

## Position On Gender Roles In The Church

### Introduction

Crossroads is committed to a high view of Scripture. We believe that, unless the Bible is God's word to us, we live without any real moral authority. "Right" and "wrong" would then become matters of personal taste or popular opinion. We would not really be able to talk of justice or truth at all, for there would be no way to know objective truth. Holding that view, Crossroads embraces a Complementarian view of gender roles. This means we believe that males and females complement each other in their different roles and duties. In the context of Christianity, men are to be leaders in the church and the home, where women are not. Likewise, women are to assist the husband in raising children and expanding the kingdom of God. Complementarianism does not see women as inferior or men as superior. Instead, it sees them as being identical in nature but different in function and role. For example, women are to bear children, where men are not. This obvious biological difference is a Complementarian necessity within the family. Likewise, men are to lead their families with Godly direction, and the women are to support their husbands in their leadership.

### Our Position

We chose the term Complementarian in order to emphasize both the equality of the sexes and the complementary differences between men and women. According to this viewpoint, God created men and women equally in His divine image. Men and women are fully equal in personhood, dignity, and worth (Genesis 1:26-28). Furthermore, Complementarians assert, all believers in Jesus Christ--whether male or female--are baptized, Spirit-gifted, believer-priests and are full members of the Body of Christ. Therefore, they should use their spiritual gifts to their fullest potential and grow in their faith to full spiritual maturity. In particular, the Bible affirms the valuable and necessary role of women serving and leading in Christian ministry. A church in which women are not encouraged and granted opportunity to serve and lead within the church as vital members of the Christian community is both disobedient and unhealthy. However, equality does not mean same in function or role. As joint heirs with Christ and equipped by the Holy Spirit indiscriminate of gender, how each man or woman serves the church must fall under the framework of Scripture. God's word is clear in its affirmation of women in ministry, yet it also gives specific instruction regarding the roles of men and women in the church. In 1 Tim 2:11-15, Paul writes, "Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing- if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control (ESV)." Thus, according to Scripture, Christian women are called by God to serve and lead within the church, are to do so with the exception of "teaching or having authority over men" in the church. We believe a woman is prohibited from holding any office or position in the church that would require her either to teach Scripture or Christian doctrine to men or to exercise authority over men. This does not prohibit informal guidance and explanation such as that communicated from Priscilla and Aquila to Apollos in Acts 18:26. We realize that it is not always clear how this biblical teaching applies in a given ministry context. The first century church did not have the various ministry positions, both inside and outside of the local church, that are present in our Christian communities today. The early church had no Sunday school

teachers, music ministers, or Small Group Leaders, so the Bible does not address these ministries as such. But this does not mean we can simply ignore what Scripture does say about men and women serving together in the body of Christ. Rather, we must relate the unchanging truths of Scripture to our contemporary ministry circumstances. What follows is obviously not intended as hard and fast rules to be accepted on the level of Scripture, nor do we expect that this will address every possible ministry position or scenario. Yet, as with any text of Scripture, while correct interpretation is necessary, it must be joined with biblically faithful application. This helps demonstrate how Crossroads seeks to live out Scripture's mandates on this position:

#### Roles That Are Restricted to Men

1. Pastor and/or Elder
2. Worship Director
3. Any Bible Teaching Director or Coordinator position over men
4. Small Group Leader – mixed gender
5. Adult Sunday School or Seminar Teacher

#### Activities That Are Restricted to Men

1. Preaching on Sunday mornings.
2. Bible teaching in Adult Sunday School, Small Groups or Seminars w/ mixed gender.
3. Bible teaching in less formal meetings with mixed genders.
4. Presiding over a wedding or funeral or parent dedications.
5. Being licensed or ordained.
6. Presiding over a baptism or communion service with mixed genders.
7. Bible teaching to Middle School age and above with mixed genders.
8. Bible teaching in any special church services with mixed genders.

#### Roles That Are Open to Both Men and Women

1. Children's Sunday School Director or Coordinator
2. Evangelistic Missionary (Locally or Overseas)
3. Music Director or Worship Leader assisting the Worship Pastor or Director
4. Church Member
5. Member of Church Staff
6. Chaplaincy (within hospital or hospice)
7. Deacon/Deaconess
8. Ministry Assistants or Administrative Coordinators
9. Member of Advisory Council

#### Activities That Are Open to Both Men and Women

1. Leading singing on Sunday mornings.
2. Giving recommendations and advice to Elder Board and Pastors.
3. Formally counseling a woman.
4. Speaking, reading scripture, praying, singing or sharing in a public worship service.
5. Speaking or sharing at wedding or funeral or parent dedication.
6. Giving announcements or updates in a public worship service.
7. Voting as a church member or attender.
8. Serving as a greeter or usher.

9. Preparing and serving communion.
10. Bible teaching to a Women's - Bible Study, Sunday School class, small groups conference, camp, retreat or seminar.
11. Bible teaching to a Children's - Bible Studies, Sunday School classes, small groups, conferences, camps, retreats or seminars.
12. Performing a baptism of a women.
13. Serving on prayer or counseling team that prays for men or women after the service.

## Conclusion

The divisions among evangelical Christians over this issue are very tragic. Not even all Complementarians will necessarily agree with every aspect of the Crossroads position. In this discussion it is not uncommon for churches and individual believers who hold to a Complementarian view of gender roles to be unsure how to apply these principles in specific cases. We hold this position with great humility and grace. If you hold an application that differs from the Crossroads application you should know that it is our opportunity to display unity inside diversity of the greater body of Christ. We also understand some situations covered above must be examined in context. As setting and perception can greatly alter the application of this position. This would include the appropriateness or non-appropriateness of some of the above applications. One may ask what those circumstances would be and we would answer that the Elders would have to address those individually as they arose. May the Lord grant that all of us-men and women-would be faithful in our calling to serve him and to serve one another in love.