



The Role of Women in the Ministry & Body Life at Good News

By the elders of Good News Bible Chapel
June, 2005

*"... Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it ... Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good ... All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines ... Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way."
- I Corinthians 12:27, 7, 11; 14:40 NIV*

Introduction:

In our desire to see everyone at Good News - men and women - participating in the ministry opportunities and the general life of the church and using their gifts as the Holy Spirit leads, we affirm the following:¹

1. The Bible is the first and last authority in the teaching and the practice of the church. "All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" - 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.
2. Both men and women are created in the image of God and as such both have identical, intrinsic value (ontological equality) in God's sight (Genesis 1:26, 27). We deny that either man or woman is inferior to the other by creation or nature.
3. God has appointed man to be the head (leader / authority) of the woman - "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." - I Corinthians 11:3. This "headship" principle is to be understood in terms of a distinction in role and responsibility - as Jesus submitted in

obedience to the "headship" of his Father - not in terms of essence, value or quality of gifting (cf. Galatians 3:38, Ephesians 5:21-24).

5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to both men and women (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:18; Galatians

3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community of believers (Genesis 2:18; Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:11-15).

6. The Bible teaches the significance of women in the life and ministry of Jesus in that they were friends, supporters and followers (Luke 8:1-3; John 4:1-42; John 20:1-18). It is notable that women were the last at the cross and that the resurrected Lord appeared first to women.

7. The Bible narrative describes the role of women in the ministries of the infant church including but not limited to the multiple women acknowledged by Paul for their ministry and support in the closing chapter of Romans and other letters; the role of Priscilla and her husband Aquila when they explained or expounded "the way" to Apollos (Acts 18:26); the four daughters of Phillip the evangelist who prophesied (Acts 21:9), etc.

8. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Genesis 3:1-7, 12, 16).

The 10 Principles...

The ten principles of hermeneutics (interpretation) applied to reading the Bible are:

- First, understand the words themselves, what they say and mean - this may take some work as translations are sometimes less than literal. The context is important in defining the meaning of words.
- Second, note the type of literature in the text. Is it poetry, history, allegory?
- Third, try to determine what the original recipients/readers of the passage would have understood the passage to mean in their circumstance, culture and time.
- Fourth, look for the principles that transcend culture and time.
- Fifth, scripture must be compared to scripture to resolve apparent discrepancies or contradictions - no one scripture can stand alone.
- Sixth, do not build a doctrine or principle on one verse alone.
- Seventh, while a passage can have only one interpretation, it may have multiple applications.
- Eighth, in general, doctrine comes from the didactic, not the narrative portions of scripture.
- Ninth, we should interpret personal experience in light of scripture and not scripture in the light of personal experience.
- Finally, the first mention of a principle in scripture is frequently significant, must be noted, and must be given careful consideration.

- In the home, our sin nature may cause the husband's loving, humble headship to be replaced by domination or passivity; and the wife's intelligent, willing submission to be replaced by a desire to take-over or servility.

- In the church, sin may incline men toward a love of worldly power or a surrender of spiritual responsibility, and may incline women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.

9. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse. In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-19; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-7).

In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation (Galatians 3:28); nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (1 Timothy 2:11-15).

10. All believers alike are given gifts by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12; 1 Pt. 4:10,11) to be used to build up each other in the life of the church and the faith. Note 1 Corinthians 12:7-10 in particular. We deny that some gifts are restricted to women or to men.

11. All believers, women and men alike, are "priests" (1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 1:6). The concept of our priesthood means that all believers, equally, have direct access to God through the one mediator Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5).

12. The Biblical record and teaching is that men are to be the leaders in the church. This is seen in the example of Jesus' choosing of 12 men as the disciples, and the qualifications for elders and deacons as "husband of..." (1 Timothy 3:1-13). We deny that this is a cultural accommodation.

13. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Timothy 2:11-15; 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will. For example, if a woman feels a call by God to preach or teach, such a call will always be consistent with the Biblical principles, regardless of her subjective feelings or personal experience.

14. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have not heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging,

addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Corinthians 12:7-21).

15. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these preceding principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

16. The four over-riding Biblical principles in this issue, in no particular order, are that of (1) "headship" (I Corinthians 11:3-16), (2) "orderliness in the meetings of the church" (I Corinthians 14:40), (3) the responsibility of men to lead and women to respond to that leadership (Ephesians 5:21-24), and (4) the gifting by the Holy Spirit of all believers alike for mutual building up of the body of Christ (I Timothy 2:11ff).

Good News Background:

Founded in 1935, Good News has always desired to be firmly grounded in the truths of the Bible. And at the same time, Good News has been willing to look at those truths and their application and make changes when it was warranted - and when it did not violate the word or the spirit of the Bible. Examples include the addition in the 1980s of using a piano to accompany singing during the Breaking of Bread service and the change in the early 1990s to contemporary music instruments in the Celebration & Growth service.

Over the years, women have always been active in the ministries at Good News. From Ceinwyn Stebbings' supportive role in the Friday night children's rallies to many women teaching Sunday School; from hosting visiting missionaries and preachers in their homes to playing the organ or piano for services and to women mailing out tracks and supporting missions with a women's missionary group.

The elder team in the 1990s, composed of Shelton Forrest, Rick Simmons, Alden Stebbings and Steve DuPlessie, looked at the question of the participation of women in the meetings of the church at Good News. They decided at the time to encourage women to participate in the discussions of small groups, to allow women to read Scripture as part of the worship time in the Celebration & Growth service, to allow women to pray in mixed small groups,

and to give out a hymn in the Breaking of Bread service without rebuke - all "under the authority of the elders." But - and this is an important "but" - this "policy" was never articulated, written, published or even announced in any way. It was just left to unfold as women were invited to participate.

The lack of clear teaching on the matter has left a vacuum that encouraged misunderstanding and discourages participation. Not knowing what is and what is not expected or allowed, some women remained confused, silent, and others have left Good News.

This lack of clear guidelines and direction - in effect an unspoken set of rules - also led to questions and confusion: why can a woman read scripture in the Celebration & Growth service but not at the Breaking of Bread service? Why can women pray in a small group but not in a larger group?

Discussion of Specific Texts:

There are a handful of important texts that address questions of the participation by women in the meetings of the church. We will look at each briefly below:

1. The Principle of Headship Established

1 Corinthians 11:3-16 "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. 4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. 5 And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved. 6 If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head. 7 A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. 8 For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; 9 neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10 For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.

11 "In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as woman came from man, so also man is born of

woman. But everything comes from God. 13 Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, 15 but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. 16 If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God."

For the purposes of this discussion of this passage we should note the following:

1. The context of this passage is Paul correcting improprieties in the church of Corinth. Specifically, chapters 11-14 address disorder in the meetings of the church in prayer (11:3-16), in the Lord's supper (11:17-34), and the use and abuse of spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40).² The over-riding principle of I Corinthians 11:3-16 is the teaching of the "headship" principle in the relationship of the Son to the Father as an example of that of the woman to the man.

3. Paul refers to women praying and prophesying (vs. 5, 13). It is assumed from the context that this is in the meeting of the church. Not all agree on this assumption - some think this paragraph is referring to prayer outside the meetings of the church and that Paul's instruction for order in the meetings of the church begins in verse 17. The overall context of chapters 11-14 seems to belie that assumption.

4. That women were praying and prophesying in the meetings of the church seems obvious in that Paul instructs women to demonstrate proper submission to the headship of the men by wearing a head covering. If women were not praying and prophesying, such instruction in head coverings would not be necessary.

Some would say that Paul is here correcting an issue of headship and head coverings, choosing not to deal with the "improper public prayer and prophecy by women" until chapter 14.² Again, the issue of a head covering is moot and no head covering is required if women are not publicly participating.

5. So this passage seems to indicate that women were participating in the meeting of the church in prayer and prophecy (see discussion below on the nature of prophecy).³ A proper demonstration of the headship principle is required.

6. Verses 4 and 5 of chapter 11 are difficult: "Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head." This is difficult particularly in light of the fact that Jewish men, specifically the Jewish High Priests, were instructed by God to cover their heads with a turban and headband as part of their garments for tabernacle/temple worship (Exodus 39:27, 28). But now in this passage we are told that for a man to cover his head in prayer is dishonoring to his head, Jesus Christ.

While it was common practice for Jewish men to cover their head in prayer with a prayer shawl, much as orthodox Jewish men do today, it was not the custom for non-Jews to cover their head in the time of the early church. But it was common, even expected, for women to cover their head - not to do so was regarded as the mark of a prostitute. Women are asked here not to act like men with uncovered heads, but rather dress in a way that is distinctly feminine, modest (I Timothy 2:9) and to demonstrate submission to their husband.

Paul wrote to Corinthian Christians who generally consented to Greek traditions and customs. For example, men had their heads uncovered (which was contrary to Jewish tradition) and the women covered theirs. The question facing the Corinthians was whether to follow the existing custom of their day. Paul's advice was to examine the symbolism of the custom (vv. 4-7) and determine if it was contrary to God's order in creation (vv. 8, 9). Since this custom of head coverings symbolized God's creative order, it was not to be looked down upon by those holding to Jewish traditions.⁴

The change in instruction for men - head coverings for Jewish men in the Old Testament, but no head coverings for Greek men in the New Testament - puts this discussion firmly in the area of cultural acceptability. In western society, there does not seem to be today an equivalent demonstration of the principle of headship for men or women. For a man to wear, or not wear, a hat today does not in any way signify his place in God's created order. Likewise, in the western culture of today, for a woman to wear, or not wear, a hat / head covering does not in any way signify her place in God's created order.

2. Is the command to be "silent" an absolute command in all circumstances?

1 Corinthians 14:26-40 26 What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. 27 If

anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. 28 If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet (Gr. *sigao* - lit. "let him be hushing," to be or become silent) in the church and speak to himself and God. 29 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully (Gr. *diakrino* - to judge, determine), what is said. 30 And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop (Gr. *sigao* - lit. "let him be hushing," to be or become silent). 31 For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. 32 The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. 33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, 34 women should remain silent (Gr. *sigao* - lit. "let him be hushing," to be or become silent) in the churches. They are not allowed (Gr. *epitrepo* - lit. "given permission") to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. 35 If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak (Gr. *laleo* - lit. "speak") in the church. 36 Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? 37 If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. 38 If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored. 39 Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. 40 But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

Please note the following from the passage above:

1. Paul opens verse 26 with an encouragement to all the Christians in the church at Corinth to participate in the meeting of the church with their gifts and Spirit-led comments. "What then shall we say, brothers (Gr. *adelphos* - lit. from the same womb⁵)? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation." Peter uses *adelphos*, where the context makes it clear that it's more than just literal brothers or even men, in his sermon at Pentecost in Acts 3:22 when he said " For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people (*adelphos*); you must listen to everything he tells you.'" And Paul uses *adelphos* in Romans 9:3&4 to mean the entire Jewish nation - men and women - when he writes " For

I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel."

2. Paul actually makes a list to be sure he is understood: "When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation" (cf. 12:7-10; 14:26).

3. Anything said must be helpful in building, strengthening, edifying the others, brothers and sisters, in the meeting. v. 26 "All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church."

4. The injunction for women to be "silent" in vs. 34 is not referring to absolute silence as indicated by the same word being used in verse 28 for those speaking in tongues without an interpreter and again in verse 30 for those prophets interrupted by another. An injunction to absolute silence would require these individuals to be totally silent as well. A word usually will not mean one thing in one verse and something else in the next verse. I Corinthians 11:5 & 13 appear to indicate that women were praying and prophesying in the meeting of the church, although they are being rebuked in these verses for not showing respect for the headship of men.

. Paul states that the reason women should be "silent" is that they "must be in submission... If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church" (vs. 34, 35). (Based on this verse, some try to limit the restrictions of chapter 14 to married women only.⁶) How is it that just by speaking or asking a question a woman could appear to be defying the principle of submission? The answer might be found in verse 29 preceding: "Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully (Gr. *diakrino* - to judge, determine), what is said..." For a woman to participate in this public "judging of the prophets,"⁷ possibly even including judging a prophesy by her own husband, during the meeting of the church would not demonstrate submission - she should ask any questions of her husband at home (the assumption is made, based on cultural considerations, that most women at the time were married). Thus the silence was circumstantial, not absolute.

3. Can women teach men?

I Timothy 2:8-15 8 I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. 9 I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, 10 but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. 11 A woman should learn in quietness (Gr. *hesuchia* - lit. "quietness," settling down, lack of disturbance. See Acts 22:2; 2 Thessalonians 3:12; also v. 12) and full submission (Gr. *hypotasso* - lit. "to place in proper order"). 12 I do not permit a woman to teach (Gr. *didasko* - To learn, to know or teach) or to have authority over (Gr. *authenteo* - lit. to have authority over) a man; she must be silent (Gr. *hesuchia* - lit. "quietness," settling down, lack of disturbance. See the use of this same word in I Timothy 2:2; I Peter 3:4). 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. 15 But women will be saved through childbearing – if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

Please note the following from the passage above:

1. The overall context of 1 Timothy chapter 2, as in I Corinthians chapters 11-14, is instruction for orderly worship in the meetings of the church.
2. It appears that some men had difficulties (v. 8) in controlling their anger and arguing while they were praying. Maybe they were using their "prayer" as an opportunity to "tell brother so-and-so what he needs to hear," i.e.: using prayer to "preach a sermon." Paul wants men to lift holy hands, not angry fists, in prayer, not in arguments.
3. It also appears that some women were coming to the meeting of the church (v. 9) in immodest dress that was either indecent or flaunting their wealth. Decency and modesty in dress are commanded. This requires the women of the church, now as then, to choose their wardrobe carefully in light of a very permissive and promiscuous society.
4. In verse 12 Paul restricts the teaching of men to men (just as he encouraged women to teach women in Titus 2:3-5) and he forbids women from taking a domineering position over - have authority over⁸ - men. This verse, combined with the principles of headship in Genesis 2 and I Corinthians 11 and with the qualifications for elders in I Timothy 3 (note I Timothy 5:17), establishes the principle that leadership in the local church is the responsibility of men.⁹

5. In verse 12 women are instructed to learn respectfully in "quietness," (Gr. *hesuchia* - lit. "quietness," settling down, lack of disturbance), not making a disturbance (whispering questions, holding concurrent conversations?), as opposed to absolute silence.

6. In verse 13 Paul goes back to the order of creation as the basis for this restriction thus transcending the culture of the day and making this a trans-cultural principle.

Discussion of "Prophecy" and "Teaching":

It quickly becomes apparent in this discussion that some words need some particular attention. The first we should look at is "prophecy." Specifically is there any difference between prophecy and teaching? Or between prophecy in the Old Testament and "the gift of prophecy" in the New Testament? What is the gift of prophecy? How does that gift serve the church today?

Prophecy - Prophecy, in a broad sense, is the prediction of future events. The word's etymology signify simply "speaking before" or "foretelling", but prophecy often implies the involvement of supernatural phenomena, whether it is communication with a deity, the reading of magical signs, or astrology. It is also used as a general term for the revelation of God's divine will.

The Old Testament teaches us that God spoke directly to some people. These prophets would in turn tell people what God told them, sometimes beginning with the powerful phrase "Thus says the Lord...!" That there are true prophets and false prophets who claim to speak for God is shown in the prophet Jeremiah's words, "For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams that you cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely to you in My name: I have not sent them, says the Lord" (Jeremiah 29:8-9). God, through Moses, gave a test to determine the source of a prophecy: "If the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing that the Lord has not spoken: the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him" (Deuteronomy 18:22).

Thus the nature of the prophecy was a) to speak on behalf of God to people, b) to speak with the authority of God, not to be questioned, c) and to explain what would happen in the future. Many times this prophecy took the role of correction or warning. Read the

prophesies recorded in Lamentations and Jeremiah. The little book of Jonah is a good example of someone speaking with authority for God in warning about future events if people did not repent.

In the N.T. false prophets - people claiming to speak with the authority of God in predicting the future - were plentiful (I John 4:1) and were compared with wolves in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15) and false teachers (II Peter 2:1).

But was the Spirit-given "gift of prophecy" the same as the Old Testament prophet's gift? When we look at I Corinthians 14, Paul tells the Christians to "weigh or judge" the prophets - those with the gift of prophecy who were participating in the meeting of the church - and see if what they are saying is true.

"29 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully (Gr. *diakrino* - to judge, determine) what is said. 30 And if a revelation comes (Gr. *apoklypsis* - lit. to remove a veil or cover) to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop (Gr. *sigao* - lit. "let him be hushing," to be or become silent). 31 For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. 32 The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets."

Notice four things about this passage. First, that the individuals should judge what a prophet is saying seems to indicate that they are not speaking with the same unimpeachable "Thus says the Lord..." authority as did the OT prophets. This should correct the growing trend in some circles of Christians today to train people to be prophets who frequently begin their statement with "Thus says the Lord!"

Second, notice that the "revelation comes to someone" (v. 30). This is obviously a thought, an idea, a "prompting" by the Holy Spirit that one had not thought of on their own.¹⁰

Third, notice that "if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should "stop" (v. 30). The implication is both that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the control of the prophets" (v. 32) and that the first speaker is not speaking with the "Thus says the Lord" authority of God - otherwise who would dare to interrupt.

Finally, notice in verse 24 and 25 that the gift of prophecy in the New Testament had an element of evangelism - possibly even revealing by God information about individuals that might not be common knowledge.

"But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"

So while prophecy is indeed a spiritual gift for the edification or building up of the church "for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort" (14:3, 4 & 24), it does not have the same authority or role of the Old Testament prophet.¹¹

Note in closing that each church might have multiple people with the gift of prophecy (I Corinthians 14: 1, 3, 24), that women had the gift of prophecy for use in edifying and building up the church (Acts 21: 9, I Corinthians 11:5), that the primary use of the gift in the church was to strengthen, encourage and comfort (I Corinthians 14:26), and that prophecy might have a powerful impact on any unsaved people present in the meeting (I Corinthians 14: 24, 25).

Teaching - Virtually everything that happens in the context of any meeting of the church is "teaching." From the very graphic illustration when we take the bread and the wine that teaches all of us about the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, to the words that we sing, in songs and hymns as a congregation and in special groups or solos, they all powerfully teach us Biblical truth (or we should not be singing them!).

Nevertheless, there is teaching and then there is "teaching." So what does it mean when Paul writes in I Timothy 2:12 "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man"? The linking in this verse of teaching and authority sheds light on the question. This particular combination of teaching with authority seems to imply the type of authoritative teaching that happens when the whole church is gathered together and someone stands up in front and teaches "the Apostle's doctrine" (Acts 2:42).¹²

As the elders are the shepherds of the flock and responsible for the teaching of the flock (I Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:24), it seems that in most cases, the one doing the authoritative teaching from the pulpit should be one of the elders. That is not to say that the elders should not ask someone to teach from time to time or invite a guest teacher - but in most cases it should be an elder.¹³ And while there are many gifted men and women in every church, it is the elders who bear the primary responsibility before God and the authority as the shepherds for this pulpit teaching.

There are many different opportunities for teaching in the ministries of the church including but not limited to men's ministries, women's ministries, Bible studies in the church and in the home, youth ministries, camp ministry, missions, one-on-one discipleship/mentoring, teaching through community chaplain services in venues such as a hospital, inner-city mission, nursing and retirement home or sports team, prison ministry and of course teaching the Bible in the classrooms of schools and colleges.

Discussion of the Application of these Principles at Good News Bible Chapel:

The elders have studied the question of the role of women in ministry at Good News. We invested the better part of ten meetings over a period of twelve months reviewing the pertinent Old Testament and the New Testament passages. The discussion was long and at times difficult and the many different views and backgrounds of each of the elders involved were challenged.

It is obvious when doing any reading on this topic that there is a wide spectrum of interpretation and application of the scriptures involved. From the more permissive "evangelical feminist" or *egalitarian* position (based entirely on faulty exegesis of Galatians 3:28), to the more restrictive traditional or *complementarian* position, and many shades in between. And it becomes quickly obvious that many Bible teachers and scholars of greater experience and training than the elder team at Good News have studied this question and still come down on differing sides of both the interpretation and the application of these passages in the church. This is very humbling and should serve to remind us of our own fallibility and need to depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit in any study. And it should remind us that in the big picture of things, this issue while very important is secondary, not central, to the overarching great theme of the Bible - the disclosure of God's redemptive plan for His creation.

In the end the elders of Good News have in good faith before God determined the following:

The four over-riding Biblical principles in this issue are that of "headship" that reflects God's order of authority and responsibility; "orderliness in the meetings of the church" that honors a God of order, not confusion; the responsibility of men to lead with love and self-sacrificing service in the home and in the church and women to respond to that leadership;

and finally, the gifting by the Holy Spirit of all believers alike for mutual building up of the body of Christ (I Corinthians 11:3ff; 12; Ephesians 5:21-24; and I Corinthians 14:40; and I Timothy 2:11ff).

The elders in studying and discussing these principles have observed that both men and women at Good News bring spiritual passion and gifts for use in the church. From a practical standpoint, the combination of the principles of headship, order, male leadership and Spirit-gifting leads us to the following conclusions and encouragements:

The women of Good News, those born again by the power of the Spirit, are invited and encouraged to use their spiritual gifts to participate publicly under the authority, direction and leadership of the male elder team. The role and responsibility for authoritative teaching in a mixed group environment is restricted to teaching by men.

Specifically, the sisters are encouraged in the Breaking of Bread service to respond to promptings from the Holy Spirit to suggest an appropriate hymn or song to be sung, pray out loud to the Father, and/or read an appropriate passage of Scripture - all under the authority of the elders who oversee this public service. We ask that the sisters show respect for the authority and headship of the men present by refraining from turning this worship opportunity into a "teaching or preaching" opportunity. In general, the focus of this service is not on teaching *per se* but rather on corporate worship and remembering the person and work of Jesus Christ, culminating in taking the bread and the cup together. Thus in general, men and women should not be looking to this service for an opportunity for teaching. Granted, this distinction between worship and teaching is sometimes a fine one, for example, in prayer or Scripture reading or even in song. Nonetheless, we encourage women to freely participate as the Holy Spirit leads while demonstrating an attitude of respect for the leadership of men. Some women publicly demonstrate this attitude by wearing a head covering.

In addition, the sisters at Good News are encouraged to continue to fully participate in the discussions and prayer times in small groups - again respecting the leadership, direction and authority of the male leader of mixed groups.

Women are encouraged to continue to participate in the Celebration & Growth service as invited and directed by the appointed male leaders - whether it be a praise team leader that requests a sister to read a Scripture passage, or the man responsible for the service who

invites all sisters to participate in sharing a praise or prayer request, a verse or scripture reading, a prayer, or another element of the service such as music, drama, etc..

Women are encouraged to be involved in serving God and the saints at Good News in initiating, supporting and leading ministry efforts as appropriate - under the direction and authority of the elders. These roles might include teaching in the Sunday School and Youth Groups, leading combined efforts such as music ministry or VBS, missions, community service roles, compassion or fellowship, and certainly in teaching ministry by women for women: one-on-one and in groups of women.

In all things, we desire to honor God with submission to his design for order. The sisters and brothers in the assembly must clearly understand that the sisters are invited, encouraged and free to participate under the Biblical authority and the express direction of the elders. The responsibility and authority of male leadership is not to be surrendered by passive men nor usurped by dominant women. To this extent, our understanding is that the leadership of the local church in the role of elders is reserved for men (cf. I Timothy 3:1-7) and women are not to be in a position of the authoritative teaching of men (cf. I Timothy 2:8-15) in the main meetings of the church.

Conclusion:

It is our desire to encourage unity in the body at Good News and to see every woman and man recognize and use their spiritual gift given by the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the body. Teachers should teach. Leaders should lead. Those with the gift of mercy should be showing mercy. And on it goes as the Spirit leads.

We want to see women using their gifts to strengthen, encourage and comfort, to teach, to serve, and to in every way be a vital part of the ongoing expression of the image of God through his church.

Ultimately, in all things, we want to see God glorified, His Son Jesus Christ lifted high for the world to see, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit recognized and used.

Revised and updated, September, 2010

End Notes:

¹ Those Affirmations indicated above by the use of a number in italics (*i.e.*: 2, 3, etc.) are taken, in whole or substantially, from "The Danvers Statement" of *The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. This statement was prepared by several evangelical leaders at a CBMW meeting in Danvers, Massachusetts, in December of 1987. It was first published in final form by the CBMW in Wheaton, Illinois in November of 1988. Available online at www.cbmw.org

² For a strong defense of this position, see J. H. Fish, "Women speaking in the Church," *The Emmaus Journal*, I (1992): pp. 214-251.

³ William Kelly in his *Notes on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Orange, California, n.d.) p. 242, says that Paul was inspired to forbid women speaking in the church, but of course not absolutely, for every gift is meant to be exercised. Kelly does not explain how this exercise of gift would be realized in the context of a local church.

⁴ Zodhiates, Spiros. *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible - NIV* (Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 1996), p. 1341, footnote.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 1575, note #81.

⁶ Fiorenza, E. S. "Women in the Pre-Pauline and Pauline Churches," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 33 (1978), pp. 153-166.

⁷ This view is ably defended by D. A. Carson, "Silent in the Churches," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. J. Piper and W. Grudem, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books 1991), pp. 140-153

⁸ Patterson, P. "The meaning of authority in the local church" in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. J. Piper and W. Grudem, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books 1991), pp. 140-153

⁹ For a differing perspective, see J. R. W. Stott in *The Message of I Timothy & Titus* in "The Bible Speaks Today" commentary series (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1996) pp. 73-88.

¹⁰ Grudem, W. "Why Christians can still prophesy" in *Christianity Today*, September, 1988. pp. 29-35

¹¹ Grudem, W. *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), pp. 1049-1061.

¹² Piper, J. in "Manhood, Womanhood and the Freedom to Minister," a sermon to *Bethlehem Baptist Church*, Minneapolis, Minnesota. 1988.

¹³ Moo, D. "What does it mean not to teach or have authority over men? I Timothy 2:11-15" in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. J. Piper and W. Grudem, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books 1991), pp. 140-15

Additional Resources:

1. *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* by John Piper & Wayne Grudem, eds. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Crossway Books, 1991)

2. *Women in the Church - A Fresh Analysis of I Timothy 2:9-15* by A. J. Kostenberger, T. R. Schreiner & H. S. Baldwin (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1995)

3. *Men and Women: Equal But Different* Alexander Strauch. (Denver, Colorado: Lewis & Roth Publishers, 1999)

4. *Two Views On Women In Ministry, 1st edition* James Beck & Craig Blomberg, eds. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001)