



Position Statement – Women and Spiritual Leadership

Date: November 14, 2000

Summary of Position

We affirm that God has chosen men and women alike to a “salvation unto good works” and recognize that spiritual gifts have been distributed by Him to the all those who are born again.

We endorse women of proper maturity and biblical qualifications as candidates for the position of Ruling Elder.

We absolutely affirm two biblical truths that we cannot adequately reconcile completely in our human understanding:

- Beginning from creation (i.e. Original Intent) and reaffirmed in both the Old and New Testament, there is a sequence of order from male to female that reflects and symbolizes the relationship within the Trinity. This truth manifests in a “headship” or “sourcing” attribute to the male gender in aspects of spiritual leadership and oversight within the church.
- God chooses throughout history to use women in singular and significant roles of spiritual leadership – including prophets and teachers.

Background Principles

1. Where the Bible speaks inconclusively, LFCC will err on the side of grace and liberality in Christ.
2. Because the Bible is inconclusive, this is a non-essential. Therefore, we will hold our concluding convictions loosely, rather than tightly and dogmatically.
3. Regardless of LFCC’s position, we recognize that we will be simultaneously aligned with, and juxtaposed to, other godly men and women. We will tread lightly with our conclusions.
4. We will look for God to work in surprising ways, but always consistent with His Nature, His Character, and His Holy Word – the Bible.

Scripture and Supporting Comments

Equal Distribution of Giftedness. God has provided salvation, the Holy Spirit, and spiritual giftedness to men and women without deference to gender. There is no distinction in distribution between the sexes

- Joel 2:28-29 (“I will pour out my spirit on all mankind...”)
- Galatians 3:26-29 (“...there is neither...male nor female...”)
- I Corinthians 12:11 (“...the same Spirit...distribution to each one individually...”)

Women as Elders. The “Husband of one wife” criterion outlined in I Timothy 3:1-7 appears to be a call to marital fidelity, not a qualification based on gender. The same description (“Husband of one wife”) is found both in the Elder and Deacon portions of I Timothy 3 (verse 2, verse 12, respectively). However, it is clear that Deacons may be women (I Timothy 3:11). It is not consistent exegesis to presume that “Husband of one wife” disqualifies women Elders, while permitting women Deacons.

Women as Pastors. Women and men alike will be gifted by the Holy Spirit as pastor / shepherds. The point of contention seems to be when a position of pastor is seen as uniquely authoritative – a “headship issue”, if you will.

This “headship issue”, therefore, raises the question: “Can women be Senior / Lead Pastors?” One may argue that Senior/Lead Pastors are under an authority and accountability structure that makes this a moot point – this is debatable. Senior / Lead Pastors do exercise authority in our denomination in matters of vision / direction, doctrine, and discipline. It is true the basic qualifications in scripture for a Senior Pastor are the same as that for Elder – the Bible makes no distinction. Moreover, “Ruling” and “Teaching” Elder is not a biblical distinction, but rather a denominational one. However, where a “headship” exists, there must exist an order of role or function (not worth or capability). I Timothy 2:12 is compelling in its apparent admonition to prohibit church “headship” / authority to women. What makes this admonishment clearer is that verses 13 and 14 reinforce this based on an appeal to:

- ❑ Original intent / order (Genesis 2:21-23, I Cor. 11:8-9)
- ❑ Implications of the Fall (Genesis 3:6, 9, 17, 19)

Women as Teachers. Where a woman is authorized by the Session to teach, she is operating under authority. Therefore, it is permitted.

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