

Women In Office  
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The offices of elder and minister are offices of leadership and authority in God's church. In churches of the Reformed heritage, elders and ministers are members of the ruling council or consistory of the church and exercise authority in teaching, preaching, discipline and membership as well as in administrative matters.

The Apostle Paul, in 1 Tim. 2:12, forbids women from teaching and exercising authority in Christ's church. The reasons he gives are not local or temporal but based in creation and the relationship between, and the history of, our first parents Adam and Eve, a history and relationship that remain normative for the whole human race.

Since the Apostle Paul bases the restricted role for women on the way God set things up in creation (1 Tim. 2:13,14; 1 Cor. 11:8,9) and since he makes clear that the restricted role for women is for all the churches (1 Cor. 11:16; 14:33) and since the New Testament consistently shows only men as qualified for office (Acts 6:3, 1 Tim. 3:2,12; Titus 1:6), it should be clear that the church of Jesus Christ should not open the ruling and teaching offices of the church to women.

The universal outpouring of the Spirit on the church recorded in Acts 2 is said to result in every member prophesying. It does not say that as a result some women *may* prophesy but that all men and women *will* prophesy. Thus, the text is not about special offices in the church. Further "to prophesy" is not the same as "to preach" and "to teach." The preaching and teaching offices are not open to all members of the church, James 3:1. There are explicit texts that deal with the special offices, limiting them to qualified males members. Therefore the possible implications of texts like Acts 2:18 or Gal. 3:28 should not be used to contradict the explicit teaching of verses that directly deal with special offices, lest we make the Holy Spirit, who inspired all Scripture, contradict Himself.

However, women are still very important and valuable in the church. Romans 16 gives several women high honors as servants of the church and fellow workers with Paul and other church leaders. Priscilla and Aquila seemed to have had a team ministry and together instructed Apollos (Acts 18:26). Many modern ministries of the church would not exist without the dedicated and skillful labors of women. Yet today, as in Paul's day, the biblical teaching of male headship, which is based on the order of creation, should be carefully observed.

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1 Timothy 2:12-14 <sup>12</sup> *I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.* <sup>13</sup> *For Adam was formed first, then Eve;* <sup>14</sup> *and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.*

1 Corinthians 11:3-8 <sup>3</sup> *But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.* <sup>4</sup> *Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head,* <sup>5</sup> *but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head- it is the same as if her head were shaven.* <sup>6</sup> *For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head.* <sup>7</sup> *For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.* <sup>8</sup> *For man was not made from woman, but woman from man.*

James 3:1 *Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.*

1 Corinthians 14:31-40 <sup>31</sup> *For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged,* <sup>32</sup> *and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.* <sup>33</sup> *For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints,* <sup>34</sup> *the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says.* <sup>35</sup> *If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.* <sup>36</sup> *Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?* <sup>37</sup> *If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.* <sup>38</sup> *If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.* <sup>39</sup> *So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues.* <sup>40</sup> *But all things should be done decently and in order.*