ was never called "head" of the church until after his crucifixion, the supreme expression of his servant ministry as the giver of new life.

Whenever Christ is described as "head" to the church, his ministry is that of servant-provider. Similarly, as head to his wife, a husband is a servant-provider of life, of fullness and growth, not one who exercises authority over her. n

*Gilbert Bilezikian is professor emeritus of Biblical Studies at Wheaton College (IL) and cofounder of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois. Among the books of which he is the author are Beyond Sex Roles and Community 101.*



Written responses to this and the other nine challenges will be evaluated by a panel of three professors emeriti of the Department of Biblical and Theological Studies at Wheaton College. Responses referencing biblical texts already cited in this fascicle will be reviewed but not acknowledged. Send responses to Christians for Biblical Equality (122 West Franklin Ave., Suite 218, Minneapolis, MN 55404-2451; e-mail: CBE@cbeinternational.org).

For a fuller treatment of the themes that are being presented in these challenges, consult the CBE catalog for many available resources.

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# An Honest Column

*What I really think about opposition to women in ministry.*

JOHN E. PHELAN

**T**HOSE OF US WHO DEFEND WOMEN IN MINISTRY ARE USED to making careful biblical and theological cases, wrestling with the difficult texts as well as the occasional difficult person. We are used to listening earnestly to people who argue against women in ministry with furrowed brows and trembling chins. We aspire to be thoughtful, reasoned, and respectful because, Lord knows, we don't want to make things any harder for women in ministry. Secretly most of us, I suspect, are sick of this circumspection and caution. For even with all our care we are frequently accused of "cramming women in ministry down our throats."

Recently an incident occurred that has finally caused me to want to take the gloves off and write an honest column. During a mid-winter pastors' conference, at an evening service I heard one of the most brilliant and stirring sermons I have ever heard. It was preached by Brenda Salter McNeil, an African American woman. The power and presence of the Spirit of God was palpable. After thinking about it for a few days I have decided to say what I really think about opposition to women in ministry. It's ridiculous. It's absurd.

**T**his emperor has no clothes and hasn't had them for a long time. Listening to someone oppose women in ministry is like listening to a medieval surgeon defending the use of bloodletting. This is not to say that the reasoned defense of women in ministry shouldn't go on. I tried such a reasoned defense last summer in a sermon at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church and hope to see that material in print some day. But it really comes down to this: Women have shown themselves capable of excelling in virtually every sphere of human endeavor as leaders and visionaries. They have offered leadership in academia, written some of our most learned treatises, and made some of our most significant scientific discoveries. They have skillfully led major corporations and government agencies, as well as cities, states, and entire countries. We have skillful theologians, thoughtful writers, eloquent preachers, and outstanding missionaries who are women. And yet, knowing all this, we say women should not be called to lead some sixty-member congregation in Kansas! I say it again—*this is ridiculous!*

I actually think many of the proponents of this position know it is ridiculous. But in my opinion they are so afraid of undercutting what they consider an ultimate source of authority (the Bible for evangelicals or the church's tradition in the case of the Roman Catholics) that they tolerate

what the rest of the world knows is really absurd. I for one do not think the authority of Scripture is challenged one whit if a woman is called to serve a church in Des Moines or Boston or Atlanta. Far from it. The real authority of the Scripture is challenged if people see us using our sacred texts to defend ludicrous positions that humiliate and demean half of humanity.

This does not mean we should never challenge our culture. Of course we should. And of course we should say hard things when the Bible says them. But we have been peculiarly selective when it comes to challenging our culture from the Scriptures. We evangelicals have said little about the greed of our corporations or about our government's insatiable need for power, or our violence, or our acquisitiveness. We have bleated now and then about the suffering of the poor—but, of course, we can't say too much because that is a cause of the "liberals."

Brothers and sisters, I say again, *this is absurd!* Our posture is fearful and belligerent, tremulous and torrid. Called to be prophets of the kingdom, we run around smashing fleas with sledgehammers and wasting precious breath on things the rest of the culture shrugs at. Sometimes I think evangelicals are like the Jews within the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, fighting a civil war for control of the temple while the Romans are outside the walls slowly strangling the city and preparing to slaughter its inhabitants. So we keep on fighting these sad and destructive battles that make us look foolish and make the good news of the gospel look like bad news.

**I** think it was Philip Yancey who wondered why, if the gospel is such good news, are we unable to get people to listen to it? Why does it seem like bad news to so many people? Because we have tragically made it so. And we have made it so out of fear, timidity, and defensiveness.

It is time for all that to end. Perhaps you think I have made a large thing out of little. But ask those women who languish without a call or who are condescended to and ignored. Ask those who have heard God but have not been able to get anyone else to listen. n

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*Listening  
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bloodletting.*



John J. Phelan is president and dean of North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago; he is also professor of biblical literature. A former pastor, he was executive director of Covenant Publications prior to assuming the North Park Seminary presidency. He will be among the speakers at the CBE International Conference scheduled for Orlando in August 2003.

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Christians for Biblical Equality is an organization of Christian men and women who believe that the Bible, properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of men and woman of all racial and ethnic groups, all economic classes, and all age groups, based on the teaching of Galatians 3:28—*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

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We believe in the full deity and full humanity of Jesus Christ.

We believe in the sinfulness of all persons. One result of sin is shattered relationships with God, others, and self.

We believe that eternal salvation and restored relationships are possible through faith in Jesus Christ who died for us, rose from the dead, and is coming again. This salvation is offered to all people.

We believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, and in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers.

We believe in the equality and essential dignity of men and women of all races, ages, and classes. We recognize that all persons are made in the image of God and are to reflect that image in the community of believers, in the home, and in society.

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