

WOMEN'S VOICE IN THE CHURCH: A STUDY OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN
VOICE AND AUTHORITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY.

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Abstract

A debate rages around the “roles” or “callings” of men and women and how it affects women having a voice and authority in the church today. There are two sides to this debate. The Egalitarians say there should be no distinction between the roles of men and women that are based only on gender. The gifts a person has received from the Holy Spirit should be the determining factor. On the other side are the Complementarians who hold to the understanding that God established the callings of men and women at creation where he placed man as the head and women as the helper. This thesis will explore those teachings of both the Egalitarians and Complementarians with special reference to a careful study of Genesis 1 and 2, 1 Corinthians 14:33-35, and 1 Timothy 2:11-14. On the basis of that study of Scripture, the thesis will show how the Complementarian view is in accord with Scripture. Then, while honoring that biblical understanding of God’s unique callings for men and women, the thesis will seek to demonstrate how women’s voice in the church can be more clearly heard. Through interviews, the voices of women in the WELS will be heard as this thesis explores ways for women’s voices in the church to be heard more clearly.”

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Introduction

The Word of God is living and active; it transcends time and location. Many people, especially Americans, would like to pick and choose which portions of the Bible apply to them. They do not see the Bible as a unit; rather, because of higher negative critics, the Bible is most often seen as a regular book written by people. Many higher negative critics say that there is a kernel of God's Word in the Bible, but you have to find what it means for you. That, however, is not the case. The Bible is God's verbally inspired word. It lays out principles that apply to all human beings of all times. It also contains applications of those same principles. Depending on the culture of the time, the applications of the principles might change, but the principles never do. One of the areas with which this has caused the most trouble is when in regards to the roles, or callings, of men and women.

Throughout the remainder of this paper, I will refer to the “calling” of men and women rather than the “roles” of men and women. It has been said on the seminary campus that if you do not like the terminology used for certain doctrines or teachings, you should come up with something better. Thankfully I do not have to find a better term for the roles of women. Even though the term “roles” has nothing inherently wrong in its definition, a number of the women I interviewed preferred the term “calling.” One woman explained it very well. I said, "I should probably go through my questions and change ‘role’ to ‘call’ because this is not the first time I've heard that." She replied, "And that's one of those best examples that most men will look at that word [role] and say ‘What's wrong with that word?’ And it just strikes a wrong chord for many women - not because it's a bad word, but because of the way society has changed the connotation." Words carry more than just a dictionary meaning for those who hear them. Just using the word "calling" helps us better understand that we need to work together to use our gifts in a God-pleasing way. It is interesting to see how God has made men and women in different ways and, at the same time, so complementary. This is why it is important and beneficial to take not only the denotation of a word into account, but also the connotation. Even a small change in terms can have profoundly positive effect on how people understand the doctrine of the callings of men and women.

Nowhere in the world is the doctrine of the callings of man and woman more challenged and attacked than in the United States of America. There are many unique factors in the United States that have led to this development. Some groups immigrated to the United States for

religious freedom, but most came to escape repressive government: to find freedom. This desire for freedom and equality has long been ingrained into the mindset of all Americans. Everyone has the inalienable rights to claim life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Everyone enjoys the right to a voice and representation, because they are a person. These rights have been taken to the extreme. They are being applied in ways our forefathers, who wrote the Constitution, did not attend. Instead of the freedom of religion, people are pushing freedom from religion. People are trying to force toleration on others, and no differences or inequalities between people will be tolerated, even if placed in nature by God from the very beginning of the world.

This is where the calling of men and women comes under attack. It is asserted that there is no difference between men and women. The adage “anything a man can do, a woman do better” shows one modern worldview. Following the women's rights movement, the secular world has quickly moved to level all of the inequalities between men and women. The adjustments to pay scales, career choice, and legal rights did have a positive impact and brought about changes that improved the lives of many Americans, both male and female. Along with these changes and granting women suffrage, women felt like they had a voice more than ever before. In the United States having a voice is considered nearly inseparable from having a vote.

This American paradigm led to an interesting encounter between a family acquaintance and me. After being introduced, our conversation turned to religion. She told me that she was a Christian, and a Lutheran. I told her I was training to be a pastor. Then she asked me into what synod I was training to be a pastor. When I replied that I was training to be a pastor in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), she replied, "Oh, you're the ones who hate women." I was taken aback by her statement and asked her why she thought the WELS hated women. It all came back to the issue of voting. She could not understand why the church would not allow women to vote and be heard. That very sentiment is not exclusively found outside of the WELS. While WELS women may not go so far as to say that their synod hates women, some do feel ignored and undervalued.

The WELS has done much to expand women's ministry and enhance their opportunities to serve. However, WELS congregations are not united on exactly how to give women a voice and help them feel heard. Some congregations do this well; however, there is still room for improvement in our church body.

In this essay, we will examine two distinct families of interpretation on the callings of men and women. We will compare and contrast the main teaching of the two groups, and identify into which group the WELS falls. Then we will move into an exegetical study of Genesis 1 and 2. Special attention will be given to the order of creation, the image of God, and whether the principle of male headship was instituted before the fall. Our exegetical study will continue with 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14. We will look at doctrinal issues of voice and authority that arise from these passages and compare them to the two interpretations of the callings of men and women. Then we will discuss how the WELS has dealt with this issue in the past, based on the insight gleaned from the five interviews I conducted. Finally, we will look at a number of ideas to help give women a voice in the church. In this essay, I will demonstrate that the Complementarian view is supported by Scripture and gives ample opportunities for women to use their gifts and voice to serve the church.

Egalitarians vs. Complementarians

As we look at the issue of women's voice in the church, we need to understand the background of the controversy. There are two main groups with opposing views. These two groups are called the Egalitarians and the Complementarians. These two groups have a lot of overlapping understandings that both agree on, but their disagreements really come in the principles and application of the callings of men and women.

The Egalitarian View

One Egalitarian writer describes their view of how the callings of men and women play out in the Bible and in the real world when he says,

The essential message of biblical equality is simple and straightforward: Gender, in and of itself, neither privileges nor curtails one's ability to be used to advance the kingdom or to glorify God in any dimension of ministry, mission, society or family. The differences between men and women do not justify granting men unique and perpetual prerogatives of leadership and authority not shared by women. Biblical equality, therefore, denies that there is any created or otherwise God-ordained hierarchy *based solely on gender*. Egalitarianism recognizes patterns of authority in the family, church and society – it is not anarchistic – but rejects the notion that any office, ministry or opportunity should be denied anyone on the grounds of gender alone. This is because women and men are made equally in God's image and likeness (Gen 1:27), are equally fallen (Rom 3: 23), are equally redeemable through Christ's life, death and resurrection (Jn 3:16), equally participants in the new-covenant community (Gal 3:28), equally heirs of God in Christ (1

Pet 3:7), and equally able to be filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit for life and ministry (Acts 2:17).¹

Most of the Egalitarians hold the Scriptures in high regard and look to the Bible for answers. Many of their interpretations of the above Scriptures are quite accurate, but their application and interpretations of different portions of Scriptures sometimes lead them to make applications different from those of Complementarians. Even though Complementarians agree on the last sentence of the above quote, their understanding of Scripture leads them to apply the principle in different manners.

Many Egalitarians see current day structure in the church as something that has changed since the time of the New Testament church.

Many have also argued that women have more latitude to use their gifts when the church was a movement, before it became institutionalized. Thus when people's gifts were valued on the basis of empowerment by the Spirit rather than on some formal office of leadership, women could participate more fully. When church structure moved from house churches to bodies governed by a "monarchical bishop," the diversity in church leadership was suspended.²

The Egalitarians equate the formation of the hierarchical church structure to something that takes away the rights and values of women if they are excluded from certain parts of the hierarchy. The natural state of the Christian community should not look like a government, but like a group of people working in a harmonious fashion to the achievement of a single goal. The formation of a hierarchy that allows only one gender sole leadership of the whole group serves only to harm the women and limit the possibilities of what the group could achieve as a whole. Instead of helping the church achieve its goal, this artificial, imposed structure serves only to limit the gifts of all the people in the church.

Instead of focusing on the structure or gender, Egalitarians point to the fact that God has distributed gifts to all believers. If a person has a particular gift, there is also a command to use that gift to the glory of God. The same holds true when it comes to gifts that involve leadership and authority. There are many examples, both in modern times and in the Bible, of how the Holy

¹ Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee. *Discovering biblical equality: complementarity without hierarchy*. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), 13-14

² Kristina Peterson, *Liberating tradition: women's identity and vocation in Christian perspective*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008), 154

Spirit distributes gifts indiscriminately throughout the church. Men and women both receive spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit. "What is at stake is whether God the Holy Spirit, in his gifting the people of God, ever makes gender a prior requirement for certain kinds of gifting. I will argue that on this point what biblical data we do have seems clear: the Spirit does not."³ Along with the gifts, the Holy Spirit gives each individual the right and responsibility to fully utilize those gifts to further the church. It does not make sense that the Holy Spirit would give a gift and then limit the person's use of that gift. If the Holy Spirit did not want women to be leaders or to have a voice in the church, he would not have given women the gifts of leadership. The Holy Spirit indiscriminately gives these gifts to people from every race, age, and gender. Therefore nobody's voice in the church should be silenced in regard to voting, preaching, or any other form of leadership. This is expressly because the Holy Spirit would not give these gifts if he intended them to be restricted in an individual.

Closely related to understanding that when the Holy Spirit gifts he also enables, empowers, and encourages whoever receives those gifts to utilize them to the full extent, is the Egalitarians understanding of the priesthood of all believers. The priesthood reminds us of the Old Testament worship system. God appointed the tribe of Levi to be the priests. These priests had unique roles, and they also had certain qualifications they had to meet. Old Testament priest had to be male without defect from the tribe of Levi and from the house of Aaron. Along with setting the priests aside from the rest of the Israelite community, these qualifications made the priest able to carry out specific roles for the Old Testament church. They were the mediators between people and the Lord. They instructed the people on what the law of God said, and they also were spiritual leaders for the Old Testament. They were the very voice of God to the people. In the New Testament, we are told that all believers are part of this priesthood. This includes every man, woman, and child. This would change that dynamic of voice and authority in the New Testament church. Being part of the priesthood of all believers would remove any restrictions from those who serve as the head and voice of the congregation.

Although the principle of the priesthood of all believers has gained nearly universal acknowledgement among evangelicals, those advocating male leadership aver that the principle does not necessarily entail that the pastorate is open to all believers regardless of gender. Denying that the priesthood of all believers opens the door to women in

³ Gordon Fee, "The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry," in *Discovering biblical equality: complementarity without hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), 241

ministry requires, however, that this doctrine be deemed irrelevant to the issue of pastoral leadership.⁴

Based on the fact that the gifts given by the Holy Spirit carry a command to use them and considering the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, it is inconsistent to limit the voice or service of women in any position of the church. All believers are now the priesthood. Each believer is responsible for going to God in prayer, teaching people around them, and studying the Word of God to know the truth.

The only way this could come about was through the liberating work of Jesus. Jesus did not come to this world only to free us from sin. He also came to free us from all the effects that sin has in our lives. This means that Jesus came to liberate us from the restricting structure of the calling of men and women, because they were imposed after the fall into sin. So this liberation is not only for women, but also for men.

Coming to this earth as a man, Jesus liberated both men and women from their bondage to the social orders that violate God's intention for human life-in-community. Jesus freed males from their slavery to the role of domination that belongs to the fallen world, in order that they can be truly male. On behalf of women Jesus acted as the paradigmatic human standing against the patriarchal system, bringing women to participate in the new order where sex distinctions no longer determine rank and worth.⁵

In the Garden of Eden, man was not supposed to be domineering over woman. This is not the natural state of humans. Christian men do not want to dominate over women any more than women want to be subjected to subordination under man. This is because any hierarchy based solely on gender degrades the worth of the person underneath. Christians teach that all people are created equal. So this artificial sin-based system of male headship is foreign to the believer and goes against the equality Christ has won for all people. This is also liberating for women because they are no longer dominated by a patriarchal hierarchy that denies their equality both in the image of God and their abilities to advance the Word of God.

This patriarchal hierarchy is wrong because the Bible clearly teaches that men and women are created equally in the image of God. What is the image of God? Egalitarians say that the image of God is some quality in humanity that inarguably separates humans from the rest of

⁴ Stanley J. Grenz, "Biblical Priesthood and Women in Ministry," in *Discovering biblical equality: complementarity without hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), 276

⁵ *Ibid.*, 282

God's creation. Some would link this to the ability to form and maintain relationships, to use reason, or a sense of morality. There is not always agreement on what this image of God truly is. Many Egalitarians like to tie the image of God to dominion over creation. "Whereas the term *image of God* in surrounding culture applies only to royalty, Genesis I emphasizes the role of humanity has in dominion over creation."⁶ Any one of these understandings of the image of God clearly demonstrates that both male and female have this ability or dominion. This is not something that can be taken away by other humans.

Many Egalitarians think that this controversy arose out of flawed hermeneutical principles.

Certain interpreters of Scripture ... because when they want to know what "the Bible says about women" they narrow their focus to two passages, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:8-15. For them these two texts are normative, which means that other things in Scripture have to be understood in light of what is said in these texts. However, to isolate a couple of passages and build a theology from them is never a reliable method of biblical interpretation. In fact, one general rule in good interpretation is that we take the clear things that appear in many places in Scripture and bring them to bear on the obscure or difficult text.⁷

Many Egalitarians assert that modern-day translations do a disservice to the calling and voice of women in the church today. "English translations stemming from the 1940s to the early 1980s tend to gloss over the difficulties. A hierarchal, noninclusive understanding of leadership is partly to blame. Women aren't supposed to be leaders, so the language of leadership, where women are involved, tends to be manipulated."⁸ To really understand how women should be able to work and be in the church, one needs to go back to the original languages. Only on the basis of the original language can the presuppositions of the translators be removed from the translation. Anyone who would take a close and honest look at the Bible as a whole would clearly come to the conclusion that equality between men and women and all people is the key message of the Bible.

⁶ Richard S. Hess, "Equality With and Without Innocence," in *Discovering biblical equality: complementarity without hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), 81

⁷ Peterson, 64

⁸ *Ibid.*, 209

Egalitarians believe this is the message of Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus." This passage is talking about more than just spiritual ramifications. In the fuller context of Galatians 3, this cannot be talking only about spiritual equality, because that would be redundant on Paul's part. However it is clear that Paul is referring back to the order of creation and basically removes any idea that one could read into it. By using terms that describe ethnic, economical and gender it clearly shows that Paul is going beyond just spiritual matters. This is attesting that each and every Christian is renewed to perfect equality by faith in Jesus. There should be no discrimination based on anything. This means that no position, leadership, or right can be denied any believer in the church.

The Complementarian View

Complementarians share many common convictions with Egalitarians. Genesis 1:27 clearly demonstrates that men and women were created equal in the image of God. Instead of the image of God being a characteristic, many Complementarians see the image of God as a state of being. "Man was created to bear the image or likeness of God. Taking in the whole of Scripture, I think it probable that the image of God in man is the soul's personal reflection of God's righteous character. To image God is to mirror His Holiness."⁹ With this understanding of the image of God it shows just how damaging the fall into sin was when it came to relationships. The fall into sin destroyed Adam and Eve's perfect relationship with God along with their relationship with one another. Instead of that pure and holy relationship, sin warped the relationship between God and humans into something foreign and burdensome. It also warped and twisted the perfect relationship between men and women. This relationship was one of equality in status but distinct in calling even before the fall into sin.

Complementarians assert that there is spiritual equality and equality in the value of each and every human being, but when it comes to the callings of men and women, God deliberately created men and women in a different way to highlight the difference in function between male and female.

⁹Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. eds. John Piper, and Wayne A. Grudem (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1991), 96

So, was Eve Adam's equal? Yes and no. She was his spiritual equal and, unlike the animals, "suitable for him." But she was not his equal in that she was his "helper."¹⁰ God did not create man and woman in an undifferentiated way, and their mere maleness and femaleness identify their respective roles. A man, just by virtue of his manhood, is called to lead for God. A woman, just by virtue of her womanhood, is called to help for God.¹¹

In Genesis 2, Moses gave an in-depth account of the creation of humans, the crown of God's creation. God formed Adam out of the dust. While he was still alone God told him to name the animals and take care of the garden. God also gave him the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then after Adam had discovered that it was not good for him to be alone, God made Eve from Adam's rib. The Lord tells us why he does it this way. God says, "I will make a helper suitable for him." Then Eve was given to Adam, and he named her. The very manner in which man and woman were created shows that, even though they are equal in the image and holiness of God, they are different in function and calling. Men are the head or leaders, and women are the helpers. These different functions or callings do not comment on the innate worth of the man or the woman.

God is not interested in unqualified equality¹² among people. Just by looking around at the world today we can see a number of inequalities that say little or nothing about a person's innate worth. It is easy to see that God is not interested in total unlimited equality between people.

God has no intention of blurring sexual distinctness in the interest of equality *in an unqualified sense*. In fact, there are many areas of life in which God has no intention of levelling out the distinctions between us. Consider the obvious: God does not value intellectual or aesthetic equality among people. He does not value the equality of finances, talents, and opportunity. It is God who deliberately ordains inequalities in many aspects of our lives. When I came from the womb, I had only so much potential for physical, intellectual, and aesthetic development. Some are born with less than I was, others with more. Because God is ultimately the one who shapes our lives, I have to conclude that God is not interested in unlimited equality among us. Because God is also wise, I further conclude that unlimited equality must be a false idea. But the Bible does teach that equal personhood and value and dignity of all the human race – men, women, and children – and that must be the only equality that matters to God. One measure of our wisdom as God's image bearers is whether we share this perspective with God. One

¹⁰ This terminology can be confusing. While it could be understood correctly, it would be stated better as "equal in status but different in calling." This would clear up any potential for misunderstanding.

¹¹ Ortlund, Jr., 102

¹² This would be men and women are completely interchangeable in all aspects of life.

measure of our reconciliation with God is whether His sovereign decrees draw from us a response of worship or resentment.¹³

There are inequalities in the world. However, these inequalities only have ramifications for this life. The Holy Spirit dispenses gifts, but not in equal degrees to every person. This does not change a number of key facts about individuals. First, every single human being was created equally in the image of God. Secondly, every single human being is equally condemned because of sin. Third, each and every person is equally redeemed through the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. While there may be inequalities in respect to our earthly and physical lives, we are all equal spiritually before our Lord and Savior through faith.

Complementarians acknowledge the paradox between equal in essence and distinct in function. This plays out interestingly when it comes to spiritual gifts given to believers. It is clear that the Holy Spirit gives out gifts of every type to both men and women. However, men are better suited to some gifts, while women are better suited to other gifts. All the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to the believers in his church are vitally important and crucial to the proper functioning of the church.

The New Testament makes it plain that Christian women, like men, have been given spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7 – 11). Women, like men, are to use these gifts to minister to the body of Christ (1 Peter 4:10); their ministries are indispensable to life and growth of the church (1 Corinthians 12:12 – 26). There are many examples in the New Testament of just such ministries on the part of gifted Christian women (see chapter 5 in this volume). To be true to the New Testament, then, the contemporary church needs to honor these varied ministries of women and to encourage women to pursue them.¹⁴

The secular world might not put as much emphasis on the seemingly unimportant gifts like encouraging, being good with children, and having an innate sense of relationships. However, these are indispensable gifts that help further the church. The secular world might look at being in charge as the only important gift, but our Lord said that service defines the church (Mark 10:41-45).

There has been a concerted effort in recent times to fully understand what the ministries of women can and do entail. Many theologians on both sides look at the callings of men and

¹³Ortlund, Jr., 99-100

¹⁴Douglas Moo, “What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. eds. John Piper, and Wayne A. Grudem (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1991) 179

women from a negative standpoint, what women may and may not do. However, this issue can be seen in a positive way: what are the manifold opportunities for women to serve the Lord? Throughout Scripture we can see a variety of different ways that women served in the church. Not only did women serve in the church but they participated in ministry and the spread of the gospel.

I propose to prove below that women participated in ministry in the Scriptures, but their ministry was a complementarity and supportive ministry, a ministry that fostered and preserved male leadership in the church. Thus, the ministry of women in the church was notable and significant, but never supplanted male leadership; instead, it functioned as a support to male leadership. This view does not rule out all ministries for women. Instead, it sees the ministry of women as complementary and supportive.¹⁵

Miriam, the sister of Moses, comes to mind. She was called a prophetess and a leader of the women. We see how she led the women in singing a song of victory after the Lord drowned Pharaoh's Army in the Red Sea. In Numbers 12, we are told that the Lord spoke to her. She did ministry for the Lord, for the most part, in a fitting way that supported the headship of Moses and Aaron. Deborah also comes to mind. She was a prophetess and a judge, but she did not act in the way that the male judges acted. She did not lead the armies, and she waited for the men to come to her for judgment. She gave the Word of God to support the male headship around her, and called them into action. Time and time again, we see women as prophetesses and servants of the Lord doing great works. They did not do their ministries in a way that undermined male headship, but always seeking to serve the church and further the gospel.

These are a few ways we see women carrying out public ministry responsibilities for the people of the Lord. But there are also many examples of women participating in the priesthood of all believers. Women shared God's Word with men and women across cultures. However, there were no women elders, overseers, or apostles. This is where Complementarians draw a clear line between the doctrines of the priesthood of all believers and the doctrine of the public ministry.

And I think women can proclaim the gospel to men in those cultures, for 1 Timothy 2:11 – 15 prohibits only authoritative teaching to a group of Christians within the church, not evangelism to those outside the church. Such proclamation of the gospel is not limited to

¹⁵Thomas R. Schreuner, "The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership: A Survey of Old and New Testament Examples and Teaching," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. eds. John Piper, and Wayne A. Grudem (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1991) 215

men. She (a woman advancing the gospel) should clearly explain, however (as many missionary women have done in history), that men should assume leadership roles in the governance and teaching ministry of the church as soon as it is established.¹⁶

Every single Christian has the right and responsibility to share their faith. Each and every believer has the right to go before their Lord and Savior without a mediator. These are distinct from authoritative teaching and standing as the head of the congregation. The teaching that only men can hold certain positions of leadership or authority in the church is not contradictory to the priesthood of all believers. This goes all the way back to Genesis and the order of creation. Both Adam and Eve had a responsibility to worship and praise God by not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, even though only Adam directly received this command from God.

However, women are not the only believers who are serving under other people in the church. Every believer is part of the body of Christ. Some parts are seen as more dignified or seemingly important by the world. A body always works together to further its goal. This is the same with the body of Christ. The whole church works together as one giant system to bring the gospel to more and more people. Each member of the body serves a different function and is subject to the head, which is Christ. As believers, we do not strive to fight or change the order God established in the callings of men and women as it is expressed by the order in his church, but to better understand how to work to the glory of God.

The fact that we are all equal in Christ does not exempt us from being obedient to God's Word. Neither does His Word limit us in any way from experiencing complete fulfillment in our relationship with Him. Why not? Because our greatest fulfillment comes from living in submission to Him, expressed in submission to the limits He has established. This is equally true for male and female, Jew and Greek, slave and free.¹⁷

The fact is men and women have not been set up interchangeably by God. God, as a God of order, has set up functional differences between men and women. When we come to understand and embrace these differences, we can better understand our relationship with Christ. He has made us equal to himself in perfection, but we are still under him.

¹⁶ Schreuner, 223

¹⁷H. Wayne, House, "Principles to Use in Establishing Women in Ministry*," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. eds. John Piper, and Wayne A. Grudem (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1991) 361

As we have seen, Complementarians and Egalitarians are in agreement on a number of places on the status of men and women, but the areas of difference causes great debate between the two. Many questions are raised about how someone can be equal in status and unique in function at the same time. The only place we can find the answers to such questions is in Scripture.

To the Scriptures

Before we discuss the calling of men and women and how it was applied specifically in the church after biblical times¹⁸, let us go back to the Scriptures and see what God has given us. The Complementarians and some Egalitarians firmly hold to the fact that Scripture is God's Word. What better place to start our search of the Scriptures than in Genesis 1 and 2. We will take a look at what God says about men and women from the creation of the world.

Genesis 1 and 2

The issue of what the image of God is can cause confusion in the application of the callings of men and women. It is clear, from verse 26 and the following verse, that both men and women are created equally in the image of God. This is something that distinguishes mankind from all other creatures, but what exactly is this image of God? Payne states,

God's repeated references to himself as "us" in 1:26 highlight the relational interpersonal aspect of God and implies that there is a relational interpersonal aspect to male and female being "in the image of God". There is an analogy between God in community ("let us make") and man in community ("male and female"). It is not the God, who is spirit, is sexual, but that personal relationships are essential to the being of God and of human kind¹⁹

If relationships were the key factor of what it means to be in the image of God, could we say that men and women were created equal? Women, in general, seem more focused on and better at relationships than men. This understanding of the image of God would also fail to separate us from the animals. Many animals form lifelong relationships, and humans can form relationships

¹⁸ By "biblical times" I mean the time after the Bible was finished being written.

¹⁹ Philip Barton Payne, *Man and woman, one in Christ: an exegetical and theological study of Paul's Letters*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2009), 42

with animals. There has to be something more to the image of God than just a mere ability to form relationships. Peterson lays out some other interpretations of what the image of God is.

Some have suggested that the *imago Dei* refers to some sort of likeness to God, such as human rationality, or moral nature, or the ability to love deeply, or even the capacity for creativity. Others had suggested that the *imago Dei* has to do with humans being created for relationship with God, and still others link it to the rulership (sic) the humans were to have or the care they were supposed to exercise over creation on God's behalf. Finally, some have suggested that the *imago Dei* is a royal image signifying that human beings represent God much as monarchs in ancient societies were thought to represent the divine, or even in the way statuary was said to represent a deity, by being the location of the deity's presence.²⁰

All these interpretations of the image of God miss what the image of God truly is. If the image of God is an ability of a person to be rational, moral, love deeply, or be creative, why are people still able to do it today? The image of God is also something more than just human dominion over the rest of God's creation. Even people who do not believe have these capabilities. In the fall, humans lost the image of God, and they were born into the image of man (Genesis 5:1-5). When we are brought to faith, that image of God is restored (Ephesians 4:20-24, Colossians 3:9-10). There must be something else that is the image of God.

The image of God is something special. God is not a physical being, so we should look to something other than physical traits to reflect the image of God. In Lawrenz and Jeske's commentary on Genesis 1 – 11, they write about the image of God in this way:

For a proper understanding of the divine image, it is very vital that we remember that the Christian's new self is a restoration of it. That knowledge unlocks the secrets of man's original righteousness and holiness, the secret of his sinlessness. The divine image flowed out of the bond of faith, out of perfect trust in God, with which man, male and female, was created. Break that bond of faith and the image of God would be lost. Satan knew that. That is why his attack was against Eve's trust in God and for his own goodness. When Satan succeeded in breaking that trust with his lie, Eve's divine image, and subsequently that of Adam, was shattered and lost.²¹

The image of God is holiness and perfection. This can only be found in a relationship with God. Through faith, this image of God is restored in all believers, even when they struggle against their sinful nature. To understand the image of God in any other way would lead to an imbalance

²⁰ Peterson, 28

²¹ Carl J. Lawrenz, and John C. Jeske. *A Commentary on Genesis 1-11*. (Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Pub. House, 2004). 76

of his image between men and women. Men tend to be more geared toward leadership and results, and women tend to be more relationship oriented. If the image of God fell into any of these categories, one could argue that one gender had more of the image of God. However, the image of God is a holiness and a perfection that is completely in line with God's will.

Another of the key issues concerns the original Hebrew in Genesis; specifically, when “אָדָם” is talking about Adam, man, or mankind. In Genesis 1:27, אָדָם is referring to mankind. The difficulty comes in when אִתּוֹ, the 3rd person masculine singular pronoun, is used. Gender inclusive language can make it more difficult to understand. The NIV 11 translates verse 27 as, “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created *them*; male and female he created them(Emphasis mine).”²² This confusion comes not with the word for mankind, but when translators change אִתּוֹ from singular to plural. This leads to the assertion that Chapter 2 might be an alternate account that was added to raise men over women. The gender and number of the pronouns in this verse show that Genesis 2 is not an alternate account, but a more in-depth retelling of the creation account. When God made man, he made the man first and then made woman second. The fact that male and female were created at different times is even spelled out in verse 27, with “male and female” mentioned specifically, as opposed to “man.” The collective noun also points to a staged creation account. The first chapter of Genesis was an overview, and chapter 2 is a more in-depth look at the crown of God’s creation. The most important point of this chapter is that both man and woman were created in God’s image.

As the pinnacle of his creation, God now speaks to man and woman and gives them their purpose. This is a significant part of the creation account as one of only two places that God is recorded speaking directly to humans before the fall into sin. He tells them to be fruitful and increase in number, subdue the Earth, and rule over all the created animals. It is here that God also gives all the trees and plants as food to the people and animals. God is speaking to both of them and gives them the same work to do. However, verses 28 and 29 stand in contrast to Gen 2: 16-17.²³ God gave Adam the one commandment, telling him not to eat from the tree of the

²² *The New International Version*. 2011 Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

²³ And the LORD God commanded the man saying, “from all the trees of the garden for you to eat

knowledge of good and evil. In 28 and 29 God is speaking to both Adam and Eve, but in chapter 2 he speaks only to Adam, the head. Adam was supposed to lead the family in the proper way to worship and obey God. Many call the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil Adam and Eve's church, "This tree of the knowledge of good and evil was Adam's church, altar, and pulpit. Here he was to yield to God the obedience he owed, give recognition to the Word and will of God, give thanks to God, and call upon God for aid against temptation."²⁴ This demonstrates that God already had in mind, before the fall into sin, that Adam was the spiritual leader. Peterson asserts, "Nowhere in Genesis 1 or 2 is the man said to lead, inspire, or dominate²⁵, and these imported notions obscure the mutuality of the Genesis text."²⁶ It may not be explicitly stated that the man was the leader or inspirer of the woman, but it is clearly seen that is the case. Only Adam receives the command, and it is not repeated elsewhere. In Genesis chapter 3, we see that Eve had heard this command. Some might argue that Genesis 1:28, 29 was just an abbreviation, and the command was included, but a more natural understanding would be that Adam, the spiritual head, explained God's command to her. This is the better understanding because when God gave the commandment not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God had not yet built Eve from Adam's rib.

This order of creation is also important to an understanding of the calling of men and women. By "order of creation" it is not meant just whom was created first, but also underscores the functionality of humanity in the way that God created male and female. Most Egalitarians assert the first mention of a hierarchy does not happen until after the fall into sin.

It is here (Gen 3:16) that we have the first mention of a hierarchy, of one-person rule over the other. The mutuality that is intended by the joint commission is now marred by the altered relationship described in the statement: your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you here, in the aftermath of the fall, and the "curse," the first mention of male domination female subjugation.²⁷

And from the tree of the knowledge good and evil you must not eat from it, for on the day you eat from it you will surely die.

²⁴ Lawrenz and Jeske, 111

²⁵ The concept of domination is not found in the creation account. This is a caricature many Egalitarians impose on the principle of head and help.

²⁶ Peterson, 37

²⁷ Ibid., 40

This view ignores the fact that Genesis chapter 1 and 2 are not different accounts, but rather that chapter 2 is a more in-depth view of the most important part of God's creation.

If God had given us only his revelation of Genesis chapter 1, we might have concluded that God made mankind, male and female, and one creative act. There we heard that both the like are created in God's image. To both together God assigned domination over the earth and all of its creatures. Yet the supplementary revelation of chapter 2 informs us that for the existence of this joint human domination, God at creation at the same time established a specific relationship between the two sexes. He assigned distinctive roles for men and women for this earthly life.²⁸

This relationship was firmly established before the fall and was not burdensome to the man or woman. This is what Paul explains to us in 1 Corinthians 11. Christ is the head of man and man is the head of woman. Just as Christ was always the head of man even before the fall into sin, so God established the head-helper relationship before the fall into sin. Again it is alluded to in 1 Timothy 2:13. We are told man was formed first, then the women. We see that Genesis 3:16 clearly demonstrates that the different callings for men and women only become burdensome after sin has distorted God's gift of the callings of men and women.

A lot can be imagined about what man and woman's relationship was before the fall. However, much can be said about helper (עֲזָרָה) and the word corresponding to (כְּנֻגְדָּהּ). The word here used for helper occurs 21 times in the Old Testament and is most often used in reference to God.

Some have maintained that being a helper does not in itself imply a subordinate position. This is correct, for in the Holy Scriptures God himself urges us to turn above all to him as our helper (Ps46:1; Heb 13:6). In exercising his headship over his wife and in self-sacrificing love, man too is to be a helper to her. It is quite a different matter, however, when we are told that God specifically made woman to be a helper for man. Being made a helper for a man can be understood only as being made for a role subordinate to that of the man. Being subordinate should, however, not be equated with being of lesser quality, worth, or importance. The woman's subordination to the man is a unity subordination. It involves a divine assignment of distinctive responsibilities to the woman in the interest of marriage and the family, upon which human society in this earthly life is basically structured. Eve was a helper by the manner in which she was made by God and by virtue of what she was like through God's creative act. And what was true of Eve is true of all womankind inasmuch as they too are what they are made to be through her creation.²⁹

²⁸ Lawrenz and Jeske, 114

²⁹ Ibid., 116

When the word עֵזֶר is connected with the word כְּנֻגְדּוֹ, it shows a structural relationship between man and woman. It does not communicate an innate superiority or inferiority to either the man or the woman. It communicates a functional relationship that would be one as head and the other as a helper. Both the head and helper are equal in person and spirit, but there is a subordination in function. “It is not good for man to be alone” is not saying that he is imperfect, but incomplete. The man needed the woman as a companion, and as someone to help him fulfill the tasks God had assigned.

God already knew what Adam needed. God's statement that, “it is not good for man to be alone” is something that he said to reveal his will to us. However, it takes action to highlight this need to Adam. Adam was already created and had already received God's command about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God has Adam name all the animals to demonstrate what God already knew: Adam needed a helper that corresponded to him. During the naming process, no corresponding helper was found for Adam. Not one animal was on the same level as Adam. God knew Adam needed someone, and he was making it clear to Adam that he needed someone. Adam is intelligent and he comes to the same realization. In the image of God, Adam's will and understanding mirrored God's, and he thought God's thought after him. He was all alone without a companion that was like him. So the Lord moves to remedy the situation.

God does something wonderful for man. He makes him fall asleep, takes a rib, and builds woman from the rib. It is interesting to note that the Lord does not create a completely new being to be man's helper, but from him produces a helper that is corresponding to him. God makes woman out of man. She has the image of God and is perfect just as the man is perfect because they are of the same substance. The fact is she was still taken out of man, and while equal to him in personhood, relationship to God, and perfection, she is still under man. She is not inferior in any way to the man, but was placed under the man's headship in a functional partnership. Sometimes too much emphasis is put on the part of the body that God used to make woman. It is easy to read too much into it. "The fact that she was created from Adam's rib emphasizes the quality of the two people, rather than them from the foot to be walked on or from the head to rule over him."³⁰ The reason God used Adam's rib is not explicitly stated. Adam gives us an insight into what it meant when he called Eve, “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.” God made Eve

³⁰ Peterson, 35-36

out of Adam to show without a doubt that she was meant for him. She corresponded to him. Only the woman made from the man was able to perfectly complement him in carrying out the commands God gave him. Then the woman was brought to the man. It was not left up to chance and the man was not given to the woman.

Adam praises God and identifies the woman as the one corresponding to him. "Adam gave testimony to the unity of the human race and made joyful tribute to the dignity of the one. He had knowledge that she was not inferior, yet also not identical, but fashioned from his bones and his flesh to be a fitting complement and helper."³¹ Adam knew this is exactly who he needed. Here Adam names the woman, later he will rename her Eve. We do not know exactly what is meant when Adam named all the animals, whether he placed them in categories or species. We do not know, but the same verb is used for what Adam did for the animals and for Eve here. Even though Adam named the animals and woman, there is a difference between the relationship of man and animal, and man and woman. Adam and Eve were of the same substance. The woman perfectly corresponded to him in a way no animal ever could. Both Adam and Eve were given dominion over all living things, but as we see in the next verses there is a special relationship that is put in place for Adam and Eve.

Verse 24 speaks more to marriage, but still has some application for the relationship between men and women in the church. According to the order of creation, the man is specifically mentioned as taking the initiative in marriage and this arrangement is with the woman's consent. "The woman's unconditional consent is just as clearly implied. How otherwise would the man know that she is his woman, to whom he is determined to cling until God parts them by the death of either spouse?"³² Some would argue that the man is the inferior person because he leaves and cleaves, whereas nothing like this is said about the woman. The emphasis, however, is on the action of the man. He initiates and leads. He moves away from his parents and towards his spouse and is responsible for the relationship which should never be devoid of a spiritual aspect. This is also how the relationships should be in church. Godly men should take the initiative, with the consent and support of the women.

From Genesis 1 and 2, we can see it clearly demonstrated that there is a functional hierarchy established from the creation of the world. This hierarchy did not speak to the inherent

³¹ Lawrenz and Jeske, 122

³²Ibid., 123

worth or quality of the man or the woman. Both the man and the woman were created equally in the image of God. Both the man and the woman were given the command to be fruitful, to subdue, and to rule over all of creation. It is also clearly demonstrated that God has established man as the head and women as the helper. Before the fall into sin, this relationship was not strained and distorted by sin. The man and the woman lived and functioned perfectly as head and helper as God intended from their very creation. After the fall into sin, the perfect unity and functional nature of the head helper relationship is twisted and distorted, making it harder for men and women to work together. We see this in Genesis 3 where Adam accuses Eve instead of protecting her. It is most clearly laid out for us in Genesis 3:16 when God states the strife that has now entered into the relationship between men and women because of sin. The apostle Paul also attests to the fact that there is this hierarchy in 1 Corinthians 11:3 where head (*κεφαλή*) means authority. The fall into sin did not force a foreign concept of head and helper onto the man and woman, but it twisted the perfect relationship into something burdensome.

1 Corinthians 14:33-35

Now we move on from Genesis to 1 Corinthians 14:33-35. It has been demonstrated from Scripture that the order of creation placed man as head and women as helper. We are not the first believers to struggle with this issue. In 1 Corinthians 14, we see Paul telling the Corinthians how to worship in an orderly manner. It is at this point, for the sake of order, Paul begins to speak of how women should conduct themselves in the church.

1 Corinthians 14:33 gives significant insight to how this section fits into the chapter. It both connects and separates this section from what precedes it. God is a God of order. He has an order in worship as there is order in his creation. Just as we honor God's order in creation, we need to honor God's order in worship. Without order no one is edified, because when order breaks down problems work their way into the church. Paul is moving onto a new topic which is really a sub-point under the topic of orderly worship done in a way to edify all the believers. Some people like to dismiss this part as an example of an application of a principle and not the principle itself, like with head coverings in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Paul is basically saying the opposite in the two places: in 1 Corinthians 11:16 *ἡμεῖς τοιαύτην συνήθειαν οὐκ ἔχομεν οὐδὲ αἱ ἐκκλησίαι τοῦ θεοῦ*³³, and in 1 Corinthians 14:33 *Ὡς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων*. In 1

³³ We have no such practice neither [do] the churches of God.

Corinthians 11:16, head coverings were a custom that was an application of the principle of the calling of men and women in the church, acknowledging the headship of men. The covering of the head showed submission, not inferiority, and a respect for the order God established at creation. The fact that 1 Corinthians 14:33 begins with, “in all the churches of the saints,” shows he is building on the principle that will be explained in the following verses. Whereas, 1 Corinthians 11:16 says, “We have no such practice—nor do the churches of God,” at the end as a way of stating that this was Paul’s advice on the particular application of head coverings to show submission. Head coverings were an expression of the callings of women to be under the leadership of men. This was a uniquely Corinthian application of the principle of head and helper. Paul is encouraging them to continue the practice because it clearly attested to the principle.

Paul moves on to the main point in verse 34, “αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν· οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν, ἀλλὰ ὑποτασέσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει.”³⁴ Taken out of context, this would seem to say that women are not allowed to make any noise in the church. That is not the case. This verse is speaking of authoritative speech and is connected to the use of gifts in the church. In 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 Paul lays out a worship service that is completely alien to us. Each time a number of directly inspired prophets would speak. When one stood up he would silence the former prophet. There were also people with the gift of interpretation and discernment that would judge the words of the prophet. Any participation in this manner would exercise authority. Women are not to stand up and disrupt the message being given. We would not allow anyone to verbally interrupt a pastor during his sermon; that would be out of order. However, it is clear that women do and are encouraged to participate in the church. In fact, Paul says women do pray in the church (1 Corinthians 11).

It is helpful to look at these verses not only as a whole, but also broken down into the key components. There are a number of key words and phrases in this verse alone which shed some light on the meaning of the verse. We also must keep in mind that the denotation of the word goes only so far, and we need to keep the context in view. A good illustration of this is *σιγάτωσαν*, the word for silent. *Σιγαω* has two meanings in A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd Edition (BGAD): to be silent, or to keep

³⁴ The women in the churches be silent. For not permitted for them to speak, but be subject, just as also the law says.

something secret. The most natural way to understand this is as being silent in the church. The context it is not saying that women are to be completely mute in church, but they should be silent when it would overstep the bounds of authority. Without the worship context of the entire letter of 1 Corinthians where prophets were speaking and being silenced or their words were being judged by others, this silence could easily be misapplied. We hear that women pray. There are examples of female prophets. Additionally a direct correlation between New Testament worship and modern worship does not exist. This is why Paul uses such a strong word for silence here because an assertion in the Corinthian worship service would be perceived as authoritative. We see that even in the Old Testament and the New Testament women were invited and expected to participate in certain aspects of worship. Paul was not trying to push women completely out of worship, but only prohibited speaking that violated the callings of men and women.

Obviously, the mere sense of “talk” is not intended. From which we may safely gather that God does not expect stone silence from women in church, but the avoidance of such speaking as would challenge His created order. It would be strange indeed if Paul were trying to bar women of the NT church from a role they possessed under the Old Covenant. There they were urged to participate in the singing, praising and confessing of the congregation.³⁵

Υποτασσω, to be subject, can mean to cause someone to be in a submissive relationship or to attach a document to another document. Obviously the first definition is the one that fits the best. It is clear that this is submission as part of a structure, similar to *υποταγη* in 1 Timothy 2:11 in function and meaning, even though there is a difference between a noun and a verb. We will go into greater detail when we look at 1 Timothy 2. The highlight of this verb is stressing functionality, not worth.

The reason Paul gives for this submission and silence is because of the law. What does *καθως και ο νομος λεγει* mean? The word “law” could be used to describe a number of different things. It could mean the Ten Commandments, the whole Old Testament, the Pentateuch, or God's law that condemns sinners. It is most natural to take the law to mean the Pentateuch here, although there are no specific probates on women speaking.

It is true that there is no specific evidence express command in the law, the Old Testament Torah, no express and specific *εντολη*, which orders woman to be subject. The closest we come to such a command is the word spoken to Eve after the fall which made

³⁵ Edward Fredrich, "Women's Call to Serve in the Church, Home, and Society." (Pastor-Teacher Conference from Michigan District, Saginaw, Michigan, June 15, 1977) 5

her subject to a sinful husband, and many commentators immediately assume that Paul must have that Word of God and mind. But the law, the Torah, is more than the sum of the total of all the specific *εντολη* given by God in the Old Testament. The law includes also the story of creation and all that is said there to reveal to us what the holy, immutable will of God is in regard to human behavior.³⁶

Even though no express command is mentioned, it is easy to determine from the order of creation that Paul alludes to a number of times, including earlier in 1 Corinthians 11 when talking about head coverings. The principle of head and helper, established before the fall into sin, is a principle that still guides the actions of men and women today.

Paul moves to another application of the principle of head and helper in the church. What Paul says in verse 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 in the church” seems strange and is not reflected in our current practice in the WELS, which encourages women to participate in Bible classes. What Paul says here is not a principle, but an application. In the context of the Corinthian congregation, a question during the part of worship where the prophets were speaking would be seen as judging what the prophet was saying. This would be a disregard for the principle of head and helper. With the direction to ask her own husband at home, Paul is ensuring that women would be able to learn and understand what the prophet was saying. In our Bible classes today, having women ask questions usually is not challenging the authority of the leader and would not be seen that way.

This is a difficult section of Scripture to understand correctly. Not only does it sound strange to us today, but it also seems to go against other portions of Scripture. One of the humanly easiest ways to resolve this is to view this portion of Scripture as an interpolation. "Understanding 1 Cor 14:34-35 as an interpolation, namely, a passage that was not originally in the text but was inserted later, makes perfect sense for the entire passage... Only an interpolation solves the contextual problem that these verses disrupt the flow of Paul's argument."³⁷ However, there is no evidence to support dismissing this section of Scripture as an interpolation, and this is not the only section of Scripture that uses this terminology to describe how women are to be heard in the church.

³⁶ Siegbert, Becker. "An Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36." *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (1981): 168-175. 180

³⁷ Payne, 225

1 Timothy 2:11-14

In 1 Timothy 2:11-14 Paul also uses very similar language to talk about the callings of men and women. 1 Timothy is a very unique book. Paul was writing to one of his students, who was a new pastor. Paul gives Timothy advice and guidelines on how a church should run. Paul is also advising Timothy on how to deal with false doctrine in the church. Some Egalitarians like to see it as one or the other, but they do not see both, "Paul is addressing the heresy of that place and not writing out the church manual."³⁸ That is not quite how Paul sees it. Paul says in 1 Timothy 3:14, 15, "I am writing these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you'll know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God." In chapter 2, Paul is talking specifically about how to act in church. Paul is doing both. But this letter to Timothy is not something that only applied to his congregation. Paul is articulating a principle, head and helper, which applies to all the churches. He also gives applications drawn from that principle to Timothy for his congregation. After he talks about how the men should act, he moves on to how women should dress and act at church.

One of the main descriptive words Paul uses to describe women in the church is *ἡσυχία*. Quietness does not have the meaning of not talking, but is more of an attitude. In the BDAG, *ἡσυχία* has two meanings for this word: 1) a state of quietness without disturbance, quietness, rest and 2) a state of saying nothing or very little, silence. The BDAG place this verse under the second meaning. This noun is used only four times in the New Testament, twice here in 1 Timothy, once in 1 Thessalonians 3:12, and once also in Acts 22:2. It is interesting that BDAG pairs the 1 Timothy and Acts passages together even though in Acts, *ἡσυχία* is in a verbal phrase, and in 1 Timothy it is in a prepositional phrase. The use of *ἡσυχία* in 1 Thessalonians seems to be closer to its usage in 1 Timothy. 1 Thessalonians 3:12 has *μετὰ ἡσυχίας ἐργαζόμενοι*, and in 1 Timothy 2:11 *ἐν ἡσυχία μανθανέτω*, but in Acts 22:2 *μᾶλλον παρέσχον ἡσυχίαν*. In 1 Timothy and 1 Thessalonians *ἡσυχία* follows a preposition and precedes a verb, while in Acts it is verb then *ἡσυχία* as an object of the verb. This shows that just as in 1 Thessalonians, this noun is showing more of a state of being than a specific action as it does in Acts. This is not a

³⁸ Peterson, 69

prohibition of women from speaking in church but an attitude that is not a commandeering or forceful way of questioning to undermine the teacher. This is made clear by the next dative noun ὑποταγῆ. The two datives here are commenting on how a woman should learn in the church. The two datives are playing off of each other while giving a slightly different emphasis on the verb “to learn.” Seeing how ὑποταγῆ is a state of being and not a specific action, it would also solidify the understanding of ἡσυχία to be the same.

The BDAG only has one definition of ὑποταγῆ; the state of submissiveness, subjection, and subordination, as opposed to setting oneself up as controller. This noun is used four times in the New Testament in 1 Timothy 2:11, 3:4, 2 Corinthians 9:13, and Galatians 2:5. This word has the idea of someone recognizing their place in a structure, and does not comment on the value of the person or their innate worth. ὑποταγῆ simply states they have a place in the structure that is under someone else. In Galatians 2:5, Paul is under the Gospel, in 2 Corinthians 9:13 God’s people are placing themselves under their confession of the gospel of Christ, and in 1 Timothy 3:4 children are under their parents.

Subordination is for the sake of function and welfare. The child is subordinate to the parents for the child’s welfare, not to punish the child or to benefit the parents. Christ is subordinate to God in carrying out the task of salvation. This does not degrade Christ. The one in the superior or upper position exercises love to those in the lower positions. That’s why Paul says that husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church. Of course many do not model their family lives after the divine pattern and grief must necessarily ensue. Still the abuse of the divine pattern does not allow abrogation of the pattern because it is defiled by sin.³⁹

Nowhere does this imply that those who are subordinate are of any less value, just that they have a calling that is under someone else.

A good illustration of this submission would be to compare the brain and the heart. Both the brain and the heart need each other to function. Both are vitally important to the survival of the body, so which one is more important? It is impossible to say that one or the other is more important, valuable, or superior. The fact is they are both indispensable to the body. The brain sends signals to the heart to tell it to keep beating. The heart sends blood to the brain. You can

³⁹ Alan Siggelkow, "Women in the Church: Are They Seeking a Bigger Role? (1 Timothy 2:9-15)." (Conference from SE Wisconsin District, Chicago, Illinois, January 14, 1975), 8

say that the heart is subordinate to the brain, but it is no less important or vital to life. There is a functional structure that they operate within to keep the body alive.

Paul goes on to explain in further detail to make it even more clear what he means in the following verses. **12** διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἀνδρός, ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ.⁴⁰ The first portion of verse 12 explains what the opposite of verse 11 is. To teach is different than to be in quietness, and exercising authority is different from being in all submission. There is also significance in the fact that in verse 11 the two words are nouns, whereas in verse 12 the words are verbs. Nouns show what we are, but verbs show what we do. Our actions should line up with what we are. The restatement of ἡσυχία at the end of verse 12 also marks this as a unit by serving as a book end for the statements. The fact that all the verbs are present infinitives in this verse stresses that an ongoing attitude should be present.

How are we to understand διδάσκειν? BDAG has two definitions for διδάσκειν: to tell someone what to do, or to provide instructions in a formal or informal setting. Διδάσκειν is most often used to describe Jesus teaching his disciples and other believers. Vary rarely is διδάσκειν used in a context without a sense of authority behind it. This is a common verb, but contains an element of authority that is not to be held by women. "The Greek word διδάσκειν also has this connotation of being a master over those taught."⁴¹ It is helpful to contrast this word with παιδεία which is defined as the act of giving guidance for responsible living, or the state of being brought up properly. Both can be translated "teach", but διδάσκειν has a more authoritative tone: a teacher who takes disciples and trains them in doctrines of the church; as opposed to parents teaching a child. Both have authority, but it is of a different type.

The quietness and silence to which Paul refers is the proper attitude of submission with which God would have women adorn themselves in the church. The teaching that Paul prohibits is that teaching which exercises authority over men. The inspired apostle has taken the authority/submission principle and used it to enlighten our understanding of how women may properly serve in the church. And once again he has gone back to Genesis to support his proposition.⁴²

⁴⁰ And to teach a woman I do not permit nor to exercise authority over a man, but to be in quietness.

⁴¹ Thomas Henning, "Exegesis of 1 Timothy 2 with Emphasis on Women in the Church." (Minnesota Pastoral Conference from Minnesota District, West St. Paul, Minnesota, April 27, 1976) 8

⁴² Daniel Leyrer, "Women in the Church: Drawing the Line between Truth and Tradition." (WELS-ELS Pastor-Teacher Conference, Cannon Beach, Oregon, October 10, 1991), 4

Children are placed in submission (ὑποταγή) under parents, but a teacher who teaches (διδάσκειν) place people under (ὑποταγή) him. God has a structure for people that take on different roles and callings when it comes to men and women.

The word ἀυθεντεῖν occurs only once in the New Testament and has caused almost endless debate on meaning. BDAG defines it as: to assume a stance of independent authority, give orders to, dictate to, used with the genitive of person. This is the opposite of ἡσυχία as shown by the next phrase ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχία. It also points back and gives better understanding of what ἡσυχία is, not the absence of speaking, but an attitude of being under in a functional role. However, since ἀυθεντεῖν occurs only once, it has been a topic of great discussion. Even outside of the New Testament, ἀυθεντεῖν was rarely used. The word itself is compound, coming from, αὐτός meaning self, and ἐντος a form of ἵημι meaning to send or to thrust. The two most common translations of this word are the one we see in BDAG and “to murder.” “There are literally hundreds of incidences where there emerges a mistake to leave the meaning of ‘thrusting oneself forward, asserting oneself, acting as lord and master’”⁴³ Given the context, pushing oneself forward in an authoritative manner is the best fit. However, suggested meanings range into the idea of sexual dominance drawing from the supposed cultic worship Paul is speaking against in 1 Timothy.⁴⁴ However the context clearly points to an understanding that asserts an understanding of authority.

The negative conjunctive οὐδὲ brings in an interesting discussion. Is Paul talking about two different activities or just one? Some have argued that οὐδὲ forms a hendiadys⁴⁵ with the words διδάσκειν and ἀυθεντεῖν. This means that the only act of authority would be to teach. The other understanding is that Paul is connecting these two ideas together. One is a principle, exercising authority over (ἀυθεντεῖν), and the other is an application, to teach (διδάσκειν).

“It seems therefore that Paul is prohibiting two separate events: teaching and acting in authority. The relationship that exists between the two is that of a principle and a specific application of that principle... This agrees with the pattern that same pattern noted in vv

⁴³ Armin Panning, "AYΘETEIN---A Word Study." *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (1981): 185-91. 186

⁴⁴ This is one Egalitarian interpretation to try to explain away the clear understanding of the word ἀυθεντεῖν. See footnote 43.

⁴⁵ A figure of speech used for emphasis literally “one through two.”

9-10; the principle of modesty and dress appropriate to one's character find specific application in the proper adornment of hair.⁴⁶

Seeing how in a hendiadys the two words are usually right next to each other, the distance between διδάσκειν and ἀυθεντεῖν makes the “principle application” understanding more natural. This understanding also mirrors the pattern that has been set up only a few verses before. We see this principle application relationship in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 with order in worship and silence and in 1 Corinthians 11 with authority and praying with head coverings.

Paul now gives the reason for this submission and quietness in verse 13 Ἀδὰμ γὰρ πρῶτος ἐπλάσθη, εἶτα Εὐά.⁴⁷ The γὰρ clearly shows that the order of creation⁴⁸ is the reason for women to be in submission and was in effect before the fall into sin as well. In the next verse we see that sin also played a part in this submission, but is not part of the foundation of the callings of men and women. The order of creation was already established before the fall. Paul, being an inspired writer, has more insight and understanding on this matter than we do today. He had no doubt what Moses was saying in Genesis because the same God gave them both the words to say. The order of creation cannot be written off because it offends modern ears and senses. In fact, Paul affirms the order of creation. This inspired writer explains the order of creation even better in 1 Corinthians 11:8, 9 “For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.”⁴⁹ Two important facts are gained by knowing that the order of creation established the head helper relationship. First, this relationship was meant to be a gift from God to edify and bless us. Secondly, this relationship was set up for all time. It is the principle that all our applications have to be in line with. Paul moves on to the relationship and calling of men and women in view of the fall.

Verse 14, talking about how it was Eve who was deceived, has been misapplied by people on both sides. The Egalitarians have totally dismissed this passage and use it to condemn

⁴⁶ William D Mounce, "Correction of Improper Conduct." In *Word Biblical Commentary*, 117-147. Vol. 46. (Dallas TX: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 130

⁴⁷ For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

⁴⁸ Order of creation is not just the sequence of creation, but the underling structure of the way God wants the world to work. See page 16

⁴⁹ *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. 1984. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Paul. In this verse they find an excuse to ignore what he says here and in 1 Corinthians 14 about the callings of men and women. On the other hand, some modern Complementarians, as well as other ancient peoples, have used this passage to try to say women are inferior to men morally and rationally.

It is therefore clear that the Apostle does not forbid women to teach publicly and to rule because she has committed a greater sin in Eve than man in Adam, but because from the beginning she showed herself to be 'the weaker vessel,' because in the area of understanding she is not equal to men, because she is more easily deceived and therefore not qualified for ruling authoritative teaching.⁵⁰

Both are abuses of the passage. Just like the verse before, this verse is a statement of fact. It is an example of a reversal of callings. Adam gave over to the leadership of Eve. Adam did not act in protection of Eve and she was deceived. It is unclear if Adam would have fared much better against Satan if he were the one targeted. In fact, we hear that he was with her and did nothing. It is unfair to draw the conclusion that Adam, representative of all men, was morally and mentally superior to Eve, representative of all women.

The second God-inspired reason why woman is forbidden to have dominion over the man is the order of the fall into sin. This does not mean that Eve's sin was greater than Adam's. If we can speak of sin being greater we would have to speak about Adam's sin as the greater. God had directly given the command not to eat to Adam. Adam had relayed it to Eve. Satan directly tempted Eve. Through Eve Satan tempted Adam. What Paul refers to here is that Eve first sinned and then the fall into sin was fulfilled by Adam.⁵¹

Paul is not commenting on the character of all women. He is only stating the fact that the woman was deceived and this sin brought about a burdensome form of submission. People struggled with this in Paul's time, and we continue to struggle with it in our time as well. There is a fine distinction between the words *ἠπατήθη* and *ἐξαπατηθεῖσα*. Both come from *απαταω* which has two meanings: deceive/mislead or enjoy oneself/live pleurably. The word *ἐξαπατηθεῖσα* is used to describe what happened to Eve, and the distinction lies in the prefix. *εξ* has the idea of someone causing someone else to accept false ideas. This is not placing the blame on Eve, but shows that she was the means through which sin came into the world. As a result of sin, the relationship between men and women was warped. No longer was the God-ordained head helper

⁵⁰ William Henkel, "The Status of Women in the New Testament Church." *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 58, 59 no. 3, 1 (1961, 1962): 210-223, 27-42. 216

⁵¹ Siggelkow, 7

relationship perfect. Sin introduced resenting and dominating attitudes into that perfect relationship God intended to be free of strife. However, God did not institute or create the head helper relationship at the fall.

Paul points out that there is an order of creation that has divinely instituted callings for men and women. This affects a few areas for women's ministries in the church. We see that women are limited to not having authority over men. This leaves open a multitude of ways that women can and should use their voice in the church. Women should participate in Bible classes and worship services. Women's voice and their gifts as a leader need to be acknowledge and explored, since there are many areas for women to serve that will give volume to their voice. This will be done with the biblical principle of the callings of men and women as head and helper.

A word from the Women of the WELS

After completing my study of Scripture, I interviewed five people to find out how they understood the calling of men and women and how it pertains to women's voice in the church. I obtained two names from Prof. Gurgel, my advisor. He gave me the names of women who also shared an interest in this topic. After e-mailing them to ask for an interview, I also asked for the names of other women who would be willing to give me an interview. I collected a list of eight people who might give me an interview. Five of them ended up giving me an interview, four of them over the phone and one through e-mail. For these interviews, I came up with a list of questions.⁵² The questions ranged from a general understanding of the callings of men and women to their understanding of specific aspects of women's voice in the church. I recorded the interviews with their permission, and also took notes on significant points.

The callings of men and women

In general, all five of the women I interviewed were on the same page. One of the first things that was brought to my attention was using the word "call" or "calling" instead of the word "role." This might seem like an inconsequential distinction to many people, but this simple switch cast this entire issue into a more positive light. Role, in and of itself, is a fine word that expresses the principle of head helper, but the word has a negative connotation imposed on it. "Role" seems to communicate that women fit a certain label, and they need to be fit into a certain box. "Calling" on the other hand, communicates that there is work to be done but there is a

⁵² see appendix

slightly less rigid nature to the word, and a more positive connotation. This encourages men and women, instead of looking at what one cannot do, to search for what can be done. This discussion of “role” versus “call” took place while defining the principle of male headship. When asked, "What do you understand from Scriptures to be the unique role of men and women?", they pointed back to Genesis 1 and 2. They said that God created men and women equal in the image of God and spiritually, but with distinct callings. God created man with the calling of headship and authority over women. He created women as a helper/supporter for the man. They had seemingly little difficulty understanding and explaining the supposed paradox of equal in personhood, but unequal function. When applied to the church, this meant that the women would defer to the head in matters of authority that involve men.

Authority

As the interviews continued, we moved from callings to authority. No succinct answer was given on the meaning of authority. Instead of a definition like, "authority in its common meaning is the right to make decisions that bind the will of others,"⁵³ a purpose or ideal was given. One person I interviewed said authority is something that, "God gave to accomplish his purpose for good." Others I interviewed gave me more insight and help by pointing me to Bible passages that help form an understanding of what authority is. Hebrews 13:17 "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."⁵⁴ Hebrews 13:17 explains authority from the view of people under authority. Authority is not something that is intended to benefit those who have it, but it is intended to help everyone else. This verse also points out that even those who have authority on earth are under the authority of Christ. Leaders are supposed to be an advantage for the church. We are really obeying the authority of others not for our own sake or the leader's sake, but because of our love and obedience to Christ. All authority is derived from God. When we obey the leaders God has placed over us here on earth, we are showing reverence and respect for God.

The next verse which was brought to my attention was Ephesians 4:15, "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is,

⁵³ John F Brug, *A Bible study on man and woman in God's world: Leader's manual*. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Pub. House, 1992), 53

⁵⁴ *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. 1984

Christ." ⁵⁵ This verse looks at authority from the top down. It points to what the goal and pinnacle of what leadership and authority should be like here on Earth. Authority in the church should mirror that of Christ. He used his authority not to command service, but to come and serve. If all our leaders were like Christ, there would be less chafing under their authority, but sin continues to warp our relationships. This verse also points out that we are not completely like Christ. Every leader needs to continue to grow and become more like Christ, our head. Authority should be defined by two main thoughts. First, leaders are entrusted with a portion of Christ's authority, and second a serving and sacrificing attitude. Where this leadership is over men it would go against the principle of head and helper, but where this is not the case leadership is not denied to women. There are many ministries within the church that can be and are led by women. Leadership is not always simply a defined position like pastor or councilmember, but a leadership through action and service.

Voice

Women's voice in the church was the next topic that was discussed in the interviews. Two main ideas about voice came out of my interviews. The first idea was that having a voice is knowing that one's feelings, thoughts, and ideas would be heard and considered. As one of the interviewees puts it, "To be able to convey questions, concerns, have conversations or give suggestions." An important part of having a voice is knowing a person to go to, and feeling safe to talk with them.

The other part of having a voice seems to be connected to spreading the Word of God. Voice in the church seems to be pointed inward and outward at the same time. Having a voice makes people feel they are part of the community and valued as individuals. This is important because women are a part of the church. They are extremely important to our Lord and Savior, who came and died for them. Jesus modeled women having a voice in the church in his interaction with Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42, John 11:1-43), the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-42), his mother at the wedding banquet in Cana (John 2:1-11), and more. Jesus listened to women and validated their concerns. He did not always do exactly what they asked, but he gave his time and attention to them. He also used women in his ministry. He uses the widow who gave her last bit of money to the church to teach his disciples (Mark 12:41-44). He

⁵⁵ *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. 1984

used the women who came to his tomb to tell the disciples that he had risen (Matthew 28, Mark 16, and Luke 24). There are many women commended in the Bible for their knowledge and understanding of God's Word and for their service to the people around them. The idea of the voice pointing into the church and out of the church was an insight that I gained during my interviews.

Another interesting concept I discovered was that the women did not tie voice to voting or authority. In the church, it seems that these two things are distinct. There is also an understanding that, just because women do not share the same amount of authority, this does not mean that they are any less important. Authority is to be used to further the Word of God instead of hindering the participation of any person in the church. It is not surprising that God limits authority or other gifts. It is just the expression of order that God created in the world.

Voting is one of the main forms of authoritative decision-making today in our WELS congregations. When asked if all voting was authoritative, four out of the five people I interviewed said that it was not. They recognize that voting could be distinct from authoritative decisions. That is all based on how each individual congregation structures their decision-making process. One interviewee said that all voting in the church is authoritative because it affects the mission of the church. None of the women said that voting should be expanded to include women. It was even said that it was dangerous ground to start “splitting hairs” on whether all votes are authoritative. Another one of the people I interviewed said that we should not do what the world does just to keep up with or be in line with the world, or to make the church more attractive. The fact is most of the teachings of the church go against American culture. The principle of head and helper is not an easy one to fully understand and follow. This principle is meant to promote effective and complementary efforts on the part of men and women to further God's plan of salvation.

Women are a big part of the church that is seemingly underutilized. The women I interviewed expressed in many different ways that women could play a bigger part in the congregation. They pointed me to the women's ministry website, www.wels.net/aom/womens-ministry, and explained the struggle they went through to have some leaders recognize and support the fact that women are leaders in many areas of ministry. This website gives many helpful ideas and Bible studies that show what women can do in the church. It also offers workshops to help women become leaders and start special ministries in their churches. Women

in our churches today are not looking to usurp authority but are trying to find more and varied ways to use their gifts to spread the gospel. One of the greatest insights I gained from my interviews is not to look at the callings of men and women in a negative way, what cannot be done, but in a positive way, trying to find more and new ways to serve the Lord.

Applications to try

This leads us to the question, what can we do to help women be heard in the church? There is no easy answer. We need to understand that the calling of men and women permeates almost every part of the church. Only after studying the Scriptures can believers make wise decisions on applications in the church. As we continue to move forward we need to closely examine what our current practices are, and we need to look ahead to further opportunities for women to use their gifts and abilities in the church. It would be nice if I could prescribe certain practices and all the women would have the perfect balance of having their voice heard and not overstepping the head helper principle. Each church has its own unique culture and set of circumstances that make it impossible to implement identical plans across the synod. Every church does not have to work identically to be God pleasing. I have compiled a number of possibilities that might be helpful in a congregation. There is by no means a one-size-fits-all solution. Each and every church has to take stock of its current situation, its culture, and how the principle of head and helper is expressed in their area. How this looks in a traditional church will be different from a college campus or a mission church. However, wherever you have Christians who are dedicated to the Word of God and its spread, you will have more than enough opportunities to grow and share the Word of God. Even though the applications change, the principle stays the same. Patient explanation and dialogue need to be carried out whenever changes occur. An understanding between all parties (those congregations where specific applications may be different) need to be consciously worked towards.

Education

There is one thing I can say will certainly help any and every congregation improve women's voice. That one thing is education. The place to turn for this education is not a random book or program, but the Bible which is God's true, inspired Word. No matter what the problem is, God's Word is the starting point. Going back to the Bible and finding the principle God has laid out is key to understanding the calling of women and how women use their voice in the church. This can be done in a number of ways. This can be done in a general way during regular

Bible classes. With a little work, you can highlight how women in the Bible demonstrate the principle of head and helper. This method is a good way to start the process of a more in-depth study of the calling of men and women and how they interact in the church. While this question about women's voice the church is not always spoken, it is never very far beneath the surface. Starting the conversation before a bigger issue arises is a good idea. After all, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. A pastor could also undertake a more intentional Bible study into women in the Bible. Studying Eve, Sarah, Deborah, and other women in the Bible will highlight the fact that women were, and still should be very involved with the church and the spreading of the gospel. Such a study would also show that women do have a voice in the church. While it might not be the head voice, a woman's voice can be very persuasive without overstepping male headship. We see this with Abigail, who deterred David from killing her husband Nabal. You can even go a step further and find Bible studies specifically about the callings of men and women. The one Bible study every person I interviewed recommended was, *Heirs Together of God's Gracious Gift of Life* by Richard Gurgel and Kathy Wendland. This Bible study clearly lays out that men and women are equal in the image of God, they fall into sin, and the redemption won for us by Jesus Christ. The Bible study continues by giving some helpful insights to how the interaction between men and women can reflect the principle of head helper in the home, the church, and society. This is just the start of the education that can be done in the church to help women find their voice, and encouragement for men to seek out that complementary voice to theirs.

There is another way the Bible study can be used to help encourage women to find and use their voice within the congregation. Having a variety of Bible classes can help people get into the Word and express how it affects them in their daily life. One important Bible class to consider adding is a women's Bible class. This Bible class would not only be for women, but it would also be led by women. This helps women to talk about issues in the church in view of the Bible in a less threatening environment. Many men do not see Bible class as a threatening environment. Many women have reservations about participating in mixed Bible class when they look back in history and take into account the misapplication of complete silence in all parts of the church from 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14. Although most people understand that this does not mean complete silence in the church today, and not participating in Bible class, there still may be a reluctance to fully participate in a mixed Bible class. Over time

in the all-women's Bible study, women will get accustomed to sharing their thoughts and asking questions. These types of classes acclimate them into participating in a mixed Bible class. When the women are validated and empowered to share their opinions and views in the Bible class, it carries over to other areas of the church. This will also make them feel comfortable sharing their views in an open forum of the church. Having women leaders of the Bible class also shows that women do in fact have authority, voice, and many opportunities to serve in the church besides the traditional ones. A good resource to look at to get started or research what to study would be www.wels.net/aom/womens-ministry. A better understanding of the callings of men and women is just one of the many blessings the congregation will reap from further study of God's Word.

Community

Fostering a sense of community within the church will also help women gain a voice. It is the experience of many believers that the larger the congregation becomes, the less people in general feel heard. This is especially true for women. It is important to foster a sense of community in the church across genders. Finding and connecting people with other members in the church strengthens relationships and promotes communication. One way to do this is to form a variety of small groups within the church. These groups can be based on age, interests, children, or a number of different factors. The point of these small groups is to make a person feel like they belong. Going beyond that, being in a group of like-minded individuals emboldens and validates the views of the individuals. So when one member of that group comes up with an idea, they can share it with their group. After that, the group discusses and strengthens the idea. Then, with the support of their group the individual can present their idea to the church, elders, or the pastor and after prayerful consideration that idea might be put into effect. This would give voice to the women of the group who participated in formulating that idea, and could be a useful idea for larger congregations.

One of the women I interviewed said that this sense of community was built-in from the ground up. She was in a mission congregation. She said that there was so much work to be done and no idea would be thrown out just on the basis of who presented it. Just like there is a lot of work to be done in large churches, there is a lot of work to be done in a small church as well. The difference is that in the smaller churches there might be more of an idea of needing "all hands on deck" without the thought of already having enough men to do the work. The focus of the work is to get the message out into the world. With the Word getting out into the world the church

grows. Over time those close relationships that all members of that small church had can start to change. One measure that could be taken to keep the close-knit connection is to start other churches. Instead of having one church of a thousand plus members in one city, having three or four smaller churches could go a long way toward having women's voices heard. This might be considered an extreme measure that might not work in every place, but there is something about a small church that seems more like an inviting family. At these smaller congregations an individual would be more comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas. It also promotes a sense that their voice will be heard because they' are not just one of the thousands.

If you put women's Bible studies and small groups together, you will need leaders. If that small group was all women, it should have a women leader. God has given the gift of leadership to some women as well. Just like male leaders in the congregation, they will work with and under the pastor to better carry out their area of ministry. This can give many women in the congregation a strong sense of voice even if they are not the leaders. They can go to that female leader and know their ideas and concerns will get to the pastor. Identifying these female leaders in the church can be a great help to single women. Married women should have the avenue for their voice to be heard through their husbands, but it is much harder for a single woman to feel heard in the congregation. If she has another woman she can talk to whom she knows will get her concern dealt with, she knows her voice will be heard. Many women feel more comfortable talking about issues and disagreements with other women than with men or before they take these concerns to a man or the pastor. Another option with women leaders is to have them co-lead with their husband or another man. This has a number of benefits because of the complementary strengths men and women have.

Committees

Along with having women leaders of small groups, a congregation can also include women in the committees. Committees can function in a variety of different ways depending on the congregation's constitution. Also, different committees can carry a different amount of responsibility. Before appointing women to any and every committee, some careful consideration needs to be done. What is the role of the committee? What is its function? Does the committee just do research and report? Does it give input, or does it make decisions? In many congregations, a committee serves by gathering information and doing designated tasks, in a way that does not violate the principle of male headship. If this is the case, then it would be a natural

step to include women in these committees if they have the gifts. Committees should be made up of people who are willing to serve, have the gifts, have a proven track record, and are members in good standing in the congregation. That being said, committees should reflect the congregation. Outreach committees should have men, women, and any other group within the church represented. In my interviews, I found that voice is not only what we say, but what we do to serve. By including women on committees, their God given gifts are better utilized to spread the word through the committees on which they serve.

There are still some issues that need to be worked through. There needs to be a clear understanding of authority. "Authority in its common meaning is the right to make decisions that binding the will of others."⁵⁶ The committee is not the last word on any of the information or ideas that they bring forth.⁵⁷ The authority lies with the church and/or the pastor depending on the church's constitution and the situation. However, it would be foolish not to take into account all the wisdom and knowledge of these hand-picked committee members who have recognized gifts in the area that they are serving. The congregation has to guard against the temptation to automatically approve everything the committee suggests. The order that God has established and the way the church follows that order need to be in sync. If the heads of the committee formed the church council as an authoritative body in the church, than the heads of the committees need to be men in keeping with the principle of head and helper. Serving on a committee is a great opportunity for women to be a voice in the congregation.

Voting

Even though this was not of great concern to the women I interviewed, one of the topics of voice that can cause much frustration and conversation is voting. In the United States of America, having a voice is almost indistinguishable from having a vote. People outside of the church or looking for a church seem to see if women can vote in your church as a litmus test if you consider women to be equal or second-class citizens. Even among Complementarians there seems to be a wider array of practices when it comes to women voting. *In Doctrinal Statements of the WELS* hardly any ink is spilled on this topic of voting. It says, "In church assemblies the

⁵⁶ Brug, 53

⁵⁷ Many congregations follow the way of naming committees and boards according to whether that group is exercising direct authority in the congregation or not. Where that distinction is followed, committees tend not to have direct authority within the congregation (more service or task oriented) while boards tend to have authority (called workers responsible for reporting to them and policies being made and implemented).

headship principle means that only men vote when such votes exercise authority over men."⁵⁸ This brings us to a point where we need to take a careful look at voting, and how it could be done. There are a few options that could be considered in regard to voting that could honor both sides of the principle of head and helper (honoring authority and yet also acknowledging the interdependent partnership that exists between men and women). There could be a modification made to the current system of voting that would increase the voice of women in decision-making in the church, or a different system of decision-making can be implemented into the church.

Part of what makes this difficult is that each church is different. Larger congregations have different struggles than smaller congregations. Newer congregations have different issues than older congregations. However, for any church, a few steps could be made that would increase the woman's voice in the church. The first thing is transparency or effective communication. Even in the busy hectic life of the church, it is important that information is disseminated in a timely manner. The time to be explaining what is going to be voted on should not be an hour or day before the actual vote will take place. There are certain occasions where advance notice is not possible, but for the most part a well-organized church has plenty of time to send out information about what is going to happen during the voters' meeting. Two to three weeks is a good amount of time to announce and give out information pertaining to the voters' meetings. This gives the congregation time to more fully discuss and understand the decisions that are going to be made without making it seem too far off. This gives families time to discuss the issues and for individuals to bring up their concern to the pastor and other members of the church council. Having the information about the meeting out beforehand would be of benefit to all the members of the congregation. This will also help guard against the phenomenon known as rubberstamping. Individuals of the congregation who are not well informed may leave the decision up to the church council or the committees. They received a recommendation from one of the groups and vote according to that recommendation without thoughtful consideration. How much better is it when decisions are best made by well-informed members of the congregation after they had time to think and discuss the issues.

In many WELS churches, women are invited to sit in on the voters meeting and a number of other types of meetings. This keeps the women well informed just like men. This could be taken a step farther. Women have gifts, skills, and understanding that could greatly benefit the

⁵⁸ *Doctrinal statements of the WELS*. (Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Pub. House, 1997), 66

congregation by sharing their thoughts and insights. Their experiences and insight can greatly help in the decision process. Allowing women to share their insight in meetings in and of itself may not be an act of authority, although it can very easily become an act of persuasion or binding consciences. Often debates are part of church meetings and women should avoid participation. “Debate very often involves more challenge and assertion of authoritative viewpoints than the actual process of voting. Even questions asked during debate are often implied challenges to the views of others. Submission to headship, not teaching men, being silent and not asking questions are hardly compatible with free participation in debate.”⁵⁹ As long as women participate in these meetings in a way that respects the biblical principle of headship, there is no real reason why they could not be at one of these meetings. This is something that needs great consideration before any change is made.

Other ways this could be accomplished without having women come into the voters meetings is to have open forums and discussion groups. These can be held any time before the vote, but the closer they occur to the actual vote the more the individuals who spoke out in these forums or discussion groups will feel heard. It seem in Acts chapter 1 and 6, where they picked new leaders, that the whole congregation may have had a chance to give their input before the final decision was made, although nothing can be said with certainty. Including women in the decision-making process does not automatically place them in a position of authority. These are some ways to enhance most WELS churches’ voting practices that will help women feel more heard.

There are some more drastic measures that could be considered. Some have questioned how it could be fair or reasonable, for example, that an 18-year-old boy or a new male convert should have more of a say in how the church is run than the 50-year-old woman who spent her entire life in that church. One way a church could deal with this is to take voting off the table. Having a church council that makes the decisions based on the input of committees and the members of the church is an acceptable route to go.

A few congregations have allowed their women to vote because they see it as an advisory activity, not an authoritative one. Making your voters’ assembly advisory means that some other body, like the church council, holds the authority for making congregational

⁵⁹ Brug, 40

decisions. Of course, then that smaller governing body would have to consist of men. There is nothing unscriptural about this alternate system of church government.⁶⁰

Having the church council as the authority and decision-making center of the church with the vote being advisory can actually lead to more people being heard. A church with this form of government would probably set up more committees to help collect information, come up with plans, and execute everyday affairs. Having more people on these committees and boards gives more positions for men and women to hold. This would lead to an increase in the voice of individuals being heard.

Of course there are drawbacks to this way of making decisions for the church. “However, your essayist wonders why any congregation would want it. Do we really want to establish a hierarchy where the larger body is only advisory to the few who have authority?”⁶¹ A system with the voting body being advisory could only give the illusion of everybody being heard, when in reality only a few people are making the decisions. Conversely, it can occur that the majority of the people who show up to the voters meetings are members of the church council. In cases like that even though the form is different the function is still really the same.

Another extreme measure that likely would only work theoretically would be to have two different voting bodies within church. There could be a general voting body which took care of items which did not include authority over men. There would also be a special voting body made up of all men to deal with authoritative issues like extending calls, church discipline, and the hiring and firing of other church workers. This would take a lot of time and effort to set up. Clear ground rules would have to be laid out to say which type of things would go before which voting body. This may be extremely difficult considering that the circumstances of each situation could change whether or not a vote was authoritative and the Scriptures have not provided us a list.

Establishing a formal position in the church for women to be in a leadership role can also lead to women being heard in the church. One of the people I interviewed was a female staff minister. She helps out in many areas of ministry at her church. She started going to voters’ meetings to stay informed after asking her pastor. She noticed that many women came to her for information and to share ideas. There are a number of female staff ministers in the WELS today, and they do a great service by modeling how a woman can use her voice in the church. However,

⁶⁰ Leyrer, 8

⁶¹ Ibid., 8

not everyone can go to school to become a staff minister. In the New Testament, there was a position that was similar to our staff minister. This was also a position for women in the church. The position of the deaconess is an old tradition that continued through the early church but slowly died out. In Romans chapter 16 Paul commends Phoebe as somebody who served the saints and helped many needy people. Paul calls her a *διάκονον* which can mean servant or deacon. We can find many qualified women in our congregations who could serve as deaconesses. They could serve in many ways like a female counterpart to an elder.⁶² Of course, their focus would be on the women of the congregation. They would serve as go-betweens between members and the pastors. They could serve in some areas more effectively than the men. As one example, when making a call on a single woman, a deaconess would feel more comfortable approaching an individual woman in her home, and the woman receiving the deaconess might feel more comfortable inviting a woman into her house. Having an established female leader in the church that the congregation knows can lead to women feeling more comfortable with voicing their opinion to her, and knowing that someone will listen to them.

Conclusion

Keeping our applications of the callings of men and women today in line with God's principles is never an easy task. Almost every single doctrinal principle found in the Bible goes against human reason and logic. These principles are put in place not to limit or handicap people, but to show a God-pleasing way to live our lives here on earth. It is good to look for ways to have women feel and be more heard in the church, but advancing only to keep up with secular standards is not a good idea. Instead of looking at the principle of head helper as something that limits women, we should look at the manifold ways in which God has blessed women. We should acknowledge the ways that women have been uniquely set apart to serve and complement how God uniquely blessed and set apart men to serve. Change in the church is something that comes about slowly with much study and careful consideration. Having women lead and be heard in the church has taken longer than some changes because it is the men who have to seek out the information and be the agents of change.

During my study I encountered a few other questions that gave me pause. How does what God says about the calling of men and women in the family shape and form how we understand

⁶² These deaconesses would not serve in a way that would cause offence, for example giving communion to other women, but would serve as a voice for the other women in the congregating.

the callings of men and women inside the church? Closely related to this topic would be how the principle of head helper affects the lives of Christians in the secular world. Very little is said in the Bible about which positions women should and should not fill. One pressing question would be, is it congruent with the principle of head and helper for a woman to be president? A fuller and more in-depth study on deacons and deaconesses in the church would also be very interesting. Do we have parallel church positions today, or is it something that we have lost over time? There was one more interesting connection that I found in my studies that I had not thought of previously. This point was brought up by one of the people I interviewed and extensively covered in some of the books that I read. That point is there seems to be a connection between churches that accept women in all areas of authority in the church and churches who accept homosexuality as a valid lifestyle.

Women's voice in the church is a very complex and delicate situation to deal with. It would be much easier if God had just given a list of things that believers could and could not do. Our Lord knew that it was important to give us the principles but he has not given us all the applications for every situation. He has blessed the church with the gifts needed to study and understand what the best ways to follow his principles are. Everyone knows that the process of having women heard in the church and being used as leaders is a long process. The important thing is to be in the process of more fully utilizing all the gifts that God has placed at the church's disposal.

One of my favorite stories of a woman leader in the Bible is Deborah. She was a judge, but she had an attitude that typifies service to the Lord. That attitude is one of submission to the Lord and his principles. She did not go out and try to control everything, but she was sought out by the people of Israel. They knew that she was full of the Holy Spirit and a servant of God. That is what the church should do. The church should seek out the voice of believers who want nothing more than to serve the Lord. There can be endless strategies on how to make women feel more heard. We should seek out what the Lord has given to us. Seek out the wisdom and insight that God has placed in all his believers. Seek out the gifts and specialties that women have trained hard to master. Communicate that it is love that motivates us to find all the ways to hear the voice of women and spread the gospel so more people can hear the voice of their Lord and Savior.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

What do you understand from Scriptures to be the unique role of men and women?

What do you believe Scriptures tells you what a woman's role is in the church?

What would you define as authority in the church?

What does it mean to have a voice in the church?

Can you tell me about a time you felt heard in the church?

Can you give me an example of a time you did not?

Do you have any insight if there was/is a change in view over the years in the WELS?

Comment on if there is a good balance between women feeling heard and keeping the roles of men and women in perspective in the WELS today?

Has your view or understanding of how women work and are heard in the church changed over time, if so, please explain.

Do you think all voting is authoritative? Could you think of an instance where voting would not be?

What changes in how we organize or govern our congregations do you believe would have a positive impact on women feeling heard in the church?"

What should I have asked about, but didn't, that you believe could have a significant impact on women feeling heard in our WELS congregations?