

Reclaiming the Wesleyan/Holiness Heritage of Women Clergy: Sermons, A Case Study and Resources

by Randy Huber and John E. Stanley
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Foreword

Reclaiming the Holiness Heritage of Women Clergy: Sermons, A Case Study and Resources emerged from the preaching of Randy Huber at Chapel Hill Church of God, York Springs, PA as he led the congregation in a bylaws change to include women on the Board of Elders and as pastoral candidates. Rev. Huber and Dr. John E. Stanley received a Christian Faith and Life Teaching Grant from The Louisville Institute in 1998 to publish Randy's sermons, to develop seminars on women in ministry and to publish resources for helping Wesleyan/Holiness churches to reclaim their heritage of women clergy.

Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy, Inc. thanks Randy and John for their work in preparing these resources. Thanks to Monica Volante for formatting the sermons from Pastor Huber's manuscripts. Thanks also to the staff in Faculty Services and College Press at Messiah College for their help.

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Introduction

In 1998 we received a Christian Faith and Teaching Grant designed to bring a pastor and professor together for twelve months in a significant study that linked the congregation and the classroom.

The grant proposal to The Louisville Institute read in part:

This study will use Chapel Hill Church of God, York Springs, PA as a case study in reversing what Paul Bassett identifies as “fundamentalist leavening” in the holiness movement, especially in regards to women in ministry. A distinctive of most Wesleyan/Holiness denominations is that they have always ordained women as pastors. However, in recent decades as these churches have assimilated new members, especially from fundamentalist traditions, the willingness to accept women as clergy has diminished. Chapel Hill Church of God fits that pattern because it had women ministers at its inception, and a woman pastor from 1944-1947, only to reject women as leaders in 1982. Pastor Randy Huber preached a series of eleven sermons on women in the Bible in the fall of 1996 and initiated bylaw changes which the congregation approved in November 1997 to allow women to serve as pastoral leaders and as members of the Board of Elders.

Reclaiming the Holiness Heritage of Women Clergy: Sermons, A Case Study and Resources contains Randy Huber’s eleven “Women of Faith Sermons,” the seminar session we conduct, and Wesleyan/Holiness resources for reclaiming the heritage of women in ministry. The sermons are typed transcripts of Pastor Huber’s oral messages. Although overheads accompanied each message, we have only included selected overheads due to space. Feel free to use the overheads.

To document that ordained women have been part of the Wesleyan/ Holiness movement from its inception we developed three handouts for our seminars. These resources show that the acceptance of women in ministry is not a recent development but an intrinsic practice and teaching of most Wesleyan/Holiness traditions. These documents are “New Testament Arguments for the Equality of Men and Women in Ministry,” “Church Policy Statements on Ordaining Women,” and “Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy--A Partial Bibliography.” We realize that sociological forces have contributed to the decline of women clergy in Wesleyan/Holiness churches; however, we have stressed the biblical basis of women in ministry to call our tradition to reclaim the heritage and practice of Galatians 3:28, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

Randy’s sermons use the NIV Bible and John’s article uses the NRSV.

We thank the Louisville Institute for the grant which funded our seminars and contributed to the initial printing of this teaching resource.

Randy Huber and John E. Stanley

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“Eve”

September 15, 1996

This morning we begin an eleven-week series on women of faith. Despite centuries of sinful subjugation of women, God has mightily used women. As we study together, we will explore the strengths and weaknesses of various women and see what significant leadership and service these women of faith have performed for the kingdom of God.

Let's start with the first woman, our sister, Eve. Look with me in your Bibles please to Genesis 1:26-28.

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

To fully appreciate the value of women we need to understand God's original intention. Both the male and the female were created in the image of God. Both the male and female were given the role of leadership and dominion. God intended that Adam and Eve, both made in his image, should multiply and rule over the earth. He said, “let them rule.”

Let's continue reading at Genesis 2:18. “The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

God made Eve because it was not good for Adam to be alone. He was incomplete. Adam needed a “helper.” In English, the word “helper” is misleading. The Hebrew says--*ezer kenegdo*. It means “one like.” The idea is a counter-part to oneself. It means one who is like and equal to oneself, of the same nature, of the same flesh and blood. Usually, “helper” refers to God as in “My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (Ps. 121:2). The word “helper” is an unfortunate translation because it implies a hierarchy, as though the woman exists only to help the man. The Hebrew makes it clear. Let's rephrase verse 18. “The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make one like himself to complete him, one of his same nature and flesh and blood to be his counterpart.”” The man completes the woman and the woman completes the man. There is beautiful equality and harmony in God's plan for man and woman.

Let's pick up at Genesis 2:21-25.

So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman

from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. The idea of the woman being an equal counterpart and complement to the man continues in these verses. God formed the woman from Adam's rib. Man and woman are of the same flesh. They are of the identical nature. Together, they are one-flesh created in the image of God. There is no superiority or inferiority.

The sexual union of marriage reaffirms what God intended. The two are one flesh. They complete and complement one another. They can be naked and unashamed because they are one.

When Adam first saw Eve, he understood! He exclaimed, "This is bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh! She should be called 'woman' for she was taken out of man." The Hebrew word for man is *ish*. The Hebrew word for woman is *ishah*. *Ishah* means literally "she-man." Woman is fully human, but she is female. Man is fully human but he is male. Maleness and femaleness are complementary and completing traits, not hierarchical and competing traits. Our English word woman is an abbreviation of the Anglo-Saxon word that means "the man with the womb." Women are humans with wombs. They complete and complement men. Men complete and complement women.

Adam and Eve were in the garden together, both fully human, both made in the image of God, both coming from the same flesh, both given the same rule and dominion over the world. Completing one another as complementing equals they were one flesh, and they were naked and unashamed; equality was part of the order of creation.

Then there was the fall! Adam and Eve both sinned against God by eating the forbidden fruit. After the fall, sin marred everything. The man and the woman began to blame one another. They could no longer be naked and unashamed. There was a separateness between them and God and between each other. God expelled them from the garden paradise. Every form of sin entered the world. All kinds of ugly things that God never intended began. Soon there was disease, death, murder, drought, famine, war, racism, slavery, and the subjugation of women. Men would treat women as property. Women would be denied the right to study the Torah. They would be prohibited from exercising their spiritual gifts which were given by God to help rule and subdue the earth. They would suffer the indignities of being treated as sex objects, only with value if they produced male children. They would be used as expendable objects of male desires in polygamous marriages. They would be granted no right of divorce yet they could be abused and discarded. Over the centuries, women's weaker muscular strength, coupled with the dependencies generated by increased pains in childbearing, would make them increasingly subjugated by men.

God described these consequences of the fall in Genesis 3:16. "To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." How right God was about the effects of sin.

The fall drastically marred God's intention for man and woman. The curse of sin put woman

under subjection.

Is there any good news? Yes, over the centuries, despite male subjugation and domination, God has used many women powerfully. Rebekah, Jochebed, Miriam, Deborah, Esther, Lydia, Priscilla, Junia the apostle, Mary Magdalene, the virgin Mary, Hannah Whitall Smith, Catherine Booth, Joni Erickson-Tada, Mother Teresa. The list is in the millions. Even more so, the Lord Jesus Christ gave his life to set men and women free from the curse of the law that holds us accountable for sin. Galatians 3:13 affirms: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’” Jesus was cursed for us so that we could be restored to a right relationship with God. Christ restored the order of creation. He set us free from the curse so that we could be restored as gender equals and one flesh. Christ died so that we could be set free from racial divisions like those between Jew and Gentile. He set us free from class divisions like the exploitation of slaves. He set us free from gender divisions. The power of his death over the curse is beautifully set forth in Galatians 3:28. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

May God give us grace to be restored to his original plan. May we seek to demolish any residual effects of the fall. Where there is racism, let’s renounce it. Where there is slavery, let’s abolish it. Where there is male domination of women, let’s end it. In the beginning at creation, God made us male and female and gave us equal dominion over the earth. Let’s labor to fulfill God’s order of creation rather than continue the order of the fall.

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“Rebekah”

September 22, 1996

Last week, we saw that God created males and females in his own image. God created males and females to complement and complete one another as one flesh. He created males and females to rule together over the earth. Today our society is rocking in a battle of the sexes, a battle for control, a battle for dominance. Women are frequently caricatured as manipulative, scheming and controlling. Men are caricatured as insensitive, non-communicative, stupid brutes with one-track minds. How far have we fallen from God’s intent?

Today, I want to briefly study Rebekah. Rebekah is often remembered as a controlling, manipulative and deceiving woman. She was, but what’s the rest of the story?

Let’s begin with the event that commonly defines Rebekah. Isaac and Rebekah were married and had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Isaac favored the first-born, Esau. Rebekah favored Jacob. Genesis 27 records that when Isaac grew old, it was time for him to bless his oldest son. He commanded Esau to hunt for some wild game and to cook it the way he liked it, then he would bless him. Rebekah overheard the conversation and told Jacob to pretend that he was Esau so

that he could be blessed. Rebekah cooked some goat meat and disguised it to taste like game. She put Esau's clothes on Jacob. Jacob succeeded in deceiving his father into giving him the blessing.

Is there any question that Rebekah was manipulative and deceptive? Didn't she try to control the situation? Didn't she encourage Jacob to lie to his father?

Why did Rebekah do this? I certainly cannot praise Rebekah for doing wrong, but she did not have many options. She was trapped in an unfair system.

Isaac and Rebekah's marriage was not the equal partnership that God willed in the garden when God gave Adam and Eve equal dominion and rule over the earth. Their marriage was not two people complementing and completing one another as one flesh. Isaac was boss. Rebekah was far less. Rebekah was never an equal partner. In Isaac's and Rebekah's time, marriage degenerated into an arrangement among families. "You can have my daughter if you give me two donkeys, ten goats and fourteen baskets of grain." In her male-dominated world, Rebekah could not choose her own husband.

When Isaac met Rebekah, the Bible tells us that he loved her. Was his love a sacrificial, Christ-like love between equals? You be the judge.

Isaac and Rebekah moved to Gerar. Look at Genesis 26:7-9. "When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, 'She is my sister,' because he was afraid to state, 'She is my wife.' He thought, 'The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful.' When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. So Abimelech summoned Isaac and asked, 'She is really your wife! Why did you say, "She is my sister"?' Isaac answered him, 'Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her.'"

Isaac sacrificed the dignity of his wife to spare his own life. He cared less about his marriage than he did about his safety. It didn't matter what happened to Rebekah. What mattered was himself. Rebekah had no recourse. She had to do what Isaac said. Isaac was in charge. Isaac believed in and practiced male dominance. He bought into the curse of the fall. He believed he was more important than his wife. He believed he should rule over her.

This is a far cry from the equal-partnership marriage that God planned for humanity at creation. Rebekah was a lesser partner in an unequal union. She also had a problem. She had important knowledge that either Isaac did not have or that he disregarded. Look at Genesis 25:21-25. Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. Both Isaac and Rebekah prayed. Isaac prayed that Rebekah would bear children. Rebekah prayed

to understand why her twins were in such conflict even in the womb.

God spoke directly to Rebekah. God speaks to men and to women. In this case, Rebekah understood God's purposes. Isaac did not. What was Rebekah to do? How could she convince her husband to bless Jacob when he favored Esau? She lived in a fallen, male-dominated world. Her husband was boss. He favored the manly, hunting Esau, who despised his spiritual birthright and sold it to his brother for a bowl of red stew. God favored Jacob. We do not know what happened behind closed doors. Either Rebekah told Isaac of God's plan to bless the younger and Isaac would not accept it; or Rebekah was too afraid to approach her husband to tell him what God told her. The result was the same-- Isaac was in control. God wanted to bless Jacob but Isaac intended to follow the traditions of men and bless his oldest son.

Rebekah resorted to deception in order to see God's will done. She was desperate, but she was wrong. Isaac was also wrong. He was not a husband who loved with sacrificial love. He did not treat his wife as an equal partner. Because of his domination, her godly voice was either unheard or unheeded. Isaac should have submitted to his wife. She heard the voice of God clearer than he did.

Are women sometimes manipulative, controlling and deceptive? Yes, and so are some men. Are men sometimes controlling, dominating and authoritarian? Yes, and so are some women. The war of the sexes is a battle for control. It is a selfish battle rooted in the sinfulness of the fall. God's will for men and women is that we love and respect one another. He intends that both genders value the godly counsel of the other. God speaks to men. He also speaks to women. God speaks through men. He also speaks through women. My wife, Susan, has saved me from many snares and bad decisions. I have done the same for her. May God give us grace never to treat our mates as anything less than He intended--equal partners.

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“Deborah”

October 6, 1996

Today we continue in our series “Women of the Faith.” We have already seen that when God created men and women, God created both in his image. God made males and females to complement and complete one another and gave both dominion over the earth. He gifted both to rule. When Adam and Eve sinned, all forms of evil entered our world. Slavery, war, racism and exploitation of women became commonplace. In recent years, women have made some progress. Less than a century ago, women did not have the right to vote in this country. Less than a century ago, it was unthinkable for a woman to be a senator, or a governor, or a general. Thank God for progress, but women remain second-class citizens in much of the world.

In 1980, according to the United Nations, women who represent roughly half the world's population did two-thirds of the world's work, earned one-tenth of the world's income, and

owned only one-hundredth of the world's property. Today, women nearly everywhere still suffer abuse and discrimination.

Centuries of curse-oriented prejudices are hard to change. Is it okay for women to own their own businesses? Is it okay for women to be doctors or lawyers? Is it okay for women to be university presidents? Is it okay for women to have positions of leadership in the government or in the church? Can women be leaders in the military?

There is only one place to go for answers and that is to God's Word. Is it God's view that women should not lead men? Is it God's view that women should not lead in matters of government or military or religion?

Look with me in your Bibles please to Judges 4. "After Ehud died, the Israelites once again did evil in the eyes of the LORD. So the LORD sold them into the hands of Jabin, a king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor."

Susan and I have been to Hazor. It was a key city in Galilee located on a main road. Because of Hazor's location, Jabin was able to cruelly oppress the Israelites for twenty years. King Jabin's commander was a tough man named Sisera. Sisera commanded thousands of troops with iron weapons and he also had nine hundred iron chariots. Israel had only bronze weapons and no chariots. The wheels of Sisera's chariots had scythes attached to their axles. They cut through foot soldiers like cheese shredders.

Pick up reading again at verse 4. "Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided."

Did you catch that? Israel's leader was a woman. She was married. She was a judge who held court. She had such wisdom that she settled people's disputes. What were her qualifications? The text does not say that she had university degrees. She was not a princess who came into her position by heredity. She was not elected by popular vote. She was a prophetess. That means that she was so close to God that God spoke to her and she spoke God's words to others. Deborah was an inspired preacher. God himself chose Deborah to lead. God gifted her to judge legal disputes. He gifted her to preach his word so that she became the religious leader of her nation.

There are many today that say women cannot lead men. They quote a few texts from Paul's letters. Those texts are difficult to interpret and must not be carried beyond their limited context. We'll study those texts in later sermons. Essentially, they base their views on centuries of prejudice and tradition that are rooted not in the plan of God but in the results of humanity's sin. Don't miss the importance of this text. God is not bound by human prejudices and tradition. God himself chose this woman to deliver his people. A leader in government and religion, Deborah was also the commander-in-chief of God's armed forces. Let's pick up reading at verse 6. She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead the way to Mount Tabor. I will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.'" Barak said to her, "If

you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go." "Very well," Deborah said, "I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours, for the LORD will hand Sisera over to a woman."

Barak knew that Deborah was wise and walked with God. He knew that the Canaanites had him outnumbered and had superior weapons. He would not go into battle unless Deborah was by his side. He would obey her orders but he was afraid to fight without her. She was his inspiration. She was his leader.

Deborah gave the command for Barak to move his troops into battle. God gave them a total victory. The Kishon river was swollen so the chariots got bogged down in the mud. Only one Canaanite soldier survived--Sisera, the commander. He escaped on foot.

Pick up reading at verse 17.

Sisera, however, fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there were friendly relations between Jabin king of Hazor and the clan of Heber the Kenite. Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come, my lord, come right in. Don't be afraid." So he entered her tent, and she put a covering over him. "I'm thirsty," he said. "Please give me some water." She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up. "Stand in the doorway of the tent," he told her. "If someone comes by and asks you, 'Is anyone here?' say 'No.'" But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died. Barak came by in pursuit of Sisera, and Jael went out to meet him. "Come," she said, "I will show you the man you're looking for." So he went in with her, and there lay Sisera with the tent peg through his temple--dead.

This is a troubling account. Jael violated numerous customs. She was supposed to be Sisera's friend. She took him into her tent. No man was allowed in a woman's tent. Sisera would be safe there, because no man would search her tent. Once anyone was in someone's home the host was bound to offer protection and hospitality. Jael treated Sisera kindly. She built his trust. She gave him milk when water would do. She covered him up. She stood sentry at the door of the tent and then she murdered him while he was sleeping. Jael did wrong, yet Israel remembers her as a hero because she killed the evil enemy of her people.

Any number of men could have struck Sisera down yet it was a woman who killed him, just as Deborah prophesied to Barak. Sisera was defeated at the hands of women. Deborah was commander-in-chief, and Jael was the person who finished him off. God can use men and women as he pleases. If he wants women to lead, they can lead. If he wants women to preach, they can preach. If he wants women to win the victory, they'll win the victory. God is God. Our traditions and prejudices are not sacred.

Now some may protest, Deborah was an exceptional case. Indeed she was! Her gifts were so great and her courage was so remarkable that she rose above the prejudices of her time to do God's will. She won a great victory and Israel enjoyed forty years of peace under her rule. God himself chose Deborah as prophetess, as religious leader, as government leader, and as military leader. God has chosen numerous women over the centuries. The Lord has a higher view of women than society does.

In Jesus' time, Jesus taught women when it was unfashionable to teach women. He encouraged women to follow him as his disciples. It was women disciples who were last at the cross and the first to witness and proclaim the resurrection. It was a woman, the Virgin Mary, who bore the child, Jesus, in her womb. It was a woman, Priscilla who helped teach the great preacher Apollos. Despite prejudice and tradition, God has repeatedly called and equipped women to great responsibility and leadership. Is God still calling women to such important tasks today? Since God does not change, what do you think?

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“Proverbs 31 Woman”

October 13, 1996

What makes a woman valuable? Some would answer physical beauty. Women are expected to have perfect figures, clear skin and gorgeous hair. The idea that the value of a woman rests in her appearance is deeply ingrained in our society. It starts in childhood.

Two Little Leaguers were taking a rest between innings. Suddenly, one of them spotted an extremely pretty little girl sitting in the front row of the bleachers. “Wow!” he exclaimed. “When I stop hating girls, she’s the one I’d like to stop hating first.”

It is hard to overestimate the value that our society places upon the physical attractiveness of women but the Bible teaches that the value of a woman is found in her character. Turn in your Bibles please to Proverbs 31:10-31.

A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life. She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls. She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard. She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night. In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers. She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy. When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet. She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple. Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes. She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: “Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.” Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

This detailed description of a virtuous woman does not mention her appearance. It is the quality

of her character that matters.

A newspaper describes a small boy who went to the lingerie department of a store to purchase a gift for his mother. Bashfully, he told the clerk that he wanted to buy a slip for his mom, but he didn't know her size. The lady explained that it would help if he could describe her--was she thin, fat, short, tall, or what? "Well," replied the youngster, "she's just about perfect." So the clerk sent him home with a size 34. The news article followed up by reporting that a few days later the mother came to the store to exchange the gift. It was too small. She needed a size 52. This little fellow saw her loving character not her slip size.

The Proverbs 31 woman has tremendous character. She is noble, trustworthy, industrious, wise, resourceful, generous, strong, dignified and godly. In addition to the quality of her character, God gifted her with tremendous spiritual gifts and talents. She was a wife, a mother, a manufacturer, an importer, a manager, a realtor, a farmer, a seamstress, and a merchant. No wonder her husband said she was worth much more than rubies!

The incredible giftedness of this woman understandably often bothers women. Good, godly women sometimes compare themselves to this multi-talented woman and feel like nothings.

Let me quickly attempt to dispel those negative feelings.

First, it is never wise to compare our abilities to others. God has made us each unique. We all live in different circumstances. This woman was the wife of a respected town elder. She had enough wealth to have household servants. She was gifted far beyond the average woman. Comparison either makes us envious or boastful. Both are unhealthy.

Second, We must never forget that our true worth is not in our talents but in the quality of our character. Verse 30 says: "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." Godly character is what matters in life. Godly character makes a woman truly attractive. An American traveling in India met an elderly, white haired lady of unusual dignity and charm. She was a Christian who had acquired the shining quality of spiritual maturity. The visitor looked at her wrinkled, smiling face, and said "believe me, you are truly beautiful!" "Well, I ought to be," she replied sweetly, "I've had seventy-four years to let the Lord work on me!"

True beauty comes from the inside. The Proverbs 31 woman teaches us in many ways. She shows us what is inside is what matters. Godly character is worth more than physical beauty.

She shows us that God gives tremendous spiritual gifts and talents to women as well as men. This woman could run several businesses for a profit and be a godly wife and mother. This woman was praised for fully using her many talents both inside and outside the home.

She shows us how important a good wife is to the success and happiness of a man. Verse 12 says: "She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life." A Czech proverb says: "Do not choose your wife at a dance, but in the field among the harvesters." A good wife is a fabulous blessing. I should know. I have one.

She shows us how important a godly mother is to her children. Verse 20 says: “Her children arise and call her blessed, her husband also, and he praises her.” There is no way to overemphasize the influence of a godly mother on her children.

Finally, verse 31 shows, us that godly woman should be rewarded and appreciated. Verse 31 says: “Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise a the city gate.” What is the value of a woman? Just in terms of her household chores she is worth big bucks.

In a column in the *Detroit Free Press*, Bob Greene cited a study by attorney Michael Minton on the monetary value of a wife’s services in the home. First he listed the various functions she performs. They included-- chauffeur, gardener, family counselor, maintenance worker, cleaning woman, housekeeper, cook, errand runner, bookkeeper, budget manager, interior decorator, caterer, dietitian, secretary, and public relation woman/hostess. Using this impressive list of household duties, Minton figured the dollar value of a housewife’s work in 1981’s labor market. He came up with the amount of \$785.07 a week. That’s \$40,823.64 a year. That amount would be higher today.

Obviously a godly woman has value for all the wonderful things she does, but far more, a godly woman has value for all the wonderful things she is. A Christian woman was a busy housewife and mother, working hard to meet the needs of her family. She carried several key responsibilities in the church. And she was working part-time. During a time when her schedule was particularly heavy, she began to feel depressed. She felt taken for granted by everyone. Her children expected clean clothes and tasty meals. Her husband was busy. At work, no one paid any attention to her. The people at church seemed unappreciative. Then she found a bouquet of flowers at her door. The note said simply, “We just wanted you to know how much we appreciate you. You’re a wonderful wife and mother.” It was signed, “Your husband and children.” She sat down on the floor and wept. And with her tears went her depression.

Women, you have tremendous value. It does not matter if you are not physically pretty. What matters is that you allow the spirit of Jesus Christ to give you a godly character. It does not matter if you have many spiritual gifts or few. What matters is that you love God, and use all the gifts God has given you for his glory.

Men, let’s appreciate and praise the women in our lives. Let’s encourage our wives, mothers, sisters and daughters to use their spiritual gifts and talents wherever God calls them. Let’s not take our wives for granted. A wife of noble character is worth far more than rubies.

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“Esther”

October 20, 1996

About 2500 years ago, a brave young woman saved her nation. Her Hebrew name was Haddasah which means “myrtle,” but we know her by her Persian name, Esther. The book of Esther is a tale of exploitation, intrigue and deliverance.

Esther’s story begins with a drunken king named Xerxes. For 180 days he showed off the wealth and splendor of his kingdom. At the end of his boastful display he began a great banquet. The alcohol flowed freely. On the seventh day of feasting and drinking, when Xerxes was in high spirits, he commanded that his Queen, a beautiful woman named Vashti, be brought before him wearing her royal crown so that he could show her off like all the other wealth of his kingdom. Vashti refused. She would not be treated like a piece of meat which men would ogle and lust.

This was a radical act of rebellion. Xerxes was a great king. He was not accustomed to anyone disobeying him, especially a woman. Vashti was queen, but in Persian society women had few rights. The king was furious and consulted his advisors to decide what to do. Look at Esther 1:16-22 to find what the experts advised.

Then Memucan replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, “Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes. For the queen’s conduct will become known to all the women, and so they will despise their husbands and say, ‘King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.’ This very day the Persian and Median women of the nobility who have heard about the queen’s conduct will respond to all the king’s nobles in the same way. There will be no end of disrespect and discord. Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes. Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she. Then when the king’s edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest.” The king and his nobles were pleased with this advice, so the king did as Memucan proposed. He sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language, proclaiming in each people’s tongue that every man should be ruler over his own household.

Vashti challenged the sinful male-dominated system of her time. She wasn’t a Jew. She probably did not know that God created men and women and gave them equal dominion over the earth. She probably did not know that she was created in God’s image. She probably did not know that men and women were made by God to complement and complete one another as equal partners in marriage. She probably did not know that male dominance began with sin. All that she knew was that she was a living breathing person, with a brain, with feelings and she should not be treated like property, like the king’s favorite plaything.

King Xerxes and his advisors were afraid that women would rise up from their exploited position. They were in no mood to let women make any decisions (Esther 1:19-22). Men ruling women, though rooted in sin, was good for men.

Xerxes deposed Vashti from the throne and began searching for another wife. He called together all the beautiful virgins of the kingdom. The exploitation of women continued. He brought these young girls to the capital city. What mattered was not their minds, or their souls, or their

personalities or their likes or their dislikes. The only thing that mattered was beauty. Each woman was given one year of beauty treatments. Then one by one they were brought to the palace to spend the night with the king. All of these young virgins but the one who was chosen to be the king's new queen would be used and forgotten.

Esther was an orphan who was adopted by her cousin Mordecai. Mordecai raised her as his own daughter. She was very beautiful and was selected as the king's new queen. In one respect, this was a great honor, but how would you feel to be taken from your home simply because of your beauty? How would you feel to be given a one-night tryout where you would be accepted or rejected. Once accepted, how would you feel to be in a relationship with a man who controls your total life? To be under the domination of a man, who in a drunken state commanded his first wife to parade her beauty in front of all to see and divorced her when she attempted to maintain her dignity? Since the fall of humanity, women in many societies have been treated with similar injustice and unkindness.

I said at the beginning that Esther's story is a story of exploitation, intrigue and deliverance. The exploitation is clear. How about the intrigue? The intrigue began at the start because Esther concealed her national and religious identity. King Xerxes did not know that Esther was a Jew, and he did not know that Mordecai, her cousin, had raised her.

Mordecai uncovered a plot against the king. He reported the plot to Esther. Esther reported it to the king. The king recorded in his records that Mordecai had saved his skin.

At the same time, the second-in-command behind the king was a pride-filled man named Haman. Haman commanded all the people to bow down to him. Everyone did except Mordecai. Mordecai, as a godly Jew, would bow down only to God. Haman was so angry that he built a gallows seventy- five feet high for Mordecai and hatched a plot to have all the Jews in the kingdom exterminated.

When Mordecai learned of Haman's plot to wipe out the Jews he approached Esther and asked her to talk to the king. Mordecai was asking Esther to risk her life. The king's law was that anyone who approached him unsummoned would be put to death unless the king held out his gold scepter. Not even a queen could approach without risking her life. The king had a huge harem. He had many women and likely more than one queen. It had been more than a month since the king had called for Esther.

Look at Esther's response to Mordecai in Esther 4:16.

Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.

What do we see about this young woman of faith? Esther believed in fasting and prayer. She was counting on God to help her. She loved her people so much that she was willing to risk her life. She was a brave, godly patriot who defined herself when she said: "And if I perish, I perish."

Esther used her God-given intelligence to devise a plan. The plan would only work if God did his part. Esther approached the king with fear. He invited her to come forward. WHEW! She wasn't

going to die so she asked the king for a banquet the next day for the King, herself, and the evil Haman.

That night the king could not sleep so he read through his book of chronicles. There he found that Mordecai had reported the two men who had plotted to kill him. Mordecai had never been thanked so the king decided to honor him. (Isn't it great the way God comes through when needed?)

The next day at the banquet, the king asked Haman, "How should the king honor a man that he wishes to honor?" Thinking the king was talking about him, Haman answered, "Give him a royal robe and crown and march him on the king's horse through the streets proclaiming: 'This is what is done for the man the king desires to honor.'"

The king loved the idea and told Haman to so honor Mordecai the Jew. Haman was grief stricken. He hated Mordecai.

Later at the dinner, Esther told King Xerxes that Haman had built a gallows on which to hang Mordecai. She also told how Haman had plotted to wipe out her people. The king left the room, and Haman begged Esther for his life. He was draped over her when the king walked back in the room. The king was furious at Haman for all that he had done and especially now that it appeared he was making advances on his queen. He hung Haman on his own gallows and raised Mordecai up to Haman's place. He also decreed that the Jews could defend themselves against their enemies. The Jews have celebrated their deliverance ever since in the festival of Purim.

Against all odds, a young woman dragged away from home against her will became part of the king's harem and became his queen. This godly young woman devised a plan and risked her life to approach the king to save the lives of her people.

Esther moved from the position of being an exploited young girl to the deliverer of the Jews. She rose above the sinful prejudices of her time to plead for the lives of her people. She dared to approach the king, face to face, person to person. She dared to speak and to be taken seriously. She dared to be more than just a pretty face. She risked her life to do God's will. Esther is a great example of faith, ingenuity, and courage. Imagine what could be accomplished in the kingdom of Jesus Christ if more of us lived like Esther. Imagine what could be accomplished in the name of Jesus if more men and women would say as Esther said, "I'll do what God wills and 'If I perish, I perish.'" May God help us to live like Esther.

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"The Woman at the Well"--John 4

October 27, 1996

Jesus Christ is the central person in all of history. He is God in the flesh. He is the king of kings

and Lord of Lords. He is the way, the truth and the life.

As the Son of God, Jesus' example and teaching on any subject are the final word. The word of the Lord Jesus Christ is worth more than all the experts in all the books, in all the libraries of all the world.

When Jesus came into this fallen world, he came to an earth marred by centuries of sin. He came to an earth torn by war, disease, racism and the subjugation of women. What was Jesus' attitude toward the effects of sin? He preached a gospel of love and peace. He healed diseases. He treated women, people of different races, and sinners with dignity and respect.

Turn in your Bibles please to John 4:4.

Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Let's stop there for a moment. Jesus met a Samaritan woman at noon by a well and talked. So what? This conversation shows us the heart of God's son toward three groups of people-- Samaritans, women, and sinners.

The woman was a Samaritan. Jews and Samaritans did not associate with one another. The Samaritans were a mixed race. They were a blend of the northern tribes of Israel, Assyrian, and other pagan elements. They worshiped on Mount Gerizim until the Jews destroyed their temple about two hundred years before Jesus. The hatred ran deep for centuries. When Jesus traveled through Samaria and talked with a Samaritan, and drank from a Samaritan well, it was like violating American segregation laws in the 1950s. Jesus' behavior was scandalous.

His conversation in a public place with a woman was even more scandalous. Centuries of patriarchal, curse-oriented teaching about women had made them second class. One rabbi of Jesus' time wrote: "Let no one converse with a woman in the street, not even his own wife." Women were viewed as inferior and incapable of understanding spiritual things. Another rabbi wrote: "Rather burn the sayings of the law than teach them to women."

Jesus was a Jewish male, the product of his racist, patriarchal culture, but he also came from heavenly glory where God's will is done. He challenged his society when he talked with this Samaritan woman. He had a heavenly view. Jesus did not see a person of another race. He did not see a person of an inferior gender. He saw a lost person who needed to come home. In Jesus' day, the Pharisees avoided sinners. They would not eat or drink with them. The Pharisees looked down on sinners with a sick religious pride.

Jesus publicly talked to a sinner. Women normally drew their water at morning and evening. This woman was drawing her water at noon, in the heat of the day. Her immoral life separated her from the decent women of her community, yet Jesus cared for her anyway. Jesus and this immoral Samaritan woman had a lengthy theological discussion about living water, and then he

got personal.

Look down to John 4: 16-19.

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet."

Jesus knew this woman was a Samaritan. He knew that she was a female. He knew that she was an adulteress and a fornicator, yet he still talked with her. He valued her. He respected her. They talked some more about theological issues.

Now skip down to verse 25.

The woman said, "I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he." Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?" Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

Now skip down to verse 39.

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

There are some today that say women should be silent. They should not give testimonies. They should not teach or preach. Is that the way that Jesus Christ, the king of kings and Lord of Lords treated this woman? Even in Samaria, this woman had no credibility as a person because she was a woman. Even worse, she had no credibility because she was a sinful woman, yet God used her.

Who was the first preacher to the Samaritans? It was this woman. Jesus made no attempt to stop her ministry. He built on what she did. Did God bless her message? Verse 39 says : "Many of the Samaritans believed in him because of the woman's testimony." She brought others to meet Jesus. When they met him, they also believed.

God loves people of all races and wants to save them and use them. Jesus was no racist and there is no room for racism among the people of God. God loves women and wants to use them to further his kingdom. There is no room for sexism among the people of God. God loves sinners and wants to save them from their sins. Jesus alone was perfect, yet he showed kindness to this immoral woman. There is no room for a holier-than-thou attitude among the people of God.

If you are living for yourself, doing your own thing, receive Jesus as your savior. He loves you and wants to transform your life. If you are a racist or a sexist or a holier-than-thou legalist, allow Jesus' example and values to be yours. As I said at the beginning: "As the Son of God, Jesus' example and teaching on any subject is the final word. The word of the Lord Jesus Christ is worth more than all the experts, in all the books, in all the libraries of all the world." Serve Jesus Christ as Lord.

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“Jesus and Women”

November 17, 1996

When I was a child, my Sunday School teachers told Bible stories using little posters. The posters showed Jesus with his disciples preaching and working miracles around Galilee and Jerusalem. The disciples were men who wore robes and had long hair and beards.

A detailed reading of the gospels paints a more varied picture. Some of Jesus’ disciples were women. Jesus’ treatment of women was revolutionary.

Look with me in your Bibles please to Luke 8:1-3.

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

Jesus traveled with women disciples. This was scandalous in his time. You remember a few weeks ago, when I spoke of the woman at the well being the first preacher to the Samaritans, I quoted a rabbi who said: “Rather burn the sayings of the law than teach them to women.” I also quoted another rabbi who wrote: “Let no one converse with a woman in the street, not even his own wife.” Women were second-class citizens to the rabbis. Jesus loved women, taught them, and healed their diseases. Jesus talked with women in the streets and everywhere he went. Jesus had female disciples. This passage mentions Mary Magdalene. Jesus set her free from seven demons. This dear disciple of the Lord was present at the cross when the male disciples fled in terror. She was the first person to see the risen Christ and to proclaim the good news that he was alive. Joanna was married to Cuza who was the manager of King Herod’s household. Like the male disciples, Joanna left her home behind and traveled with the Lord.

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, the mother of the sons of Zebedee, Mary the mother of the Lord, and Matthew 27:55 says, “many other women” were with Jesus at the cross. At the Resurrection, there was Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, and Luke 24:10 says, “others” who went to anoint Jesus’ body. Susanna and many other women also traveled with the Lord. These faithful women did more than just listen. Luke 8:3 says they helped to financially support Jesus’ ministry. These women were partners in the Lord’s work. They traveled with him. They gave financial support. They did not abandon him at the cross. They anointed his body after burial. Jesus loved women and valued their service.

Jesus’ treatment of women continually challenged the Jewish male prejudices of his time. You remember the story of Mary and Martha. Look in your Bibles please to Luke 10:38-42.

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha

opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

The rabbis would not teach women. Jesus taught Mary. Martha performed the traditional role of hostess. She did women's work. Mary sat at Jesus' feet and discussed ideas with Jesus. That was a man's place. What Martha did was good. What Mary did was better. Jesus made it clear that discipleship was not only for men but also for women.

Mary and Martha were sisters of Lazarus. The scriptures tell us all three of them became good friends of Jesus. Jesus had women disciples and friends in a time when other religious leaders treated women as second class.

Jesus' example even challenged the rabbinical teaching that a woman was unclean during her period. This teaching was rooted in Levitical ceremonial laws.

Look at Leviticus 15:19.

When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening.

Leviticus 15:25 adds:

When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period.

To say that a woman was unclean was to say that she was ceremonially or morally impure. The Hebrew word was *Taw me* and it meant not fit to enter into the presence of God. It was mainly the uncleanness of menstruation which prevented women from becoming priests in the temple. It was also the fear of being contaminated that kept many rabbis from teaching women. You remember in cursing Eve, God said a woman's pain in childbirth would increase. Because of the curse, a normal biological function became a monthly reminder of the fall. Women were impure during their periods. Leviticus is full of such purity laws for men, women and even animals. These laws were rooted in the curse of sin after the fall. The priests knew that God was holy while his creation was not. The law made a separation between a holy God and his sinful creatures. What was Jesus' attitude, as the Son of God, about a woman's bleeding and fitness to be in his presence?

Look at Matthew 9:20-22.

Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed." Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that moment.

Did Jesus become unclean as the law said? If so, how could he have been the perfect sacrifice for our sins? Did he condemn the woman for touching him? Jesus went against centuries of curse-oriented teaching and praised this woman's faith. Jesus was not made unclean. This woman was made clean. Jesus also touched lepers and corpses. He made the lepers well and brought the dead

to life. Jesus brought a revolution for women, lepers and corpses.

Men of Jesus' time viewed women as inferior. Women were treated as second-class citizens. They had few legal rights. They were prevented, in large measure, from mingling with men and exercising their spiritual gifts. Normal biological functions made women unclean. Jesus chose women as friends. He taught women as his disciples. He accepted women's generosity for his ministry. He stayed at Martha's house. He re-interpreted the ancient purity laws. Jesus Christ restored the God-given dignity and worth to women.

For centuries, Judaism was a male-dominated faith. Likewise, for centuries, generations of Christian theologians have taught the curse of sin and its subjugation of women as though it was the original plan of God. Jesus saw women through different eyes. He knew that men and women were both created in his image and were given equal authority over the earth. He knew that both had souls and needed his loving ministry. He knew that both had spiritual gifts that could be used in his service. The Christian faith, the religion built upon Jesus Christ, is not a male faith. It is a faith for all. May God help us, men and women alike, to be his disciples.

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“God’s Prophetesses”

December 1, 1996

Prophets fascinate people! Many believe that prophets are people who foretell the future. That is sometimes true. More often, prophets simply preach in God's name and with his authority. Their messages are given by God to correct moral and religious abuses. The word prophet comes from the Hebrew word *nabi* which means literally, “to bubble forth like a fountain.” A prophet is a person who bubbles forth with God's word, a person who speaks for God. In 1 Corinthians 14:1, Paul showed that prophecy is one of the most important spiritual gifts when he said: “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.”

When we think of God's prophets we usually remember male preachers like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Moses. We tend not to think of women as prophets. In fact, there are some Bible teachers today who cling to old traditions rooted in the sinful fall of humanity. They will not permit women to preach. They base their case on a few passages in Paul's letters. They view the rest of the Bible through anti-woman filters. Michael Hodgin says, “Whenever we interpret Scripture, we tend to lean toward our own bias. It's like the story of the driver of a tour bus in Nashville, Tennessee. The driver was pointing out the sites of the Civil War Battle of Nashville. He said, ‘Right over here a small group of Confederate soldiers held off a whole Yankee brigade.’ A little further along, he said, ‘Over there, a young Confederate boy, all by himself held off a Yankee platoon.’ This went on and on until finally a member of the tour group asked, ‘Didn't the Yankees win anything in the Battle of Nashville?’ “The bus driver replied, ‘Not while I'm the driver of this bus, they didn't!’”

Let's take an unbiased look at the role of women in God's word. Did God call women to preach? In the Old and New Testaments, God called women as well as men, to be prophets. He entrusted women with this important spiritual gift Exodus 15:20 informs us that not only was Moses a prophet, but his sister, Miriam, was a prophet as well.

Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing.

Micah 6:14 includes Miriam as being sent by God with Moses and Aaron. God chose to speak through both Moses and Miriam.

You remember several weeks ago, we looked at Deborah. Judges 4:4 describes Deborah as a prophetess, who led Israel. Deborah was the religious, judicial and military leader of Israel. Later, when Josiah, one of Judah's most godly kings, needed to seek God, 2 Kings 22:14-16 says he sent his high priest to consult the woman prophetess, Huldah.

Nehemiah 6:14 describes prophets who tried to intimidate Nehemiah in his task of rebuilding Jerusalem. Among these prophets was a woman named Noadiah. Nehemiah wrote: Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, because of what they have done; remember also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who have been trying to intimidate me. Isaiah 8:3 describes a prophetess who gave birth to a son. In the Old Testament there are many more male prophets than female, but the fact remains, despite a patriarchal society that downplayed the value of women, God still called women to preach his word.

When Jesus was born, his parents took him to be dedicated at the temple. Luke 2:36-38 records: There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. God chose this faithful, godly woman to prophesy over Jesus at his dedication.

The early church began with women utilizing their spiritual gifts. Mary Magdalene was the first person to declare that Jesus was risen. The first resurrection preacher was a woman. Later, after Jesus ascended, the disciples waited together in an upper room to receive the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:14-15 recorded that the disciples were not alone. "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty)." One hundred and twenty men and women joined together constantly in prayer, awaiting the promised Holy Spirit. After they were filled with the Holy Spirit and begin to speak in unknown languages some onlookers accused the disciples of being drunk. Look at Peter's reply in Acts 2:15.

These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."

This passage plainly teaches that it is God's pleasure to pour out his spirit on men and women and to make them his preachers.

Acts 21:8-9 records the ministry of four of these women preachers.

Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

I hope that it is becoming clear that God calls both men and women to preach his word. We have been blessed in the Church of God with some excellent women preachers. My friend Jeanette Flynn is the Executive Director of Church and Ministry Service in Anderson. She is a godly person with a woman's heart and the voice of a prophet. Lori Solierno is a young woman who God is using powerfully all over the country. She is an exuberant preacher of God's word. Many felt that she preached the most inspired and anointed message at Anderson camp meeting in 1996. Our own Chapel Hill Church of God was pastored by Flora Heinzman. Iva Jarvis stayed with her and knew her well.

Who could overstate the impact of women ministers over the years, Hannah Whitall Smith, Mother Theresa, Dot Worth, Lillie McCutcheon, Catherine Booth, and thousands of others?

God's word says in these last days:

I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

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“Women Leaders in the Early Church”

December 8, 1996

These are controversial times for women leaders. Nationally, women leaders are making good progress. *U.S News and World Report* printed the results of a poll: The question was: “Would the nation be governed better if more women were in elected positions?” In 1984, 28% said yes. That number grew to 61% by 1992. Nowhere is the question of female leadership more controversial than in the church.

A survey of over 700 readers of *Christianity Today* revealed that more than 80% would allow women to teach adult men. Seventy percent think women should be permitted to be deacons and 60% would allow women to be ordained. Seventy-five percent of evangelical Christians favor the ordination of women.

On the other side of the controversy, three-fourths of the delegates to a recent world conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church voted to exclude women from ordination. The Roman Catholic hierarchy are even stronger against the ordination of women.

I cannot quiet the controversy about women in ministry with this one sermon, or even with the whole series that I'm preaching, but it is legitimate to ask were there any female leaders in the early church?

Let's dig a little. The first thing we discover is that the New Testament Church was pretty much led by men. What else would we expect? Christians lived in much the same world as the Jews. They grew up in the same male-dominated patriarchal culture. It takes a long time to change deep-seated cultural biases. In Galatians 3:28 the Apostle Paul wrote: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This is a tremendous statement of Christian equality and unity that Paul, himself, did not fully grasp in his lifetime. The early church struggled for decades with the distinctions between Jew and Greek. Who would be in charge? Would Greeks have to become Jews to be saved? Would Jews and Greeks be equal? Could Greeks lead in the church? Paul made good progress on this issue. He was a strong advocate for the equality of the Greeks. Concerning the inequality of slaves and free, Paul made some progress. He still told slaves to obey their earthly masters. He made no effort to abolish slavery, yet he also was able to treat the runaway slave, Onesimus, as a brother. The inequality between slave and free was not settled in the United States until the Civil War and the subsequent amendments to the Constitution. Concerning the inequities between male and female, Paul also made some progress. On the one hand he clung to the patriarchal society that was part of his upbringing and training as a rabbi. On the other hand, in several ways he contradicted some of his own more extreme positions against women in leadership. Paul did not fully settle these issues in his lifetime, and the inequality between male and female is not fully settled today. Cultural prejudices and traditions die hard. We would no more expect to see many women leaders in the early church than we would expect to see Greeks among the original twelve apostles or slaves in leadership. In the first century, there was not full equality between slaves and free, nor was there full equality between males and females. In this context, women leaders could not be common. Despite these cultural inequities, were there any female leaders in the early church? The answer is yes.

Look with me in your Bibles please to Acts 16:14-15.

One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

The first convert in Asia was a woman. The first church in Asia met in Lydia's house. Lydia was not an apostle but she was a church leader.

Priscilla was a woman leader with a higher profile. Priscilla, with her husband, Aquila, is mentioned seven times in the New Testament. Five of those seven times, Priscilla is mentioned first. In a patriarchal culture, that is remarkable. It shows that Priscilla was a higher profile leader than her husband. Priscilla ministered side by side with Paul. She and her husband traveled with him. In Romans 16:3, Paul said to "greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus." This woman was a fellow-worker of Paul's, worthy of being greeted by name.

When the great orator, Apollos, began preaching, it was Priscilla and Aquila who taught him more about the Lord. Look at Acts 18:26. "Apollos began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately." Some Bible teachers quote Paul, saying that a woman cannot teach a man; yet it is clear that both Priscilla and Aquila, Paul's fellow workers, taught Apollos.

A patriarchal cultural bias prevents some from seeing how God used women in the Bible. Cultural bias can even influence Bible translators. Romans 16:1 mentions Phoebe. We do not know much about Phoebe. In Romans 16:1 Paul said: "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea." That word "servant" may mean simply "one who serves" but it is the same word that is translated in other places in the New Testament as "deacon." Deacons were church leaders. This selection of "servant" over "deacon" may be a case of gender bias in translation. One can only wonder, if Phoebe's name were Stephen or some other male name, would the Greek word be translated as "servant" or as "deacon"? Phoebe was likely a deacon in the Cenchrean church. Paul had no need to commend a person who merely cleared tables or cooked meals. He likely commended her for her leadership as a deacon.

Another case of translator's bias is the case of Junia. Look at Romans 16:7 please. The King James Version describes a female person named Junia. The NIV describes a male person named Junias. The NIV reads: "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." Andronicus and Junia were apostles of the Lord. Many male commentators say that the name translated as Junia or Junias can be male or female. The reality is that Junia was a common female name. Junias was not a common male name. The Greek form of the name is clearly feminine. All of our best Greek New Testament manuscripts show Junia in a feminine form. The early church leader Chrysostom stated that Junia was a female. I know of no basis in the manuscripts or in the construction of the Greek language to translate Junia as Junias. Why then, do commentators use the male name Junias? If they concede Junia was female, then they must concede there was a female apostle in the first century. The apostle was the highest leadership role in the church. To concede that Junia was an apostle violates centuries of teaching that prohibited women from being leaders.

Were there women leaders in the first century church? Not in the same numbers as men, yet the door was slowly opening for women as it was for Gentiles and slaves. Can women be leaders in the church today?

Women were created in God's image. God gave men and women dominion over the earth. God called Deborah to lead the entire nation. He called several other women to preach. Jesus taught women as his disciples. God filled women with the Holy Spirit and gave them the same spiritual gifts that he gave to men, including gifts of leadership. Some women were leaders in the early church. Since God has called some women all through the centuries to lead, why would he stop calling women to be leaders now?

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"A Virgin's Blessing"

December 22, 1996

There have been many remarkable women in history. Some have been brilliant. Some have been powerful. Some have extraordinary accomplishments, but one woman stands head and shoulders above all others-- Mary the mother of the Lord. Mary is the most deeply venerated woman of all time. Our Roman Catholic friends call her the Queen of the Universe. An increase in the number of purported sightings of the Virgin Mary has sent millions flocking to her shrines around the world. The Catholic church hierarchy remains skeptical of these miraculous visions, but the Vatican has officially certified seven sightings of Mary in the twentieth century. The annual attendance at Lourdes, France is 5.5 million. The influx of pilgrims to Knock, Ireland, where the Virgin allegedly appeared a century ago, swelled to the point that a new international airport was needed. Last year over a half a million visitors traveled to Mount St. Mary's near here at Emmitsburg, Maryland. Mount Saint Mary's is one of the oldest of the forty-three shrines to Mary in the United States.

Why the fascination with Mary? Much interest results from centuries of non-Biblical theology. Roman Catholics teach that Mary played a role in the redemption of the world through her suffering when Jesus was on the cross. They teach that Mary was not only a virgin, but that she was immaculate, morally pure, without original sin. They teach that when she died her body was assumed into heaven. They have encouraged the veneration of Mary to the point where she is virtually worshiped by some. Some Catholics say the Rosary and pray to her. Protestants have rightly reacted against these unbiblical notions, yet Mary is still the most blessed woman who has ever lived. Turn in your Bibles please to Luke 1:26-33.

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

Among all women who have ever lived, Mary is unique. She is the only virgin who ever conceived a child, and hers was not just any child. Mary bore in her womb, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. No other woman has been so highly favored and blessed by God. Listen to some of her words from Luke 1:46-49, And Mary said:

My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me--holy is his name.

God's choice of Mary is so typical. God said the humble will be exalted, and the exalted will be humbled. The Lord did not choose a rich and powerful person to bear His son. God did not seek a princess in a Judean palace. God sent an angel to the tiny village of Nazareth and chose a young, poor virgin with a good heart. God chose a simple peasant girl who loved him. Listen to Mary's response to the angel's message in Luke 1:38, "I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said." No wonder Mary was highly favored by God. Mary's greatness is not found in centuries of theological myth. Her greatness is not found in her great intellect or accomplishments. Her greatness is in her simple submission to God. Her greatness is in her holy heart. Her greatness was in gladly receiving a gift. She was willing to bear God's son.

I entitled this message “A Virgin’s Blessing.” This title has multiple meanings. Mary was blessed to bear the son of God. She is blessed to this day by all who understand the rich privilege which she enjoyed. She was also blessed that her child was called Jesus, which means “God is Savior.” Mary had the special blessing of bearing her own savior.

The Christian Reader tells about a doctor who was treating a young woman dying from tuberculosis: “Every day her condition grew worse, yet she clung to life. Toward the end of February, she became nauseous. The doctor was stumped. A senior medical consultant asked him if she could be pregnant. “To everyone’s astonishment it was true.

A chest X-ray showed the growth of the tuberculosis cavity had stopped. The reason? Her diaphragm was pushing up against her diseased lung to make room for the child she bore. The child saved her.”

The child whom Mary bore blessed her own soul by saving her. Jesus also blesses the whole world because he is our savior. The Virgin’s greatest blessing is not what God did for her but what God did through her. Mary gave birth to our savior. Mary is not the Queen of the Universe, but she was uniquely blessed and has brought a wondrous blessing to the world. She is the most important woman who ever lived, yet she is not the true focus of Christmas.

Lisa Wells Isenhower of Spartanburg, South Carolina wrote how her eight- year-old son, Rob, and her four-year-old son, Andrew, helped her set her porcelain manger scene on the coffee table. She wanted the children to arrange the figures so that they all looked posed like for a photograph. The children did as she instructed. When the manger was all set up, she left the room. Later, Lisa returned and saw that the manger scene had been re-arranged into a tight little circle. “Boys”, she called angrily, “Why did you change the manger scene?” “Because nobody could see Jesus!” Rob said. Lisa looked again at the scene. Her kids knew better than she did. In the middle of that tight cluster of people was Jesus. All eyes were on Him. That is the right focus. The shepherds heard the angel’s song. The wise men traveled a long way and brought wonderful gifts. Joseph took good care of his expectant Mary. Mary was highly favored as the woman who bore the son of God. Jesus is our savior. He is our hope. He is the reason for the season. This Christmas, let’s keep our eyes on Him.

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“Paul and Women”

January 5, 1997

Catherine Clark Kroeger, co-author of *I Suffer Not a Woman*, tells of a brilliant and creative psychologist who was a research director for a prestigious Minneapolis firm. Her research earned her national recognition. She found the Lord and started attending a Bible study which was taught by an energetic and forceful leader. It wasn’t long until he directed the group to study 1 Timothy 2:11-15. He insisted vehemently that women should never teach men nor be in a

position of authority over them. He said this new believer was out of the will of God and that for her to retain her job was a direct violation of God's word. The gifted woman was confused and dismayed. Sadly a similar story has been repeated over and over again. How many godly, capable women have been told that on the basis of God's word they cannot preach, they cannot give testimony, they cannot teach men, they cannot be authors, they cannot lead worship, they cannot be missionaries, they cannot pastor, they cannot serve on church boards, they cannot vote in church business meetings, they cannot be Sunday School superintendents, choir directors, worship leaders, song leaders, or work in any occupations where they supervise men?

It is a very serious matter when we disqualify fifty percent of God's children from so many important roles. Surely, there must be a very good reason! Did you know that women are disqualified from all of these positions largely on the basis of one verse? Did you know that the traditional anti-woman-in-leadership position rests largely upon one verb that is used only once in the entire Bible and that the one reference is in this verse? The verse is 1 Timothy 2:12. The NIV translates it as: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent." In this message, I hope to demonstrate that the traditional anti-woman-in-leadership interpretation of this verse is false because:

1. It is not consistent with God's treatment of women in the rest of the Bible.
2. It fails to adequately consider the larger Ephesian context in both translation and interpretation.

Look please in your Bibles to 1 Tim 2:11-15.

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing--if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety. Let's look at my first point. To interpret this passage as denying women the opportunity to teach men or to have authority over men plainly contradicts many other passages of scripture. Back on September 15, I began this sermon series on women of the faith. We have explored how, through the centuries, God has blessed and used numerous women in his kingdom. Miriam, Huldah, Anna, and others were preachers and prophets. Deborah led the whole nation of Israel. She was a religious, civil and military leader. The Bible plainly has allowed women to preach and have authority over men.

Paul himself allowed women to teach and respected them in leadership. He allowed Lydia to persuade to him to start the Philippian church at her house. He gave greetings to Phoebe the

deacon. He called Priscilla a fellow-worker, knowing that she taught the great preacher, Apollos. He gave greetings to Junia the apostle. Clearly, Paul knew and respected women in leadership. It is poor scholarship to allow one verse, a verse which is difficult to translate and to interpret, to override centuries of clear biblical evidence to the contrary. This passage must have some other meaning.

How do we translate and interpret this difficult passage? There have been numerous attempts. Some take the edge off the passage by suggesting that the verses reflect Paul's residual anti-woman biases which resulted from his schooling as a rabbi. Others see cultural issues which were unique to Paul's day, such as how women dressed and were expected to behave. They do not believe these first-century cultural practices are binding today. There is merit in both of these views, but I believe we find the best key in translating and interpreting this text in a richer understanding of the Ephesian context that Paul was addressing.

Ephesus was a city which had long been dominated by female goddesses. You recall the riot that erupted when the gospel challenged the great temple of Artemis of the Ephesians, according to Acts 19:23-41. Pagan myths ran deep in this world famous goddess-honoring city. The Gnostic heresy was common in Ephesus. The Gnostics perverted many Bible texts including the Genesis account. Some female Gnostics taught that Eve brought life to Adam, that Adam had his origin in Eve. They also taught that childbearing was somehow beneath a woman's dignity. Truly religious women did not bear children. The Ephesian church struggled with many of these Gnostic heresies. Over twenty percent of 1&2 Timothy and Titus deal with false teaching. Women played a role in spreading the Gnostic lies. Look at 1 Tim 4:7 "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly." These old wives tales were likely Gnostic myths that women were spreading around the Ephesian church.

Look at 1 Tim 5:11-13. This list refers to the office of ministering widows.

As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry. Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge. Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to.

These young women were going around house to house spreading Gnostic tales. Women taught the Gnostic myths and believed them. Against this background of goddess worship and Gnostic false teachings, let's look specifically again at our passage. "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission." The word "quietness" does not mean merely silence. It is the feminine form of the same word found in 1 Tim 2:1-2.

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

The word "quiet" refers to a settled, non-troublesome peaceful life. Women were commanded not to make waves. They were not being prohibited from speaking or preaching. Look back at verse 12, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent." The word translated as "to have authority" is used only once in the entire Bible. It has at least four possible translations. One of those translations is to "be author or originator of." This fits perfectly with the context of the rest of the passage and with the Gnostic false teaching common

in Ephesus. The gist of the verse is: “I do not allow a woman to teach nor to proclaim herself author of man.” In other words women are not to communicate that man originated with them. Why not? Look at verses 13-14: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.” Paul reaffirms the truth of Genesis and shows the Gnostic teaching that Eve was the author of Adam to be false. God created Adam. He then created Eve from Adam’s rib.

Let’s look finally to verse 15. “But women will be saved through childbearing--if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.” Although the literal meaning of the verse implies that women are saved through having children, we know that only faith in Jesus saves (Rom 1:16-17). The plain meaning of the verse opposes the Gnostic teaching that women should not bear children. You can be a Christian and a mother too.

There is so much more that we can say. Let me summarize. There is no convincing biblical basis to deny women the right to teach or to have authority over men. Certainly, one difficult verse, dependent upon translating one verb, found only once in the Bible, is not an adequate reason to cast aside centuries of Biblical teaching to the contrary. In these verses, Paul was not giving a universal prescription for the role of women everywhere. He was giving specific instructions to combat Gnostic false teachings prevalent in Ephesus. God made men and women in his own image and gave them dominion over the earth. He called them and equipped them to be preachers and leaders. Jesus taught female disciples and entrusted a woman with the first message to the Samaritans. A woman was the first to proclaim that Jesus was risen. At Pentecost, the Lord reaffirmed that in the last days, women would preach. There were female teachers, prophets, deacons, and apostles in the New Testament church. Let’s put prejudice behind us. Denying leadership roles to women is rooted in elevating one difficult to translate, confusing to interpret, verse over the rest of the Bible. It is rooted in the attitude, “Well that’s the way I was taught. Don’t confuse me with the facts. My mind is made up.” It’s rooted in perpetuating the curse of sin on women and missing God’s original intent for women. Let’s allow Jesus to remove the curse of sin from women’s backs. Let’s allow women to be restored to their created purpose. It is time to open the doors of leadership to 100% of God’s children so that all can use their God-given spiritual gifts. Let’s live Galatians 3:28 to the fullest. The apostle Paul said, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

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INTERVIEW: “WOMEN IN MINISTRY SEMINAR” --

Dr. John Stanley and Rev. Randy Huber 1998/99

As part of the Christian Faith and Life Teaching Team Grants, awarded by The Louisville Institute, Randy Huber and John Stanley led six seminars between September 1998 and June 1999 on the topic of “Reclaiming the Holiness Heritage of Women in Ministry.” Seminars were held at Point Loma Nazarene University, Eastern States Ministers’ Meeting of the Church of God, the annual meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society, Mid-America Bible College, the

National Convention of Christian Holiness Partnership and the International Convention of the Church of God. The following interview conveys the main thrust of the seminars. However, the response after the question, "Were there any key texts that were foundational to your transition as a leader on this issue?" became a detailed listing of biblical evidence from the Old and New Testaments for women in ministry. The seminars ranged from sixty to ninety minutes.

Stanley: Describe Chapel Hill Church of God.

Huber: Chapel Hill Church of God is a congregation that averages about 180 people in Sunday morning worship. We are located in rural Adams County, Pennsylvania. The primary industries in our area are agriculture and tourism. We are located ten miles north of Gettysburg and its beautiful battlefield. There are approximately 6,500 homes within a seven-mile radius of our church. We are primarily a blue-collar congregation. We also have some school teachers, nurses and state employees who commute 25 miles each day to work in Harrisburg. We have a good cross section of all age groups. I would describe us as primarily white and middle class. Theologically, our people come from a wide cross section of backgrounds including: Church of God, Methodist, Wesleyan, Brethren, Pentecostal, Lutheran, Catholic, Episcopalian, Baptist, Independent Fundamentalist and others.

Stanley: What has been the Chapel Hill's history regarding women in leadership and ministry?

Huber: Back in 1919, a revival service was led by three women. Mary Helpingstone, Pearl Smith and Sister Wallace led two families to accept the truth of the Church of God. They became foundational families for our church. For a number of years, the church met in homes. For one-and-a-half years, Sister Wallace led these home services. Our church located at its present location and built a small sanctuary in 1931. In November of 1936, Chapel Hill Church of God sent its first missionary to Africa, a woman named Lima Lehmer. From 1944-47 Sister Flora Hinzman pastored our church. All through the years, women served on the church council and were involved in leadership. This changed fairly abruptly around 1980 when the church split. Most of those who left were long-established people with Church of God backgrounds. Those who remained were from Baptist and fundamentalist backgrounds. In 1982, the bylaws were changed. The congregation moved away from a representative church council to elected elders. The new bylaws stipulated that elders and pastoral staff must be male. I arrived as pastor in November of 1982.

Stanley: What led you to address the issue of women in ministry?

Huber: I did not dare address the issue after I first arrived in 1982. I was a green twenty-six year old pastor, serving a church which was still licking its wounds after a split. The church was small and struggling. We could not afford conflict. Nonetheless, the relegation of women to second-class status bothered me. I knew that it was wrong. I knew I needed to do something. In 1988, we established a bylaws revision committee. I seized the opportunity. Over several meetings with the bylaws revision committee I attempted without success to get the bylaws changed. I backed off. We revised the bylaws but the male-only leadership stayed intact. Our 1988 revised bylaws required that we examine the bylaws on years ending with 5 and 0. I brought up the women in ministry issue with the elders again in 1990 and in 1995. In both cases the water was cold so I

did not push. The issue laid dormant until 1996. At that time, we were seeking a new associate pastor. I broached the subject of broadening the search to include women with our elders. Some key leaders were strongly opposed. I backed off again. I was disappointed and embarrassed when we received briefs from qualified women and I had to tell them that we could not consider them because our bylaws forbade it. Around that time, John's wife Susie, a gifted ordained Church of God minister, arranged a visit with me in my office and encouraged me to make this issue a front burner issue. I knew that she was right so I promised her that I would go to the wall on it. I had been in the church for fourteen years. I was loved and respected. I wouldn't back down this time.

Stanley: What anxieties and fears did you have as you approached this issue?

Huber: My main fear was that the issue would create a split. I also feared losing some quality leaders. I weighed my fears against doing the right thing. I believe the Lord was in the timing. I had been pastor long enough and had sufficiently positive relationships with everyone that I could take the risks.

Stanley: Why did you address this issue with a sermon series?

Huber: Based on my previous experiences with this issue, I knew that I had to do a lengthy sermon series to properly handle the subject. The series needed to be lengthy because I needed to systematically challenge some prejudices and presuppositions. I didn't want to try to accomplish too much in any one message. I wanted to give people the opportunity to think about what they were hearing. I found, earlier with the bylaws revision attempts in 1988, 1990 and 1995 that I would have to lay a fairly systematic biblical groundwork. People too freely proof-texted their views without that groundwork. I was trusting that because most of the people who opposed women in ministry did so primarily on the basis of their understanding of scripture that solid biblical evidence was the only means to get them to change their position. I chose a sermon series as the forum rather than a Sunday School class for two primary reasons. First, since we have many Sunday School classes, I could not easily reach our whole congregation. Second, in a sermon, there is not as much room to dialog. This gave me the opportunity to lay out the material without having to deal with objections before the biblical framework was laid. I trusted that upset people would reach me in my office. Fortunately, I met no resistance.

Stanley: How did you prepare for your sermon series?

Huber: Over the years, I did some reading that gave me a good foundation. Dr. Susie Stanley was an invaluable resource. She loaned me a whole bag of books. I read through many of them. I prayed that God would use me and that we would not lose people from conflict.

Stanley: What resources were helpful for you in your preparation?

Huber: Catherine Richard Kroeger's book - *I Suffer Not a Woman*
Frances Willard 1888 - *Woman in the Pulpit*
[Also, consult the bibliography which follows this interview.]

Stanley: Were there any key texts that were foundational to your transition as a leader on this

issue?

Huber: Probably, the most important text was Galatians 3:28. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." I base my understanding of women in leadership believing that God created males and females as equal complements to one another. Both were created in God's image and were given dominion over the earth. Patriarchy and the resultant oppression of women resulted from the fall and is not God's perfect plan for men and women. I have also noted how God has used women in leadership all through history. Some prominent examples are Deborah, Huldah, Esther, the woman at the well who was the first evangelist to the Samaritans, Jesus' female disciples--who were the first proclaimers of the resurrection--Anna, Lydia, Priscilla, Phoebe and Junia. My own study led me to have a clear and Biblical response to those who base their views on 1 Tim 2:12 which the NIV translates as: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent."

Stanley: What was the response to the series? Did you notice greater or lesser response from the series?

Huber: I was pleased to discover that the response was very positive. Several women approached me and told me how helpful it was for them to see how God has used women. They also hoped that their husbands were getting it. A few men expressed to me that the series helped them to view things differently. I would say the level of response was fairly comparable to other series I have preached over the years. I have yet to hear any negatives from men or women.

Stanley: What factors or events helped the congregation vote to change their bylaws to include women in ministry?

Huber: I really believe the sermon series had an impact. Those who had pro-woman leanings already saw that they had biblical support. Those who sat on the fence realized also that there was good biblical support for women in leadership. Those who were not yet fully persuaded realized that there is good biblical evidence for another view. I believe this weakened their resolve to create conflict or to leave over the issue. To my knowledge not one person left the church because of the reversal on this issue. When I suggested that we revise the bylaws in November 1997, the Board of Elders were unanimous. The congregational vote against the bylaws change was less than five. I believe, Dr. Susie Stanley's presence as an ordained minister in our midst had an impact. Also, one of the key elders formerly opposed women in ministry witnessed the ordination of a female Church of God minister that he had come to know through a work camp. Additionally, a woman who formerly opposed women in ministry, commented that the two best speakers she heard at our International Convention were women. That got her thinking. God was working on several fronts.

Stanley: Change and conflict are part of growing congregations. What was the reaction of the Board of Elders and congregation when you proposed bylaws changes?

Huber: The 1988, 1990, 1995 and 1996 attempts never got out of the Board of Elders. The 1997 change was approved by the Elders unanimously and passed congregational approval without comment. This was remarkable, because in our church, few things get by the congregation

without some discussion and sometimes friction at congregational meetings.

Stanley: Have there been any positive developments or noticeable changes in the congregation?

Huber: Yes, Dr. Susie Stanley has preached once. Mandy Stanley is studying in seminary for ministry. She served in the summer of 1998 as an informal intern. She has preached three times. The response to both women has been extremely positive. People really appreciated Susie's message and have enthusiastically encouraged Mandy's call. One woman commented that Mandy is the best young preacher she has ever heard. Additionally, a female member of our congregation has been recently licensed by the Church of God and is pursuing ordination. In July, we had a youth retreat. One of the key elders was present. As part of one session, we were discussing what the young people believe God was calling them to do with their lives. One young lady said she thought God might be calling her to be a pastor. This same elder put his arm around that girl, smiled, looked her in the eye and told her she would be a fine pastor.

Stanley: Did you approach this matter similarly or differently than you do other matters where you exert your leadership for change?

Huber: Where this issue was different, was that I was hesitant to push too hard. I had hit a wall with the elders four times previously. I was reluctant to take the risk. Without Dr. Susie Stanley's nudging I probably would not have moved ahead when I did. Fundamentally, I approach large changes in pretty much the same way. I throw out trial balloons with the elders for discussion. I bide my time and see where they go. When the time seems right to move ahead and the Lord is in it, I generally try to do some educating to get people on board and soften resistance. The more people are touched by biblical truth, the more likely they are to change. A couple of years ago, I temporarily disbanded all of the adult Sunday School classes in order to walk the church through a visioning process. I taught for 13 weeks. That process included a purpose statement and considerable changes. To date, everything we discussed in those classes has come to pass. The changes included, the hiring of a full-time associate pastor, greater emphasis upon growth groups, moving to two Sunday morning worship services, re-organization of the adult Sunday School, and a Sunday School facilities expansion. My approach to change is cognitive. I have found if people can see biblically sound reasons for change you can usually move ahead. You have to anticipate objections and be ready to handle them. You have to allow time for people to catch up emotionally before you act. This approach has usually worked for me.

Stanley: What factors do you believe contributed to successfully restoring women to their rightful place in leadership at Chapel Hill Church of God?

Huber: I think that pastoring at Chapel Hill fifteen years made a big difference. The people love me and trust me and I know where most of the land mines are. The most important thing was helping the people to see the biblical basis. Those who oppose women in leadership usually believe the Bible opposes it. An appeal to scripture is effective in shaping the worldviews and ideas of those committed to scripture. Given time and the opportunity to reflect on this issue, I believe most reasonable, biblically-rooted and spiritually mature people will open their eyes and change.

John E. Stanley

Church Policy Statements on Ordaining Women

Sometimes contemporary Christians think that ordaining women is a new development. Wesleyan/Holiness churches have a heritage of ordaining women as pastors, evangelists, teachers and counselors. The following is a list of policy statements by Wesleyan/Holiness churches. These statements represent the seven churches which in 1999 support the Wesleyan/Holiness Women's Clergy Conference. Statements appear in chronological order. These statements remind Wesleyan/Holiness churches that our churches have taken stands and established policies supporting the ordination of women.

SALVATION ARMY

1879-- Section XII. Female Preachers--As it is manifest from the Scripture of the Old and especially the New Testament that God has sanctioned the labors of Godly women in His Church; Godly women possessing the necessary gifts and qualifications, shall be employed as preachers itinerant or otherwise and class leaders and as such shall have appointments given to them on the preachers plan; and they shall be eligible for any office, and to speak and vote at all official meetings.

Minutes, First Conference of the Christian Mission, held at the People's Mission Hall, London, 15-17 June 1879; quoted in Norman H. Murdoch, "Female Ministry in the Thought and Work of Catherine Booth," *Church History* 53 (September 1984): 355.

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

1899-- Members of the General Council of the New Testament Church of Christ, a forerunner of the Church of the Nazarene "decided that under the gospel women had all the rights and privileges that men enjoy. since there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond or free, male nor female in Christ, a woman is eligible for ordination."

M. E. Redford, *The Rise of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1948): 123.

1980-- That while man and woman are created equal spiritually in God's sight (Galatians 3:28), that in the interests of the Christian family, moral and ethical standards, Christian modesty and simplicity, we emphasize the distinction as male and female and stress that we respect the God-given distinction so that each may fulfill his or her highest place in the home and in the kingdom of God. We support the right of women to use their God-given spiritual gifts within the church. We affirm the historical right of women to be elected and appointed to places of leadership within the Church of the Nazarene. We oppose any legislation which would be against the

scriptural teachings of the place of womanhood in society.”

Manual of the Church of the Nazarene. Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1985): 283.

1993-1997 -- “904.6 Women in Ministry”

We support the right of women to use their God-given spiritual gifts within the church. We affirm the historic right of women to be elected and appointed to place of leadership within the Church of the Nazarene.

Manual of the Church of the Nazarene : 1997.

CHURCH OF GOD (ANDERSON)

1920 “Again, I call your attention to the organization of the church by the Holy Spirit. A man is an evangelist because he has the gift of evangelizing. It is not because he is a man, but because he has that particular gift. The gift itself is the proof of his calling. If a woman has divine gifts fitting her for a particular work in the church, that is the proof, and the only proof needed, that that is her place. Any other basis of qualification than divine gifts is superficial and arbitrary and ignores the divine plan of organization and government in the church.”

F. G. Smith. “Editorial,” *Gospel Trumpet* 40 (17 June 1920): 9. Initially *The Gospel Trumpet*, the official publication of the Church of God, represented Church of God theology and practice.

1974-- “In light of statistics which document the diminishing use of women’s abilities in the life and work of the church,...RESOLVED, That more women be given opportunity and consideration for positions of leadership in the total program of the Church of God, locally, statewide, and nationally.” Resolution at 1974 General Ministerial Assembly of the Church of God.

Barry Callen, ed., *Thinking and Acting Together* (Anderson, IN: Executive Council of the Church of God and Warner Press, 1992): 66.

FREE METHODIST CHURCH

1974 -- The General Conference passed a resolution “giving women equal status with men in the ministry of the church.”

1974 General Conference Minutes: 388.

1995-- “The objections to the equality of man and woman in the Christian Church, based upon the Bible, rest upon a wrong translation of some passages and a misinterpretation of others. We come, then, to this final conclusion: The Gospel of Jesus Christ, in the provisions which it makes, and in the agencies which it employs, for the salvation of humankind, knows no distinction of race, condition, or sex. With these beliefs, women should be encouraged to take their place in all areas of church leadership and ministry. Jesus calls us all, women and men, to

make disciples and build the kingdom of God.”

“Women in Ministry. Statement adopted by the 1995 General Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America”: 10.

EVANGELICAL FRIENDS

“Whenever a member, whether man or woman, has demonstrated gifts in ministry so that the church is edified and spiritually helped, the local elders carefully consider whether this Friends has received from the Head of the Church a gift in public ministry,” *Northwest Yearly Meeting of Faith and Practice* : 62

BRETHREN IN CHRIST

“A revision in the *Manual of Doctrine of Government* of the Brethren in Christ Church (1984) eliminated all references to ministers and deacons being male only.”

Janet M. Peifer, “Brethren in Christ Studies and Writing on Women in the Ministry, 1887-1987,” *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 13 (April, 1990): 18.

WESLEYAN CHURCH

The Wesleyan Church Discipline affirms whomever God calls to ministry. The language is inclusive.

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“New Testament Arguments for the Equality of Men and Women in Ministry”*

John E. Stanley

Four New Testament arguments anchor the case for the equality of men and women in ministry. These biblical precedents are the four gospels’ witness of the ministry of Jesus, Paul’s policy statement in Galatians 3:28, Paul’s practice of affirming women as equals, and the ministry of liberation and equality set in motion by the resurrection of Jesus and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These clear biblical evidences inform and take precedence over the two troublesome texts of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

Contrary to Jewish culture, Jesus affirmed women. Rabbi Jehuda prayed, “Blessed be God that He has not made me a woman.(1) Rabbi Eliezer taught, “rather should the works of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman.” Jesus valued and taught women. The woman of Samaria (John 4:7-42) was the first person to recognize Jesus as the Messiah in the Gospel of John. John 3-4 pairs Nicodemus as a male insider who as a leader of the Jews represented orthodoxy and the Samaritan woman as an outsider representing unorthodoxy. Ironically, it is the woman whose

testimony brought others to Jesus. Likewise, Luke pairs Anna with Simeon as the first persons to acknowledge Jesus as Messiah in the Gospel of Luke (Lk 2:25-38). In a culture which silenced women in public and did not affirm women as thinkers and leaders Jesus praised Mary for dialoging with him as an intellectual partner (Lk 10:38-42). Jesus made women central characters in several parables, as with the woman seeking the lost coin (Lk 15:8-10) paralleling the father of the prodigal son parable (Lk 15:11-32). Luke 8:3 reports that women financially supported the ministry of Jesus. All four gospel writers credit women as being the “last at the cross” (Mt. 27:55-56; Mk. 15:40-41; Lk 23:49; Jn 19:25-27) and “first at the tomb” with Mary Magdalene as the first witness to the resurrection (Mk 16:1- 8; Mt 28:1-8; Lk 24:1-12; Jn 20:1-13). There are at least eighty-eight references to women in the gospels. Such frequent appearances of women in the gospels contrast with their cultural roles as background characters in a society which ranked people in a hierarchy based on gender, age, wealth and position.

Jesus defined discipleship as servanthood rather than as submission to hierarchy or headship in Mk 10:45, Mt 23:8-12 and Jn 13:13-15. In John, Jesus made love and friendship distinguishing traits of discipleship which has led some interpreters to understand the disciples as a discipleship of equals.

The second pillar of equality of ministry appears in Galatians 3:28 which is Paul’s policy statement on the equality of men and women in opportunity and office. Paul proclaimed, “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:27-28).”⁽²⁾ Paul’s thesis in Galatians is that Christ freed Christians from Jewish law and traditions, including sexual subordination. Gal 3:28 has social implications, involving Jewish and Gentile unity as well as the equality of men and women in ministry, rather than merely addressing the equal status of salvation for all persons.

Third, in practice, as well as policy, Paul affirmed the equality of women in opportunity and office. Paul commended “Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae” (Rom 16:1) and greeted Junia as “prominent among the apostles” (Rom 16:7). In Rom 16:3,6,12 Paul greeted Prisca (Priscilla), Mary, Trypaena, Tryphosa and Persis as “workers in the Lord.” Paul also sent appreciation to the mother of Rufus, Julia, and the sister of Nereus making a total of ten women mentioned in Rom 16. 1 Cor 16:19 credits Prisca as co- leader with Aquila of “the church in their house.” While Acts 16:11-15 posits Lydia as Paul’s first convert in Philippi, in Phil 4:2-3 Paul also commends Euodia and Synthche “for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel.” Paul recognized women as public preachers and leaders in prayer (1 Cor 11:5). Alongside the equality of women in the church, Paul taught that women have the same “conjugal rights” as men, meaning that women can take the initiative in marital intimacy (1 Cor 7:1-5). Although scholarship is divided over the Pauline authorship of Ephesians, Eph 5:21-33 presents a theology of mutual submission of marriage partners rather than the authoritarian hierarchy of women submitting to men characteristic of Roman society.⁽³⁾ Cicero admonished “men to rule their wives” and outlined how to construct a society in which men prevailed over women.⁽⁴⁾

The resurrection and Pentecost ignited a social revolution that was only partially realized in the New Testament era. For instance, the New Testament accepts slavery although the church eventually realized that slavery goes against the freedom proclaimed by Jesus and Paul and is a

social denial of human dignity. Also, although the New Testament refers to the writers' experiences of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, the church did not formulate the doctrine of the Trinity until the eras of Tertullian and Augustine. Likewise, the teachings and practices of Jesus and Paul regarding women were not fully realized in the New Testament era; in fact, the Spirit continues to lead us to fuller implementation of these teachings. The New Testament practices and teachings on the equality of men and women for opportunity and office were seeds whose potential developed as the Spirit continued to lead the church.

1 Tim 2:11-12 and 1 Cor 14:33-34 are two texts often used to oppose women in ministry. Those of us who value the authority of the Bible cannot avoid these texts. Instead, we allow the clear light from the above practices and policies of Jesus and Paul to illumine these cloudy texts. It is necessary to understand the context of these two passages. 1 Tim 2:11-12 reads, "let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man, she is to keep silent." Why accept 1 Tim 2:11-12 as binding and authoritative today when we so readily dismiss the admonitions against expensive and gaudy dress in 1 Tim 2:9? Why do we deny the authority of 1 Tim 2:15 which states that women "will be saved through childbearing," a "works righteousness" which contradicts salvation through faith (Eph 2:8; Rom 1:16-17)? Also, Priscilla taught Apollos (Acts 18:26) and Phoebe, as a deacon, and Junia, as an apostle, occupied offices that required preaching to, and teaching, men. The examples of Priscilla, Phoebe and Junia, coupled with the witness of the Samaritan woman (John 4) reflect a general New Testament pattern of women in leadership whereas 1 Tim 2:11-12 should be seen as a teaching for the specific situation in Ephesus where Gnosticism and female deities such as Diana called the author of 1 Tim to caution the church to err on the side of social conservatism rather than be confused with heresies.

The second problem text of 1 Cor 14:33-34, which commands women to keep silent in church, is offset by 1 Cor 11:5 which notes that women do pray and prophesy in church meetings.(5)

Wesleyan/Holiness traditions value the Wesleyan quadrilateral of Scripture, tradition, reason and experience as sources of faith and doctrine. Strong biblical support exists for the equality of women in opportunity and office in ministry.(6) The Holy Spirit has confirmed that biblical evidence as the Spirit has called women into ministry throughout the centuries. Women's experiences of God's call have been consistent enough to become a valued tradition, even a distinctive, of the Wesleyan/Holiness movement. God's gift of reason enables interpreters to study the Scriptures and find therein authoritative support for the experience and tradition of the Spirit calling women and men equally for opportunity and office in ministry.

* Although overlap exists between Randy's sermons and this article, the article serves as a short summary.

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END NOTES

(1)' Cited by Wolfgang Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*. Translated by David Green

(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 217.

(2) Richard Longenecker calls Gal 3:28 “the most forthright statement on social ethics in all the New Testament,” *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984), 30. David Scholer regards Gal 3:28 as “a summative expression of an essential part of the central core network of Pauline theology.” “Galatians 3:28 and the Ministry of Women in the Church,” *Theology, News and Notes* 45 (June, 1998), 19. Regarding the impact of Gal 3:28 Wolfgang Scrage claims “in the body of Christ, all secular categories are transcended,” *The Ethics of the New Testament*, 223. Klyne R. Snodgrass explains how Gal 3:28 has social rather than just spiritual implications in “Galatians 3:28 -- Conundrum or Solution?,” *Women, Authority & the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 161-180 and Susie C. Stanley documents the use of Gal 3:28 as a support for women clergy by holiness interpreters in her “Response,” *Women, Authority & the Bible*, 181-88.

(3) Sharon Clark Pearson shows how mutual love softened the patriarchy of the household codes in “Women in Ministry: A Biblical Vision,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31 (Spring, 1996), 141-170.

(4) Cicero, *De Republic*, 4:5-6.

(5) Four helpful explanations of these passages, in addition to the Pearson article mentioned in note 3, are C. S. Cowles, *A Women’s Place? Leadership in the Church* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1993), 127-155; Catherine Clark Kroeger & Richard Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman. Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992); Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women. A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997) and David Scholer, “1 Timothy 2:9-15 and the Place of Women in the Church,” *Women, Authority & the Bible*, 193-224. Scholer’s article has become a classic, especially in showing how to evaluate specific texts and contexts.

(6) See Rebecca Laird, “A Brief Theology of Women in Ministry. Four Reasons Women Should Teach, Preach, and Minister,” *Grow* 3 (Spring, 1992): 46-50.

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Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy--A Partial Bibliography

John E. Stanley

In 1994 Susie C. Stanley compiled a “Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy. A Preliminary Bibliography,” available from Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy, c/o Messiah College, Grantham, PA 17027 (\$4.00). That bibliography included the categories of “Autobiographies, Letters, Diaries, Papers,” “Biographical Sketches,” “Scriptural Defenses of Women Clergy,” “Women’s Sermons,” and “General Articles and Books.”

This bibliography expands on Susie C. Stanley's category of "Scriptural Defenses of Women Clergy" by including more recent items and some publications from a non-Wesleyan/Holiness background.

Materials in this bibliography are on an introductory level.

SCRIPTURAL DEFENSES OF WOMEN CLERGY

Bailey, Wilma Ann. "Gender in the Old Testament," *Women & Men: Gender in the Church*. Edited by Carol Penner (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1998): 13-21.

Brown, C. E. "No Room for Discrimination Against Women Preachers." *Vital Christianity*. (May, 1989): 17. Excerpted from "Women Preachers," *The Gospel Trumpet* (27 May 1939): 5.

Climenhaga, Arthur M. "A Case Study in Biblical Interpretation: Women in Ministry." *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 13 (April, 1990): 64-72.

Coleson, Joseph E. *'Ezer Cenegdo: A Power Like Him, Facing Him as Equal*. Grantham, PA: Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy, 1996.

Coleson explains the meaning of "helper" in Genesis 2:18 and shows that the orders of creation and redemption take precedence over the order of the fall.

Cowles, C. S. *A Woman's Place?: Leadership in the Church*. Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1993.

Grenz, Stanley and Khesbo, Denise Muir. *Women in the Church. A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995.

Groothuis, Rebecca Merrill. *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997.

Hays, Richard B. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1996: 52-56.

Hull, Gretchen Gaebelein. *Equal To Serve: Men & Women Working Together Revealing the Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1987.

Kroeger, Richard Clark and Kroeger, Catherine Clark. *I Suffer Not a Woman. Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992.
They show that the restrictions in 1 Tim are for the specific context of Ephesus.

Laird, Rebecca. "A Brief Theology of Women in Ministry." *Grow* 3, (Spring, 1992): 46-50.

Longenecker, Richard N. *New Testament Social Ethics for Today*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984.

Argues that Gal 3:28 is the essence of New Testament ethics.

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_____. "Women in Ministry: What Does the Bible Say?" *Vital Christianity* 109 (May, 1989): 22-26.

Priscilla Papers. Edited by Gretchen Gaebelein Hull and published quarterly by Christians for Biblical Equality.

With a solid rooting in Scripture this organization calls the Reformed Evangelical tradition to accept women in ministry. www.chrbibeq.org.

Roberts, B. T. *Ordaining Women*. Rochester, NY: Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1891; reprint, Indianapolis: Light and Life Press, 1992.
A Free Methodist theology.

Scholer, David M. "Galatians 3:28 and the Ministry of Women in the Church," *Theology, News and Notes* 45 (June, 1998): 19-22.
Gal 3:28 has a social significance.

_____. "1 Timothy 2:9-15 & the Place of Women in the Church's Ministry." *Women, Authority & the Bible*. Edited by Alvers Mickelsen. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 193-219.
Scholer provides five principles of interpretation for difficult texts.

Spencer, Aida Besancon. *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985.

Stanley, John E. Review of *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, edited by Adreas J. Kostenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner and H. Scott Baldwin, in *Priscilla Papers* 12 (Spring, 1998): 12-13.
Stanley criticizes a book which opposes women in ministry.

Stanley, Susie C. "The Promise Fulfilled: Women's Ministries in the Wesleyan/ Holiness Movement," *Religious Institutions and Women's Leadership. New Roles Inside the Mainstream*. Edited by Catherine Wessinger. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996: 139-157.

_____. "Innocent Bystanders in the Fundamentalist/Modernist Controversy." *Reforming the*

Center. American Protestantism 1900 to the Present. Edited by Douglas Jacobsen and William Vance Trollinger. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998: 172-193.
She treats the Wesleyan/Holiness approach to women in ministry on 185-193.

Strong, Marie. "An Interpretation of Acts 2:17-18." *Called to Minister: Empowered to Serve.* Edited by Juanita Evans Leonard. Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1989: 1-11.

Swartley, Willard. *Slavery, Sabbath, War & Women. Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation.* Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1983.

Swartley presents principles of interpretation used by those for and against these issues.

Thompson, David L. "The Biblical Mandate for Women in Ministry," *The Wesleyan Advocate* 2 (May 1999): 22-23

Warner, D. S. "Woman's Freedom in Christ, to Pray and Prophecy in Public Worship." *The Gospel Trumpet* (1 October 1887).

Statement by founder of the Church of God (Anderson

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