

A Woman's Role in the Church of Our Lord

by Paula Gilbert

God commands us as Christians to “rightly divide the Word” of His Bible. Yet, so many people create erroneous doctrines simply by neglecting to study *all* of the scriptures on a given subject before pronouncing a judgment. As a preacher of God's Word, I hear many unbelievers and even believers who quote one single passage of scripture out of context to try justifying their sin. For instance, “Judge not lest ye be judged” is a popular misinterpretation of scripture. People use this to condone sin in their lives, and to come against the preaching of the gospel, which is God's way of exposing their sin in order that they may recognize it and turn from it. I always respond to these people, “Read the rest of Matthew chapter seven. Jesus is referring to the hypocrite who has sin, and so cannot judge. He tells him, *first* take the beam out of your own eye {sin out of your own spirit}, *then* you shall see clearly to take the mote out of your brother's {sin out of his life}.” So if we rid ourselves of sin, we *can* judge, because we are not doing the same sin (Romans 2:3). “He who is spiritual judges all things.” (1Corinthians 2:15).

Proverbs 11:14 states that “in the multitude of counselors, there is safety.” God's Word is a counselor, and so we must gather the multitudes of counsel before making a decision about doctrine. That is what I intend to do in this teaching. My goal is to exhaust all of the scripture references, including translations of words in the original Hebrew and Greek, in order to come up with the correct interpretation of *a woman's role in the church of our Lord*.

Let it first be noted that when Adam and Eve transgressed by eating the forbidden fruit, God told Eve, “Your desire will be to your husband, and he shall rule over you.” So the Hebrew word for *rule* is:

H4910

מָשַׁל

mâshal

maw-shal'

A primitive root; to *rule*: - (have, make to have) dominion, governor, X indeed, reign, (bear, cause to, have) rule (-ing, -r), have power.

Indeed, there are men who have taken this “rule” to an extreme, not regarding the fact that God designed Adam's wife, Eve, to be a helpmate for him. She was to aid him. You have probably heard the old adage, “Behind every good man is a good woman.” The Bible also states, “A virtuous woman *is* a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed *is* as rottenness in his bones” (Proverbs 12:4). So a wife is to be a help to her husband, but God also intended that the husband “cherish his wife as Christ cherished his church: by loving her, and giving himself for her” (Ephesians 5:25-33). And the Bible commands that wives are to be subject to their husbands and obey them in all things (Ephesians 5:24).

Exactly what does this subjection mean? Does it mean wives should not attend church, bible study, read their bible, or do other things that go against God's commands simply because their husbands command them so? Of course not! Does it mean the wife has no opinions or

input in any matters, and should remain in silent subordination to her husband? No! Is not Christ our Head, and we are his church? Is he a tyrant ruler? No! God created the husband and wife relationship as a role model symbolizing His relationship to His church. As His church, we are called to testify of Him, to praise Him, to honor and obey Him, and to be an example to others by the lives that we live for Him. So in a husband/wife relationship, God is using a *natural* example of a spiritual principle. In the *natural* setting, wives are to submit to their husbands, since the husband is the natural head of the wife. The woman is the weaker vessel *emotionally*, as even psychology or science will tell us. She thinks and perceives differently than man. She is more intuitive, it is said. She prefers to go into detail when relaying a story, while the man speaks “just the facts.” Her whole psychological makeup is different, and God made her so to compliment His creation, man. She is also weaker *physically*, which is obvious. But she is *not* weaker spiritually, as so many erroneously believe today! Never, never in God's Word will you find a scripture to support this. She has been given free will, just as man has, and just as the angels have. She is solely responsible for her behavior and her choices. God made her thus.

And in the natural setting, she is to love and obey her husband, praise him, and set an example for other wives by her godly behavior. She is to acknowledge him as head of the household, and so head over her in this way. If they disagree on important things, she should submit to her husband's leading, and if he is wrong in the matter, he will have to answer to God for it. But she is *not* to submit spiritually to his erroneous doctrine, as some have thus interpreted, claiming that she will not be responsible for being led astray, and that the blame will go to her husband on Judgment Day. God makes no distinction in scripture of a wife's accountability to Him being any less than that of her husband. Both are told as followers of Christ to “be not deceived.” Both have been offered the Holy Spirit baptism in order to “lead, teach and guide them into all truth” so that they will not be deceived. Both will stand before the great white throne of judgment, and be judged according to their works. The wife cannot say, “But my husband forced me to believe this way.” And God will not say, “I know your husband is to blame since he was your head, and so I am letting you off the hook.” A good example of this is Ananias and Saphirra, the New Testament couple in the early church. Both lied and held back money, claiming to have given all they sold, and both were judged by God—He killed them on the spot.

So the wife is to be subject to her husband, but God also commands that all Christian believers be subject one to another:

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, **all of you be subject one to another**, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble (1Peter 5:5).

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God (Ephesians 5:21).

So just what is scripture referring to when it commands that the woman is to “learn in silence,” and not to “teach or usurp authority over the man?” Let's examine these scriptures, first with a knowledge of historical backgrounds and of customs during the time period that these scriptures were written, because the rule of all correct biblical interpretation is to examine history, customs, and all scriptures on a given subject, as well as their translations in the

original language, in order to arrive at a correct interpretation. For instance, if we did not understand certain things about the Old Testament as being types and shadows of Christ, we would still be unable to wear mixed clothing such as wool and linen, and we would still be holding feast days.

In like manner, we must understand things about the time period, customs and history of New Testament scriptures in regard to certain issues. We will start with women attending church with men, and the history behind this.

In early New Testament times, about the time of Jesus' arrival, a ¹book of Jewish manners and customs states that men and women were separated during worship in the temple or synagogue. There was an outer court known as the "Court of Women," and they were not permitted to enter the inner court. Yet after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, both men *and* women were present in the upper room at Pentecost. How sad, though, that the spiritual and natural role of women had been reduced by the time Jesus began his ministry. In the Old Testament, they had been actively involved in service to the Lord, as well as in Nazarene vows, which are very similar to the vows of Levitical priests (Numbers 6:2-21). They had been used by God to govern and defend (Judges 4:4-22) and to direct with counsel, as prophetesses (Judges 4:5; 2Chronicles 34:21-28). But now, in Jesus' time, they were not active in temple or synagogue worship, as this book of Jewish customs notes. And clearly, there was some male prejudice toward women, as is evident when the men came to Jesus with the woman caught in the act of adultery. Though the man also was guilty of adultery, nothing was said of him, and no one bothered to condemn him or bring him before Jesus. They only brought the woman. But Jesus told the religious hypocrites to cast the first stone if they had no sin in them, knowing their filthy hearts (John 8:3-11).

Jesus never sought to lessen the role of women in regards to spiritual things, though they were discriminated against, as even ²Jewish rabbinical sources and the writings of Jewish historian Flavius Josephus testify. Many Jews did not believe a woman should be taught "or learn" anything, yet Jesus commended Mary for "learning" at his feet (Luke 10:38-42). God's Word is rich with examples of our Savior's respect for women. They even traveled with him at times. But now, let us return to the issue at hand: women in church services.

Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, addressed many problems and issues in the church at Corinth. There were divisions, contentions, and lawsuits, and there was also confusion about food offered to idols, as well as fornication {sexual sin} which had to be addressed. Then, in the beginning of chapter 11, he states:

Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the **ordinances**, as I delivered them to you (1Corinthians 11:2).

The Greek word for "ordinances" here means: *transmission*, that is, (concretely) a *precept*; specifically the Jewish *traditionary law*: - ordinance, tradition.

So Paul is covering the precepts of the Jewish traditionary law, or Jewish *tradition*. He therefore instructs a few things at this time. He begins with distinguishing between veiled and unveiled women. Tradition then was that women differentiate themselves from the pagan women of their day, as prostitutes in Corinth were said to go unveiled. Also, evidence of

Talmudic customs explains the mystery behind this obscure passage of scripture that many commentators have had difficulty explaining.

A good article by a woman named Cheryl Schatz concerning these Talmudic traditions sheds light on Paul's vague instructions concerning head coverings. Please visit the URL address below to read the article. It is very informative, and seems to be backed up by feasible research in the Talmud and Hebrew texts: www.2x2church.com/1CORINTHIANS11.doc

For the record, I don't know what all this website is about because I didn't check it out, but the article they present here is great. I find it to be logical, and helpful for clearing up the difference between traditions/customs that were man-made as opposed to laws that God set forth. I've studied some varied interpretations of 1Corinthians 11, but this one really makes sense to me.

Also, you can go to www.olivetree.com/bible/ and read the Interlinear Greek-English text to find out how it reads in the original Greek (concerning the writer's explanation of 1Corinthians 11:14,15) before it was translated into English. *Note: if you do this, please make sure that you have a King James Version with the original Greek numbers and translations (such as an E-Sword KJV with Strong's numbers), so that you can study the actual translations of the words.* The reason being is, there is *more than one* rendering for a particular word, and sometimes we only receive the translation that best fits a translator's personal bias.

Back to the head covering: Paul's final word in 1Corinthians 11:16 is that *if any has an argument {about the woman's veil, or covering}, "we have no such custom, and neither do the churches of God."* It is merely that: a custom.

Today in America, if one wears a veil or head covering, they could be looked upon as strange or maybe cultic, like they are from another time period; or like they are from another culture or religion (Islam or Amish, for example). The reason these veiled women are looked upon this way is because it is not our custom in these modern New Testament times here in America to wear veils anymore. This does not mean, however, that it is now okay for Christian women to dress as immodest, worldly women do. They should use wisdom and "fit in" without conforming to evil. In my opinion, it is better for people to notice the meek and godly woman of the *heart* (an inner adornment), rather than to notice a woman because she looks outwardly bizarre. In many cases, this kind of look could actually turn people away from the gospel rather than win them to Christ.

Moving on, notice that Paul, in his instructions to the Corinthians, describes part of a woman's role in the church:

But every woman that **prayeth** or **prophesieth** with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. (1Corinthians 11:5)

How can Paul acknowledge that women can *pray* or *prophecy*, if he knows they are not allowed to speak in the church? This would cancel out any prayers or prophecies for sure! Also, to prophesy is "to teach," in a sense, because the prophet is encouraging and edifying the Body, as well as speaking inspired Words of God. There is an erroneous and evil doctrine going around in some churches stating that a woman who teaches or prophesies has a "Jezebel spirit." Since Paul permitted women to prophesy, we know this to be contrary to scripture! Jezebel is a

female *personification* for the false church, just as the Bride of Christ/Israel/New Jerusalem are female personifications for the true church of Christ (his body of believers worldwide). Jezebel was a woman of “whoredoms and witchcrafts” in Israel, according to the Old Testament (2Kings 9:22). So in Revelation, when the scripture speaks of Jezebel, it is referring symbolically to a church (a type of spiritual Israel) practicing witchcraft (teaching her servants to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols; spiritual adultery and idolatry against God).

“Okay,” some of you might be saying, “Scripture shows that women can prophesy, but it forbids them to teach!” Let’s examine these passages of scripture referring to women “speaking” and “teaching.”

In 1Corinthians 14, Paul handles problems in the Corinth church concerning speaking out of order. He begins by addressing the issue of speaking in tongues. When we read the whole context of this chapter, we can see that people were using tongues in a disorderly way, resulting in confusion. They were not being led by the Spirit (possessing the *gift* of tongues), therefore there was no interpretation, so no one could tell what was being said. He tells them that if there is no interpreter, they should keep silence in the church, and speak to themselves and to God, for it is better to prophesy so that all can understand, than to speak ten thousand words in an unknown tongue without an interpretation. My husband often operates in the gift of tongues, and when it is truly from God, it will always be followed by an interpretation so that all can be edified and understand what is being said. Apart from the gift of tongues, he speaks in tongues daily as part of his heavenly prayer language he received at Holy Spirit baptism. I also speak daily in tongues, but I have never felt compelled to give a message in tongues to the church body, because the Holy Spirit has never led me to do so. The *gift of tongues* is listed as one of the nine spiritual gifts in 1Corinthians chapter 12, and is a message *from* God to the people. The heavenly *prayer language of tongues* is a message *to* God from the person praying, as the Holy Spirit intercedes on behalf of the person using the language of angels. For more info on this, see my other teaching, “The Difference Between the Gift of Tongues and Speaking in Tongues as Evidence of the Holy Spirit Baptism.”

So after Paul addresses the issue of speaking in tongues disorderly, he then addresses the issue of women speaking in church in a disorderly manner. He says,

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. (1Corinthians 14:34,35)

First, let’s look up the word “women” here. The Greek word translates:

G1135 women

γυνή

gunē

goo-nay'

Probably from the base of [G1096](#); a *woman*; specifically a *wife*: - wife, woman.

Notice that Paul says the women, if they wish to learn anything, should ask their *husbands* at home. So he is referring to “wives,” just as the Greek word can translate to “specifically, *a wife*.”

Remember that women were new to church services, as they had not been present with the men before. Now, they were asking questions to their husbands, because they didn't have an understanding of a lot of things due to their new participation in service, as well as their new seating arrangement! When we look up the Strong's Greek word #2980 for “speak” in this passage of scripture, it translates “to talk or utter words,” and then goes on to expound upon this definition when one checks the reference to another Greek word associated with it:

[G2980](#) means an *extended* or random harangue]); by implication to *mean*: - ask, bid, boast, call, describe, give out, name, put forth, say (-ing, on), shew, speak, tell, utter.

So the wives were speaking in “an extended or random harangue.”

The Webster's 1828 Dictionary, an old and reliable source since its definitions were, at that time, bible-based, has this to say about the word “harangue:”

This word seems to imply loudness or declamation.
Declamation; a noisy, pompous or irregular address.

The unlearned women (or wives) were loudly asking questions to their husbands in order to understand what was being taught, and were therefore disrupting the church services, which is comparable to quenching the Spirit.

So Paul says the law commands them to be under obedience:

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

What Old Testament law is that? The only law one can find is in Genesis, when God told Eve that her husband would rule over her. So in the husband/wife relationship, the wife is to be subject to her husband during church services rather than speaking out of order in a noisy disruption, and she can then ask her husband the questions at home in order to learn what she does not yet know. Paul is not issuing a command for women to sit through service in complete silence, unable to participate or be used by God. If so, he would be double minded, going against his very own ordinance that she should “pray” or “prophesy” covered with a veil in the church service. Since double mindedness is a sin, and since a double minded man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:8/4:8), we know this is not the case with Paul! He is addressing the issue of chaotic speaking: 1) in tongues among all members, and 2) with the

unlearned, disorderly women who are being loud when asking questions. He then concludes the issue with:

Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.
Let all things be done **decently and in order**. (1Corinthians 14:39, 40)

Now let's look at a similar situation that Paul addresses:

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.
But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.
For Adam was first formed, then Eve.
And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.
Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if *they* continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety. (1Timothy 2:11-15)

Notice again that reference is made to the husband/wife scenario. Adam and Eve were God's first ordained couple. The woman will be saved in childbearing, if *they* (husband and wife) continue in faith and charity, etc. If we again examine the Greek words for *woman* and *man* here, they translate:

G1135 woman

γυνή

gunē

goo-nay'

Probably from the base of [G1096](#); a *woman*; specifically a *wife*: - wife, woman.

G435 man

άνηρ

anēr

an'-ayr

A primary word (compare [G444](#)); a *man* (properly as an individual male): - fellow, husband, man, sir.

Both words can also translate as “wife” and “husband.”

Paul writes this letter to Timothy in Ephesus, instructing him how to handle the same problem that he corrected in Corinth: inordinate speaking/disruptive harangue as a result of the woman's new freedom in church. He commands that the wives *learn in silence* with all subjection to their husbands, being under obedience to them by acknowledging their natural headship and heeding them. They are to wait until they are home to ask questions. They are not to teach or usurp authority over the husband. But what is meant by “to teach or usurp authority?”

The Greek word for “teach” is simply *teach* as it implies. What could the woman be teaching her husband? We know it can't be anything God-inspired, or else there would be no just reason to instruct her not to do so. Therefore, she could be doing either of two things: 1) trying to teach doctrines to her husband of which she knows nothing about, since she herself has to “learn” things at this point due to her new involvement in church services, or 2) she is trying to teach by being bossy and insubordinate to him. Of note is the fact that the words “teach” and “usurp authority” are listed together in this scripture, to show relationship. The Greek words #G831 *usurp authority* translate in the Strong's Concordance: to *act of oneself*, that is, (figuratively) *dominate*: - usurp authority over. The Thayers Lexicon has this to say for one of the definitions: *one who acts on his own authority, autocratic*. So if the wife is acting independently of God, on her own authority only, rather than Spirit led, she is usurping her husband's authority. But what if God is telling her to prophesy or speak? Would she be acting on her own authority, or acting of herself? No. She would be acting in the authority of the Holy Spirit.

The gifts and functions of the Holy Spirit are not just for men. They are for *man* as in *mankind*, which is a general term used often in the Bible to refer to “whosoever, any,” just as today in our modern culture we understand the word *mankind* to mean.

Joel the prophet foretold of God's Holy Spirit being poured out upon *all* flesh in the last days. He said that sons and *daughters* would prophesy, and that on the *handmaidens* would also be poured out God's Spirit (Joel 2:28,29).

When we look at the gifts of the Spirit listed in 1Corinthians 12, we see no distinction between women and men, or no prohibition forbidding women to operate in the gifts.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every **man** to profit withal (1Corinthians 12:7)

The Greek word for *man* here, #G1538 means: *each* or *every*: - any, both, each (one), every (man, one, **woman**), particularly.

So now we see another important role for women in the church: to operate in any or all of the nine gifts of the Spirit:

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man {*each, every (man, one, woman)*} severally as he will (1Corinthians 12:8-11).

Isn't God wonderful? He is no respecter of persons, for He says respect of persons is sin! Now let's take a look at some of the other gifts of the Spirit and determine who they are for. Listed after the nine gifts of the Spirit, in the same context of scripture, 1Corinthians 12 goes on to say that all members are of “one” body in Christ. Whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, the Christian believer who is baptized into Christ has been baptized into one body. And just as in a physical or natural body, all members, though operating as one, have not the same functions. They all do different things to make the body run smoothly as a whole. In this way, God has also set members in the spiritual body of Christ as it pleases Him.

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?

Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way (1Corinthians 12:27-31).

Where do we find in this passage of scripture the prohibition of women operating in these gifts? We don't! These gifts are included in the same context-- right after the nine gifts of the Spirit, which as we read earlier, are for each and every person, including women. So (and this is going to rouse some of you up, but I will prove it to be true using more scripture if you will bear with me) we see that women can be apostles, prophets, teachers, operate in the gift of miracles, the gifts of healing, act as helpers, be involved in church government, and operate in the gifts of tongues/interpretation of tongues.

Okay, let's cover the first gift mentioned here: apostles. Where do we find any female apostles? some of you are asking. True, the twelve original apostles were all male, handpicked by Jesus as symbolic representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel and/or types of Christ, who is Head of the tribes (spiritual tribes, now--those who accept Jesus as Lord).

Since that time, of course, God has raised up other apostles—even in our modern day New Testament church, regardless of nationality or gender. This new understanding has come about because of the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit--that in the last days, God would pour out His Spirit upon ALL flesh—Jew or Gentile, male or female (Joel 2:28, 29). Even the apostles had to understand that the Gentiles would receive salvation and the Holy Spirit baptism, and this understanding only came about as they were enlightened by the Spirit himself. So if, in today's times, we say we must follow the original example of Jesus by choosing only male apostles rather than female, then by this same kind of reasoning (as one man put it so well),³ we must also exclude Gentiles from being apostles, as the first twelve apostles were strictly *Jews*.

Continuing on, let's take a look now at the word “apostle.”

G652 apostles

ἀπόστολος

apostolos

ap-os'-tol-os

From G649; a *delegate*; specifically an *ambassador* of the Gospel; officially a *commissioner* of Christ (“apostle”), (with miraculous powers): - apostle, messenger, he that is sent.

Now, let's examine what perhaps might be two more apostles that were not listed with the original twelve, but that were enlisted by God *later* after the death and resurrection of Christ.

Salute Andronicus and **Junia**, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, **who are of note among the apostles**, who also were in Christ before me (Romans 16:7).

Andronicus means *man of victory*; an Israelite. But what does Junia translate as? Strong's Concordance says:

G2458 Junia

Ἰουνίας

Iounias

ee-oo-nee'-as

Of Latin origin; *Junias*, a Christian: - Junias.

But Thayer's Greek correctly interprets:

G2458 Junia

Ἰουνίας

Iounias

Thayer Definition:

Junia = “youthful”

1) a Christian **woman** at Rome, mentioned by Paul as one of his kinsfolk and fellow prisoners

Part of Speech: noun proper feminine

A Related Word by Thayer's/Strong's Number: of Latin origin

Junia was a Christian woman, and scripture says she was “of note among the apostles.” She and Andronicus were both imprisoned, as Paul was. ⁴The awful thing about Junia's name is that a certain Roman commentator, Aegidius (1245-1316) decided to refer to her as a male without any historical evidence to support his claim. Then in the 13th Century, copyists literally changed her name to a male version: Junias, as we see the Strong's Concordance has also done. Although early church theologians and scholars understood her name to be feminine, and although it is said that no study of history shows any male names of Junias for that time period, but common female names of Junia, a man did not like the fact that a woman “Junia” was listed as possibly an apostle! So with no historical proof of his assumption, he simply changed her sexual origin, and her name was tweaked accordingly. Now, it has been discovered that the feminine form of the name, Junia, is really the correct translation, as some modern day scholars note. Some early church scholars believed she was indeed an apostle. Other scholars have thought, or do think, that “*of note* among the apostles” means that she was *well thought of (approved of)* among the apostles, rather than it meaning she was an actual apostle. **Of note** is Greek word #G1978 *remarkable, eminent*. There is a possibility that Junia was an actual apostle, because as we will discover by thoroughly studying the scriptures

in this teaching, God placed women in prominent roles during early church history in the Bible, contrary to the male prejudice that has sought to hide the truth about women! And since we previously covered in this teaching that the spiritual gifts are not limited to men only, we can therefore conclude that the role of apostle is not limited to men only, as it is included in the context of spiritual gifts appointed by God.

But let's continue on, making our way down the list of spiritual gifts. Next we come to “prophets.” We see that women were mentioned as prophets in both Old and New Testaments. Deborah, Huldah and Anna are some examples. And we know that women can prophesy, just as in the New Testament, Philip the evangelist had four daughters that prophesied (Acts 21:8, 9).

Next, let's examine “teachers.”

After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, **with his wife Priscilla**; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them (Acts 18:1,2)

And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, *and* mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and **Priscilla** had heard, **they** took him unto **them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly** (Acts 18:24-26).

Did you catch that? Priscilla, along with her husband, expounded unto the *man* Apollos “the way of God more perfectly.” Scripture is clear that *they* were both involved in educating him, and therefore Priscilla “taught” a man! Paul also comments later:

Greet **Priscilla** and Aquila my **helpers** in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles (Romans 16:4).

So Paul acknowledges Priscilla as a helper in the ministry. But what does the word *helper* mean?

G4904 helper

συνεργός

sunergos

soon-er-gos'

From a presumed compound of [G4862](#) and the base of [G2041](#); a *co-laborer*, that is, *coadjutor*: - companion in labour, (fellow-) helper (-labourer, -worker), labourer together with, workfellow.

Priscilla was a co-laborer with Paul in the gospel. She even laid down her own neck for his life! But who else does Paul refer to as a laborer in the gospel?

Salute **Tryphena** and **Tryphosa**, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved **Persis**, which laboured much in the Lord (Romans 16:12).

All of these laborers are women as well!

G5170 Tryphena

Τρύφαινα

Truphaina

Thayer Definition:

Tryphena = “luxurious”

1) a Christian **woman**

Part of Speech: noun proper feminine

A Related Word by Thayer’s/Strong’s Number: from [G5172](#)

G5173 Tryphosa

Τρυφῶσα

Truphōsa

Thayer Definition:

Tryphosa = “luxuriating”

1) a Christian **woman**

Part of Speech: noun proper feminine

A Related Word by Thayer’s/Strong’s Number: from [G5172](#)

G4069 Persis

Περσὶς

Persis

Thayer Definition:

Persis = “a Persian woman”

1) a Christian **woman** at Rome

Part of Speech: noun proper feminine

A Related Word by Thayer’s/Strong’s Number: a Persian woman

So Christian women can be apostles, prophets and teachers, and they can labor in the Lord just as men can. But what about deacons? Can they be deacons? Next, we're going to see what man has done to Phebe's role, as they tried to use a more “mild” word in scripture to hide the truth; the same word which when translated, gives Phebe more of a leadership position.

I commend unto you **Phebe** our sister, which is a **servant** of the church which is at Cenchrea

(Romans 16:1).

G5402 Phebe

Φοίβη

Phoibē

Thayer Definition:

Phoebe = “radiant”

1) a **deaconess** of the church at Cenchrea, near Corinth

Part of Speech: noun proper feminine

A Related Word by Thayer’s/Strong’s Number: from phoibos (bright, probably akin to the base of [G5457](#))

Thayers Greek Lexicon defines her as a *deaconess of the church* at Cenchrea!

And what does the word “servant” mean in this passage?

G1249 servant (deaconess)

διάκονος

diakonos

dee-ak'-on-os

Probably from [διάκω](#) diakō (obsolete, to *run* on errands; compare [G1377](#)); an *attendant*, that is, (generally) a *waiter* (at table or in other menial duties); specifically a Christian **teacher** and **pastor** (technically a *deacon* or **deaconess**): - deacon, minister, servant.

Now, compare the Greek word for “deacon” in 1 Timothy 3:13:

For they that have used the office of a **deacon (G1247)** well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

G1247 deacon

διακονέω

diakoneō

dee-ak-on-eh'-o

From [G1249](#); to *be an attendant*, that is, *wait upon* (menially or as a host, friend or [figuratively] teacher); technically to *act as a Christian deacon*: - (ad-) minister (unto), serve, use the

office of a deacon.

So before we conclude that Phebe probably served food at tables (which in itself is an important task for Jesus!), we have seen that the male deacons (such as Stephen) did such things, too, and that it was not the *only* task a deacon performed. They also taught and pastored. Now let's look at another word in the same passage describing Phebe, which is “*succourer*.”

That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a **succourer** of many, and of myself also (Romans 16:2).

G4368 succourer

προστάτις

prostatīs

pros-tat'-is

Feminine of a derivative of [G4291](#); a *patroness*, that is, *assistant*: - succourer.

Note that this word is a *feminine* of the derivative G4291:

G4291

προΐστημι

proistēmi

pro-is'-tay-mee

From [G4253](#) and [G2476](#); to *stand before*, that is, (in **rank**) to *preside*, or (by implication) to *practise*: - maintain, **be over, rule**.

Now let's process what we have read:

Phebe was a servant (deaconess) of the church in Cenchrea. She may have served food, just as the martyr Stephen did, and she also ran errands (such as carrying Paul's letter to the Romans, which meant she would have traveled to get it there):

To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. <Written to the Romans from Corinthus, **and sent by Phebe servant of the church at Cenchrea.**> (Romans 16:27)

She also was a “succourer” of many, which means *patroness* or *assistant*, the

feminine of the derivative word *proistemi*, which means, to *stand before, preside, maintain, be over, rule*. We can conclude that she was a feminine overseer of the church at Cenchrea. Also, by Greek definition, *diakonos* can imply the role of a *pastor* or *teacher*. It is likely that she also performed these functions, just as Stephen “taught” the Jews when he gave his long dissertation to them before they stoned him to death.

But let's study the word “pastor,” because it really is a general term in the Bible. “Pastor” is only mentioned *once* in the entire New Testament, in the fivefold ministry:

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, **pastors** and teachers (Ephesians 4:11)

G4166 pastors

ποιμήν

poimēn

poi-mane'

Of uncertain affinity; a *shepherd* (literally or figuratively): - shepherd, pastor.

When we look at the example of our Lord Jesus as the Great Shepherd, and us as his sheep, we see a good example of the function a pastor performs. A pastor gently oversees and guides the sheep. He protects them (remember Phebe was a protector and patroness) when he sees danger coming, such as wolves (in sheep's clothing), and he feeds them food (spiritual food included).

Peter, when addressing the churches with his epistle, told the *elders* to “feed the flock of God, overseeing them willingly” (1Peter 5:2). Interesting that the elders were also noted to have the same function as pastors: to “oversee” or “shepherd the flock.”

Then in Acts, Paul calls the elders together and tells them a similar thing, confirming that elders function in a pastoral sense:

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the **elders** of the church.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the **flock**, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you **overseers**, to **feed** the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous **wolves** enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Therefore **watch**, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. (Acts 20:17,28-31).

So any one who shepherds the flock of God by feeding them, overseeing them, and watching out for them (guarding them) can be considered a “pastor.” I believe the word *pastor* today has taken on more of a title or man-made position than it had back in the early church, where it seemed more of a *function* that people performed, whether they were elders, deacons,

etc. I don't see anywhere in scripture where men (or women) of God were officially called by the title of "Pastor So and So." (I say this with all respect for the pastoral role, as I myself, along with my husband, am an ordained pastor). Scripture makes mention of the qualifications for bishops and deacons, but I don't see any qualifications for the specific office of "pastor." Does this mean that all pastors are not men or women of God? No. But again, I don't see in the Bible where they had an official title. Again, it appeared to be more of a function, as the word "pastors" was only mentioned *once* in the New Testament. It seems much of our modern church service has derived from more modern tradition rather than from biblical early church practice. I am sure though, that there are pastors today who sincerely have a heart for God.

Now let's take a look at the "some" that God gave to be pastors.

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto **men** {(G444: *a human being, whether male or female*)}.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and **some, pastors** and teachers (Ephesians 4:8, 11)

When we look at the two Greek words in conjunction with the word "some," they translate to, #G3588: *the, this, that, one, he, she, etc.*, and #G3303: *truly, surely, certainly, indeed*.

So "he or **she**" are included in the "some." God did not make a gender distinction here; women can perform these ministry functions too. Therefore, women can be pastors.

Now let's take a look at evangelists. In the Strong's Concordance, the word *evangelists* translates as:

G2099 evangelists

εὐαγγελιστής

euaggelistēs

yoo-ang-ghel-is-tace'

From [G2097](#); a *preacher* of the gospel: - evangelist.

I like this ministry function, because it's another thing I do! I am an evangelist—an open-air preacher—and God personally called me to preach the gospel when I had a desire on my heart to do so. He first confirmed it through the Word, and then when I accompanied my soon-to-be husband at that time to a festival where he preached in the open-air, I asked God if He had anything for me to say. One word came to my mind, but I was clueless as to how I would begin. So my husband coached me to open my mouth by faith and begin speaking, and lo and behold, the rest of God's message came forth for the people, pouring out of me like rivers of living water! Hallelujah!

The Thayers Greek Lexicon describes an evangelist as:

G2099 evangelists

εὐαγγελιστής

euaggelistēs

Thayer Definition:

- 1) a bringer of good tidings, an evangelist
- 2) the name given to the NT heralds of salvation through Christ who are not apostles

Part of Speech: noun masculine

A Related Word by Thayer's/Strong's Number: from [G2097](#)

Citing in TDNT: 2:736, 267

Though there were evangelists that were not apostles, as one Thayers definition states, Paul the apostle said he was called to be a preacher *and* an apostle, so he had more than one function or role:

Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity (2Timothy 1:11).

But can we find examples of women evangelists in the Bible? Yes, we can. Before presenting them, however, I would like to remind you of Jesus' command to the eleven disciples (after Judas Iscariot's death):

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and **preach** the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).

“Well, that was to the apostles only,” you might argue. Don't forget that Jesus also ordained seventy more disciples after the original twelve, and they also went out spreading the gospel and working miracles:

After these things the Lord appointed other **seventy** also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way.

And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.

And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.

And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:

And heal the sick that are therein, **and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.**

But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, **and say,**

Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city (Luke 10:1-12).

Then Jesus commanded the disciples to “go and *teach* (G3100 to *disciple*) all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

A “disciple” (G3101) is a *learner, or pupil* (student).

My point is, when we are born into the kingdom of God, we all become *disciples* of Christ, whether male or female. We all *learn* from Jesus. And Jesus commands his disciples to go out into the world and *preach* the gospel. So we are all, in a sense, evangelists (or preachers), even if we might not be called to preach in the open-air. When we declare the good news of Jesus at work, or to family, friends, acquaintances, and strangers, we are “bringers of good tidings.”

To prove this, let's take a look at the Greek translations for the word “preaching” (G1256). They define it as: to *converse, discuss, argue, say, dispute, reason with*. We see these definitions applied to Paul's preaching, as the same Greek number is used in the following scripture:

And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long **preaching (G1256)**, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead (Acts 20:6-9).

If we look at Anna, she declared the good news of Jesus to all who were waiting for the Messiah:

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, **and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem** (Luke 2:36-38).

Jesus' disciples marveled that he talked with a Samaritan woman at the well. But she believed he was the Christ, and **testified** to the men in the village of him. As a result, **many believed on Jesus because of her saying** (John 4:7-30, 39).

Both the angel at the tomb and Jesus himself told Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to “**go and tell**” the disciples that he had risen from the dead (Matthew 28:1-10). They brought good news of his resurrection!

So whether a woman heralds (publicly cries aloud) the gospel message, or proclaims it in a more subdued way through conversation or discussion, she is still an evangelist in either sense. And as I noted earlier, God gave **some** (#G3588: *the, this, that, one, he, she, etc.*) evangelists.

Okay, we've examined the fivefold ministry in regards to women, so now let's move on to the next question. Can a woman be an elder? As we saw, a pastor can also be

synonymous with an elder, as the pastoral function is one of overseeing. But to provide more proof of *women* elders, I now turn to the following passages of scripture. In 1 Timothy chapter 5, Paul mentions elders: “let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine,” and “rebuke not an elder, but plead with him as a father.” He then states:

The **elder women** as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity (1Timothy 5:2)

The same Greek word for “elder”-- (rebuke not an *elder*, but intreat him as a father)-- is used when Paul speaks of the “**elder** women.” The word is:

G4245 elder

πρεσβύτερος

presbuteros

pres-boo'-ter-os

Comparative of [πρέσβυς](#) presbus (*elderly*); *older*; as noun, a *senior*; specifically an Israelite *Sanhedrist* (also figuratively, member of the celestial council) or Christian “presbyter”: - elder (-est), old.

In the Thayers Lexicon, it states that among the Christians, **elders were those who presided over** the assemblies (or churches), and that the NT uses the terms of bishop, elder and presbyter *interchangeably*. They weren't necessarily separate offices, as in the church of today. Rather, they possibly consisted of the same function, and so were interchangeable, just as we discussed when speaking of pastors/elders earlier.

We see that Paul talked about the “elder women,” the same word used for the “elders who rule well.” But can we see an example of an elder woman ruling (or overseeing) the church in early New Testament times? I have found two!

The elder unto the **elect lady** and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth (2John 1:1).

If we study the Greek words here for “elect lady,” we discover something remarkable.

G1588 elect

ἐλεκτός

eklektos

Thayer Definition:

1) picked out, chosen

1a) chosen by God

1a1) to obtain salvation through Christ

1a1a) Christians are called “chosen or elect” of God

1a2) the Messiah is called “elect”, as appointed by God to the most exalted office conceivable

1a3) choice, select, i.e. the best of its kind or class, excellence preeminent: applied to certain individual Christians

Part of Speech: adjective

A Related Word by Thayer’s/Strong’s Number: from [G1586](#)

G1588 elect

ἐκλεκτός

eklektos

ek-lek-tos'

Strong’s Definition:

From [G1586](#); *select*; by implication *favorite*: - chosen, elect.

So this elect lady is “chosen, select, favorite.” Now let's combine this with the next word, *lady*:

G2959 lady

Κυρία

Kuria

koo-ree'-ah

Feminine of [G2962](#); *Cyria*, a Christian **woman**: - lady.

Notice the Greek word is the *feminine* form of this next word, which means:

G2962

κύριος

kurios

koo'-ree-os

From κύριος kuros (*supremacy*); *supreme* in authority, that is, (as noun) *controller*; by implication *Mr.* (as a respectful title): - God, Lord, master, Sir.

So since the elect lady obviously cannot be titled as a male “Mr./Sir/ Lord controller who is supreme in authority,” they assigned the *feminine* form of the same Greek word to her: “Lady,” though it still holds the same implications of “controller who is supreme in authority!” She is a *chosen* (select, favorite, elect) *lady* (supreme in authority, controller) who rules (oversees) the church in her home. We can determine this because 2John states that she has “children” that are walking in the truth. Remember, Paul the apostle often referred to members of the Christian church as “children,” and he was their “father” (in a spiritual sense):

My little **children**, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you (Galatians 4:19).

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many **fathers**: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel (1Corinthians 4:15).

And again, as Paul himself was an elder (aged church father who oversaw his children), so scripture says the **elder women** are *mothers* in the church. Mothers have children that they oversee! Whether the elect lady was an older woman spiritually, or an older woman both spiritually and naturally, she none-the-less oversaw her church children.

Also, at the conclusion of this epistle written to her and her church, is another example of a woman elder:

The **children** of thy **elect sister** greet thee. Amen (2John 1:13).

The elect lady has a sister in the Lord who also has church children, and notice that the children are *of* (belonging to) the elect sister, or else it would read: the children *with* they elect sister greet thee. The elect sister presides over (oversees) the church children!

So then why do the qualifications for bishop and deacon mention *men* rather than women? Let's examine these.

This is a true saying, If a **man** desire the office of a bishop, **he** desireth a good work (1Timothy 3:1).

Let's review this scripture now, defining the Greek.

If a **man** (G1536) desire the office of a bishop...

G1536 man

εἷ τις

ei tis

Thayer Definition:

1) whoever, whatever

Part of Speech: pronoun

A Related Word by Thayer's/Strong's Number: from [G1487](#) and [G5100](#)

....**he** desireth a good work.

Note: *he* is not in the original Greek. It was added by man. The only word here in the original Greek is “desireth.”

A bishop then must be blameless, the **husband** of one wife (1Timothy 3:2)...

Notice: In the Greek/English Interlinear NT (tr), the original Greek reads:

(Greek/English Interlinear (tr) NT) 1 Timothy 3:2 δει <1163> (5904) {IT BEHOOVES} ουν <3767> {THEN} τον <3588> {THE} επισκοπον <1985> {OVERSEER} ανεπιληπτον <423> {IRREPROACHABLE} ειναι <1511> (5750) {TO BE,} μιας <3391> {OF ONE} γυναικος <1135> {WIFE} ανδρα <435> {HUSBAND,} νηφαλεον <3524> {SOBER,} σωφρονα <4998> {DISCREET,} κοσμιον <2887> {DECOROUS,} φιλοξενον <5382> {HOSPITABLE,} διδακτικον <1317> {APT TO TEACH;}

I'll restate this in pure English without the symbols:

It behooves then the overseer irreproachable to be, of one wife husband, sober, discreet, decorous, hospitable, apt to teach.

Now that makes a difference, doesn't it? Notice how one “additional” word by the translators, or even one comma in a certain spot, can change everything! And that is why these things are added, to support gender bias as the Catholic church did when it desired an all-male hierarchy! This verse doesn't say “a bishop must be the husband of one wife.” But rather, “an overseer irreproachable to be {comma}, of one wife husband {comma}. When we read it this way, it doesn't sound male oriented. ⁵Rather, it says the overseer should have one wife/husband. In other words, either the man or woman (if married), should have only one spouse as opposed to polygamy, which God never intended to begin with; thus the New Testament command.

Now, lets go on to the rest of the scripture in 1Timothy:

One that ruleth well **his own**(G2398) house, having **his (not in original Greek)** children in subjection with all gravity;
(For if a **man** (G5100) know not how to rule **his own** (G2398) house, how shall **he (not in original Greek)** take care of the church of God?)

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride **he (not in original Greek)** fall into the condemnation of the devil.

Moreover **he (G846)** must have a good report of them which are without; lest **he (not in original Greek)** fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Here are all of the Greek translations for these “supposedly” male oriented pronouns:

G2398 his own

ἴδιος

idios

Thayer Definition:

1) pertaining to one's self, one's own, belonging to one's self

Part of Speech: adjective

A Related Word by Thayer's/Strong's Number: of uncertain affinity

G5100 man

τις

tis

Thayer Definition:

1) a certain, a certain one

2) some, some time, a while

Part of Speech: pronoun

A Related Word by Thayer's/Strong's Number: an enclitic indefinite pronoun

G846 he

αὐτός

autos

Thayer Definition:

1) himself, **herself**, themselves, itself

2) he, **she**, it

3) the same

Part of Speech: pronoun

A Related Word by Thayer's/Strong's Number: from the particle au [perhaps akin to the base of [G109](#) through the idea of a baffling wind] (backward)

So none of these pronouns actually refer to a man because they are not gender specific, but rather to “anyone,” “he, she, it,”--mankind. And what about the actual word “bishop?” It is a masculine noun, but then so are all of these nouns listed below that we previously discussed and saw pertained to women as well:

And he gave some, **apostles**; and some, **prophets**; and some, **evangelists**; and some, **pastors** and **teachers** (Ephesians 4:11).

Therefore, looking at the masculine or feminine of a word doesn't always provide us with a correct translation. Rather, we have to look at the whole context, and review all of the other words associated with it, such as pronouns, etc., as we just did in 1 Timothy 3.

Notice, too, the role of a bishop can be interchangeable with that of an elder. Both are “overseers.” Look at this passage of scripture, as it will confirm it:

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain **elders** in every city, as I had appointed thee:

If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

For a **bishop** must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;

Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers (Titus 1:5-9).

So Paul tells Timothy to ordain elders in every city (in order to look after the churches established there), and then talks about the qualifications for these elder overseers (or bishops). The word *bishop* here isn't meant to imply a hierarchy (bishop, archbishop, etc.), but rather a *function*. And again, in the qualifications listed for a bishop, the original Greek translates “of one wife husband.” Notice also that Paul states, “if any” be blameless. “Any” is G1536: *whoever, whatever*.

Interestingly, the bishop also uses sound doctrine to exhort and convince the gainsayers, so he/she functions as a teacher, too.

Now let's move on to the requirements for deacons:

Likewise must the **deacons (G1249)** be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a **deacon (G1249)**, being found blameless (1 Timothy 3:8-10).

G1249 deacon

διάκονος

diakonos

dee-ak'-on-os

Probably from *διάκω* diakō (obsolete, to *run* on errands; compare [G1377](#)); an *attendant*, that is, (generally) a *waiter* (at table or in other menial duties); specifically a Christian *teacher* and *pastor* (technically a *deacon* or **deaconess**): - deacon, minister, servant.

Even so must their **wives (G1135)** be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.
Let the deacons be the **husbands of one wife**, ruling their children and their own houses well.
For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus (1Timothy 3:11-13).

First of all, note that “must their” is not in the original Greek, but added by man. Next, notice that “wives” can also translate to “women,” which is shown here in the Greek/English Interlinear (TR):

(Greek/English Interlinear (tr) NT) 1 Timothy 3:11 γυναικας <1135> {WOMEN}
ωσαυτως <5615> {IN LIKE MANNER} σεμνας <4586> {GRAVE,} μη <3361> {NOT}
διαβολους <1228> {SLANDERERS,} νηφαλεους <3524> {SOBER,} πιστας <4103>
{FAITHFUL} εν <1722> {IN} πασιν <3956> {ALL THINGS.}

If this passage was referring to the “wives” of the deacons, then why don't the wives of the bishops have any requirements listed for them? Because this is not referring to the deacon's wives, but rather to the *women* deacons, such as Phebe was! Remember, also, that “the husband of one wife” is again translated: *one wife husband*.

As I stated earlier, when interpreting the Bible correctly, one has to gather the multitude of counselors before making a judgment. We see how the role of women in the church has included apostle, prophet (i.e. prophetess), evangelist (preacher), teacher and pastor (deacons, bishops and elders function as such). That is why when we see something that seems contradictory in the Bible, such as the seemingly “male” qualifications for bishops and deacons after noting Phebe was a deacon(-ess), we must “study to show ourselves approved, rightly dividing the Word.” This comes from looking at the entire context of scripture, all of the references in all books we can find, and examining Hebrew/Greek words as well as historical/chronological information. That way, we do not make assumptions based on our own prejudices and a couple of scriptures taken out of context to support our views.

I hope you have found this rather lengthy study to be enlightening, and I hope you will prayerfully consider it. Remember, the New Testament makes a very important statement, written for our instruction and admonition:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither **male nor female**: for ye are all **one** in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

Unto him that loved **us**, and washed **us** from our sins in his own blood,
And hath made **us kings and priests** unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever
and ever. Amen (Revelation 1:5, 6).

Let us break down the walls of nationality, Pharisaical hierarchy, and male chauvinism.
God is no respecter of persons! (James 2:1,9)

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Resources:

Holy Spirit (John 14:26/16:13)
The King James Bible; public domain
The Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible; James Strong; LL.D, S.T.D
Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament; Joseph H. Thayer
Greek/English Interlinear (tr: Textus Receptus) NT; online bible; www.olivetree.com
Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary online (e-sword)

Endnotes:

I have listed a few resources that I found online, from which I have studied their information for myself in the Bible, and find them to be credible sources. Please note when reading these, however, that I am not an “egalitarian,” “christian feminist,” or “Catholic.” I am simply a born-again Christian (follower of Christ). The sources that I have listed are referenced because I have gleaned biblical truth from some of their online compositions (whether it be all or in part), inasmuch as they were biblically proven to be true.

¹*Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible*; J.I. Packer, M.C. Tenney, editors; © 1980 by Thomas Nelson Publishers

²*The Role of Woman in the Church*; Frank Daniels; www.friktech.com/rel/women.htm

³ *Why Jesus Chose Male Apostles; Community 101* pages 74-80 by Gilbert Bilezikian;

www.godstowomen.org/Apostles.htm

⁴*The Case For Junia, The Lost Apostle*; author unknown; www.christianfeminism.wordpress.com/2008/08/05-the-case-for-junia-the-lost-apostle/

The Apostle Junia; Women's Ministries In The Early Church; Rev. Kathryn J. Riss;
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⁵*A Church With Women: Female Church Leaders and Requirements for Ministry*; Dianne McDonnell;
www.churchofgoddfw.com/women/w_without.shtml