

VCN and the role of Women in the Church

VCN is committed to be biblically faithful to the roles God has designed for men and women as they minister in the church. Considering the role of women in ministry in particular, we want the Scriptures to guide us, knowing that we have an accountability to God to see that women flourish in our churches.

We understand that godly, gospel-faithful people have different opinions on this issue. This statement is to clarify VCN's position, in a spirit of meekness that does not pass judgment on disputable matters (Romans 14; I Tim. 6:3-5) with other gospel-centered networks or ministries. This statement communicates our heart as a community of brothers and sisters serving Christ and the Church together for the gospel.

- We believe God created two complementary sexes of humans, male and female, to bear His image together (Gen. 1:27-28; Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6). This distinction in gender reflects an essential part of being created in God's image. We believe that men and women are absolutely equal in essence, dignity, and value, and are complementary by divine design.
- We believe God, in His wisdom and providence intends for men and women to have different yet complementary roles and responsibilities in the church and home. These role distinctions do not arise from cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity but are an integral part of God's plan for humanity, complementing each other in mutually enriching ways. (Gen. 2; 1 Cor. 11:2-16, 14:33-35; Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 1 Pet. 3).
- We believe that both men and women are charged with the Great Commission, and that both are necessary for the vitality of ministry in the church. We believe that all spiritual gifts are given by God to both women and men without regard to gender, encouraging godly men and women to be visible partners in the corporate life of the church, deploying their diverse gifts for the good of the body. (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Galatians 3:28)
- We believe that the role/function of elder is reserved for qualified men. Elders are distinctly responsible for overseeing the church (1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:1-2) and it's doctrine (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9). We believe that Scripture's teaching of roles in the church, including I Timothy 2:11-12 and I Timothy 3, are not limited to a first-century culture, but clearly designate that the overseers are to be qualified men. All other ministry positions are open to qualified women. Women may exercise pastoral gifts along with gifts of administration, teaching, leadership, etc, under the authority of the overseers/elders. (1 Corinthians 12)
- We believe the Bible depicts a vision of men and women (whether single or married) laboring alongside one another in the world and the Church for the sake of the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 12:4-31). Jesus welcomed women among His disciples, teaching them (Luke 10:39) and involving them in His ministry. Women were the first to witness and declare the resurrection (Luke 8:1-3). In the New Testament Church, women are praying and prophesying in worship services (I Cor. 11:5). Phoebe, a patron and deacon of the church of Cenchreae, is commended by Paul and likely the courier of his letter to the Romans (Rom.

16:1-2). Euodia and Syntyche labored with Paul “side-by-side” in the gospel (Phil. 4:3). Priscilla is “explaining the way of God more accurately” to Apollos (Acts 18:26). Women are leading, teaching, and training, operating in their roles according to gifting. (Phil. 4:2-3; Rom. 16:2-3,12; Acts 18:26)

- We believe that at times, the Church has failed to recognize the God-given role and ministry impact our Lord intended women to have. This must be repented of, and women encouraged and taught to step up and serve the church with their skills and giftedness. When we don’t empower both sexes to exercise their gifts in complementarian partnership, both genders suffer, and the mission of the Church is compromised.
- We strongly denounce any distorted view of Scripture that leads to the subjugation, abuse or neglect of any man or woman or that contributes to the belief that any view of women or men includes or permits practices such as marginalization, subjugation, intimidation, neglect or any form of abuse.
- We firmly believe that anyone leading, especially elders overseeing a church, must remember what Jesus requires of all in authority: **Matthew 20:25–28** (NLT) *But Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

We believe that the role of overseer/elder (including lead elder/pastor) is for qualified men only. Acquiescing to cultural pressures, whether to be over-restrictive of women ministering or disregarding the biblical patterns of brothers and sisters serving, will only hamper the health of the church and the ministry of the gospel. We recognize the unique local context of our churches. We give room for our member churches to apply the broader principles outlined in this statement in ways that best fit their community and ministry. Extra-biblical applications for women ministering such as titles, platforms for ministry, licensing, ordination, etc., are not issues of dispute within our network. What is of concern is that both men and women focus, not in seeking significance in a role, but serving the gospel in relationships that are defined by love and humility and the authority of Christ over His Church.