



Summer of Lies

LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

Week 1: LIE: God uses shame to correct me and change me.

Week 2: LIE: God is not concerned with my everyday life, only the things I do for Him.

LIE #3: WOMEN ARE NOT CREATED TO BE LEADERS

Dr Grudem's outburst – We bring our past into our present belief.

Consideration #1: One in Christ = ????

Galatians 3:27-29

*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all **one in Christ Jesus**. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

What does "one in Christ" mean?

- Be who YOU are who you have been created to be so stay in that definition and....
- So, does this verse condone slavery? [Culturally current/not culturally right]
- Does all scripture have cultural referencing, shading, backgrounding to it?
- What does an heir of Christ receive? Who gets to decide what is received?
- Do we inherit certain sections of His promises according to our "defined" listing, naming, etc. in these verses?
- How do we live this out when we make decisions on who will lead?
- Who is in charge?
- Who can minister?
- If we are all heirs of everything of Christ's, how can we divide up that inheritance according to our personal preference?

Consideration #1: One in Christ = ????

Consideration #2: How Salvation is Dispersed & Appropriated

Consideration #3: What Happened in Eden?

Consideration #4: What is Paul Talking About?

Romans 3:21-26

***21** But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— **22** the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ **for all who believe**. For there is no distinction: **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, **25** whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. **26** It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

- Salvation for male and female comes through Christ.
- Do Females need to receive Christ through their male head or covering?



Summer of Lies
LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

[Sub Lie #1 - Men and Women are created Equal but Different]

Men/Women are Created Equal but for Different purpose:

- We are Equal but Different
 - Who gets to decide what different means?
 - There is no equality without a voice, without consensus.

Truly meant?

- We are both good, nothing negative meant here, but I am of more value than you because.....as I was created first, scripture supports me, the church says so.
- Adult to Adult is intended but Adult to Child is the actual meaning

[Sub Lie #2: Eve is responsible for sin entering the world, therefore...]

LIE #3: WOMEN ARE NOT CREATED TO BE LEADERS

Consideration #1: One in Christ = ????

Consideration #2: How Salvation is Dispersed & Appropriated

Consideration #3: What Happened in Eden? [DO WITH A LATER TOPIC?][DO only Gen 1:26-31?]

Consideration #4: What is Paul Talking About?

A. God Created Male and Female to Rule Together

Genesis 1:26-31

*26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And **let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.**"*

*27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; **male and female he created them.***

*28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." **29** And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. **30** And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. **31** And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

B. The Journey to the Forbidden Fruit

Adam's role in the Garden: **Genesis 2:15**

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to **work** it and **keep** it.*

- ❖ Work: 'abad (aw-bad') to work, implied to serve, enslave, bond servant, compel, husbandman, keep, labor, bring to pass, servant, service, be wrought, worshipper.
- ❖ Keep/Take Care of: shamar (shaw-mar') to hedge about as with thorns, beware, be circumspect, **guard, protect**, attend to, take heed, mark, look narrowly, observe, preserve, regard, save, sure wait, watch.

Genesis 2:16-17

***16** And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, **17** but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

Adam is instructed by the LORD about the rules of the Garden (Note: Where is Eve? Not created yet)?:

Genesis 3:1-6

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman,



Summer of Lies

LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” 2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

- Did Eve and Adam discuss the reasons behind what the LORD told Adam in **Genesis 2:16-17**?
- Why is the Enemy asking Eve this question?
- Why did not Adam say anything as he was right next to her?

- And the biggest question of all, why was Enemy in the Garden in the first place? Wasn't Adam instructed to guard and protect the Garden in **Genesis 2:15**? What was he to guard and protect it from if it wasn't the Enemy?

Genesis 3:8-24

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” 10 And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” 11 He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” 12 The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

14 The LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

16 To the woman he said,

*“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your **husband**, but he shall rule over you.”*

[Now that you have fed this sin, watch out. Contention within marriage and the desire to rule has been unleashed.]

17 And to Adam he said,

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

20 The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. 21 And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. 22 Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

NOTE: Ephesians 5 – June 15thth

LIE: A man is the priest of the home and a covering for his family while a woman just needs to be submissive.



Summer of Lies
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LIE #3: WOMEN ARE NOT CREATED TO BE LEADERS

Consideration #1: One in Christ = ????

Consideration #2: How Salvation is Dispersed & Appropriated

Consideration #3: What Happened in Eden?

Consideration #4: What is Paul Talking About?

1 Timothy 2:12

*“I do not allow a woman to **teach** or **exercise authority** over a man, but to remain quiet.”*

H Hermeneutics (interpretation of scripture):

- For all women everywhere at all times?

“One reason why women are taking leadership positions is that the man has too often failed to take his place. When men are weak, women must be strong. Men should willingly step forward to lead the church in every area, but often the men are weak and lazy...someone has to lead, so the women step in and take control.”
David W. Cloud, Baptists leader, 1998 article in OTimothy Magazine

1 Timothy 5:23

“No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.”

H For all people everywhere at all times?

- This verse falls later in the letter amongst a list of varied instructions.
- It is a personal note from Paul to his son in the faith, Timothy.
- We get a glimpse of their caring relationship.
- There is personal dialogue included in scripture.
- There is relationship included in scripture.
- Excellent resource: “How To Read Your Bible For All Its Worth” by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart

1 Timothy 2:11 *“Let a woman **learn** quietly with all **submissiveness**.”*

- Paul’s instruction **for a woman to receive instruction** was actually progressive and liberating for women at that time.
- There is cultural change happening in scripture.

H Does this (NO TEACHING) show up anywhere else in scripture, declaring it a universal decree?
(Scripture interprets Scripture)

- **Titus 2:4** he tells older women to teach younger ones.
- **Proverbs 31** woman is described as having the teaching of kindness on her tongue.
- **Matthew 28:19-20** the directive to go and teach all we know of Christ, a.k.a. The Great Commission, is given to both male and female disciples.

So, what does **1 Timothy 2:12** mean? **H** Are there any extenuating circumstances?



Summer of Lies
LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

TEACH:

1 Timothy 2:12 *“I do not allow a woman to **teach** or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.”*

- If we are hearing “women” to teach: **H**

2:12 I do not let women. The verb *epitrepō* [2010, 2205] is a present tense indicative: “I am not permitting” or “I do not permit.” And the number is singular: “a woman.”

- Is Paul forbidding a woman to teach in any setting?
 - Can a Woman cannot teach other women? Children in grade school?
 - Is Paul forbidding a woman to teach men?
 - Can a woman teach boys in school? If not, at what age do boys become men, and at what point is a woman not to teach them?
 - Does this mean a woman professor cannot teach college courses to men?

H **Scripture interprets Scripture:**

Acts 18:24-26 Apollos was discipled by Priscilla and Aquila. Note Priscilla’s name is listed first indicating she is the primary instructor.

²⁴ Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

2 Timothy 1:5 Paul commends Lois and Eunice for teaching Timothy scripture. He does not correct them for not getting a man to teach nor does he question their ability to teach or the quality of their knowledge.

⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

- Is Paul forbidding a woman to teach or preach only in a church or an authoritative setting?
 - Does the demand for silence mean it is wrong to prophesy, share testimonies, to pray publicly, to read scripture, to give announcements?

Acts 2:16-18 (Joel 2:28)

¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ “ ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, **and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,** and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;

¹⁸ **even on my male servants and female servants**

in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;

²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’



Summer of Lies
LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

Acts 21:9

“Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses.”

1 Corinthians 14:31

“For you can all prophesy one by one...”

- Is this a prohibition for a woman to hold any position of authority over men?
- Political office? Management in business?
- Should a male quit his job if his boss is a woman? Church committee?

What does Paul mean?

EXERCISE AUTHORITY:

1 Timothy 2:12 *“I do not allow a woman to teach or **exercise authority** over a man, but to remain quiet.”*

A. Cultural and Religious Background

- Timothy was leading the Church at Ephesus
- Believe this encouragement was penned by Paul between his imprisonment in Caesarea and Rome

Ephesus

- Wealthy seaport
- Largest city in their province (300,000)
- Culture – Theater sat 25,000 people. Main focal point of city. Baths, Gymnasiums, etc.
- Temple of Artemis/Diana (one of the seven wonders of the world)

Acts 19:10

This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Acts 19:23-27

²³About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. ²⁴For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. ²⁵These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, *“Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. ²⁶And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. ²⁷And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.”*

The temple served as the bank of Asia

Her temple was four times larger than the Parthenon at Athens

Magnificent in structure and Beauty

Around the temple of Diana were performed the grossest forms of immorality. She was worshiped by probably more people than was any other idol. The worshipers indulged in the basest religious rites of sensuality and the wildest bacchanalian orgies that were excessive and vicious. And farther inland, the worship of Diana became nothing more than sex orgies, and her name was changed from Diana to Cybele.¹

- Here is where Paul ministered and led the burgeoning church.
- What would converts to Christ, with this background, struggle with?
- What type of conversations were had after church and in their homes?
- What happened inside the church for Paul to write out his ban on women in authority?

¹ McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 5, p. 900). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



Summer of Lies
LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

B. What is meant by Authority

H Scripture Interpreting Scripture FALSE DOCTRINE

1 Timothy 1:3

As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to **teach any different doctrine**, (The teacher was subject to evaluation and discipline just like any other leader or minister.)

1 Timothy 1:20

among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to **blaspheme**.

1 Timothy 4:7

Have nothing to do with **irreverent, silly myths**. Rather train yourself for godliness;

1 Timothy 5:13

Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only **idlers, but also gossips and busybodies**, saying what they should not.

- What were these “church people” teaching? Saying? Gossiping about?

One Idea: J.L. Grady, states the background of this conflict included

"Some of these rebellious women were actually disrupting worship services so they could teach their strange gospels. Rather than listening to church leaders who had been trained by Paul and the other apostles, these women were pridefully claiming that they deserved the pulpit themselves. In some instances they may have wrested control of the meetings and tried to teach or even perform their rituals."²

Grady, J. Lee (2006) *“Ten Lies The Church Tells Women: How the Bible Has Been Misused to Keep Women in Spiritual Bondage”* Page 65.

H Interpreting the Wording/Language correctly

1 Timothy 2:12 *“I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise **authority** over a man, but to remain quiet.”*

- What tense is it? Plural/singular. Past/Present.
2:12 I do not let women. The verb *epitrepō* [2010, 2205] is a present tense indicative: “I am not permitting” or “I do not permit.” And the number is singular: “a woman.”
- What WORD is it?

Exousia is normally used for “authority”.

When Paul has exercise of authority in mind, he uses a word such as *exousia* [1849, 2026] (e.g., **Rom 9:21; 13:1–3; 1 Cor 7:4, 37; 9:4–6, 12, 18; 11:10; 15:24; 2 Cor 10:8; 13:10; Eph 1:21; Col 1:16; 2 Thess 3:9; Titus 3:1**).

Belleville, L. (2009). Commentary on 1 Timothy. In *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews* (Vol. 17, pp. 54–55). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Authentein = extreme negative connotation, forceful word. Not just authority but to wrench authority away from, usurp, dominate.

teach men or have authority over them. The Greek verb *authentein* [831, 883] **is not found elsewhere** in Paul’s writings or the NT. In the Greek of the day, the word meant **“domineer.”** The root of the noun is *auto + entos*, meaning “to do or originate something with one’s own hand.” The standard lexicons define the verb as **“to control in a domineering manner”** and understand Paul’s usage as, “I do not allow women ... to dominate men”

Belleville, L. (2009). Commentary on 1 Timothy. In *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews* (Vol. 17, pp. 54–55). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.



Summer of Lies
LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

This means that women here are not prohibited from roles that involve teaching men. The issue is rather the manner in which they teach—that is, they should not teach in a dictatorial or domineering way

(see commentary, and see Belleville 1990:176–177).

Belleville, L. (2009). Commentary on 1 Timothy. In *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews* (Vol. 17, pp. 54–55). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

1 Timothy 2:8-12

⁸ *I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands **without anger or quarreling**;*
⁹ *likewise also that women should adorn themselves in **respectable apparel**, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰ but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. ¹¹ Let a woman **learn quietly with all submissiveness**. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵ Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.*

Battle between the men and the women?

“to control, restrain, domineer” and define the verb as “to control in a domineering manner”

If we were to interpret **1 Timothy 2:12** without this cultural understanding, we would miss Paul’s important point: **Usurping Godly authority will not be tolerated. From anyone.**

LIE #3: WOMEN ARE NOT CREATED TO BE LEADERS

Consideration #1: One in Christ = ????

Consideration #2: How Salvation is Dispersed & Appropriated

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EXTRA: Paul’s Written Legacy of Women in Ministry

Romans 16:1-16

*I commend to you our sister **Phoebe**, a servant [deaconess] of the church at Cenchreae, **2** that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.*

***3** Greet **Prisca** and **Aquila**, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, **4** who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. **5** Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved **Epaenetus**, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. **6** Greet **Mary**, who has worked hard for you. **7** Greet **Andronicus** and **Junia**, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. **They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.** **8** Greet **Ampliatius**, my beloved in the Lord. **9** Greet **Urbanus**, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved **Stachys**. **10** Greet **Apelles**, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of **Aristobulus**. **11** Greet my kinsman **Herodion**. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of **Narcissus**. **12** Greet those workers in the Lord, **Tryphaena** and **Tryphosa**. Greet the beloved **Persis**, who has worked hard in the Lord. **13** Greet **Rufus**, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well. **14** Greet **Asyncritus**, **Phlegon**, **Hermes**, **Patrobas**, **Hermas**, and the brothers who are with them. **15** Greet **Philologus**, **Julia**, **Nereus** and his sister, and **Olympas**, and all the saints who are with them. **16** Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.*

- Note the inclusion of many women’s names.
- What does this suggest of Paul’s stance on women in leadership?



Summer of Lies
LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

Also note verse 7: *Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners*
7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.

Depending on what manuscript you read, it will list Junia (feminine) or Junias/Junianus (masculine).
Excerpt from the forward of “*Junia: The First Woman Apostle*” by Eldon Jay Epp:

The points Epp brings forward and develops are quite clear: For the first seven centuries of the church's life Greek manuscripts did not employ accents, but when accents did become common practice in the manuscript tradition, and insofar as those accents can be identified, they uniformly identify the name as feminine. To put the point sharply: **there is no Greek manuscript script extant that unambiguously identifies Andronicus's partner as a male.** That consistent pattern coheres with the evidence offered by early Christian writers for the first thousand years of the church's life and well into the second thousand years. Theologians as diverse as Origen, Ambrosiaster, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Theodoret, John Damascene, Peter Abelard, and Peter Lombard, assume that the partner of Andronicus is a woman by the name of Junia. Particularly impressive is Chrysostom's observation concerning Junia: "How great the wisdom of this woman must have been that she was even deemed worthy of the title of apostle."
Only with the thirteenth century Aegidius of Rome, and especially with Martin Luther's translation, did the view arise that Junia was in fact a male, Junias. Finally, and not of least importance, the female name Junia is a widely attested Roman name, but there exists no evidence for the use of the masculine forms Junias or Junianus.

The above forward was written by: Beverly Roberts Gaventa Helen H.P. Manson Professor of New Testament Literature and Exegesis Princeton Theological Seminary

Andronicus and Junia (Rom 16:7)

In his greetings at the end of Romans, Paul describes Andronicus and Junia (Ἰουνίαν, *Iounian*) as “my compatriots and my fellow prisoners, who are well known to the apostles, who were also in Christ before me” (Rom 16:7). Critical discussions about Andronicus and Junia typically focus on two questions:

1. Was Ἰουνίαν (*Iounian*) a woman's name?
2. Were Andronicus and Junia apostles?

Was Ἰουνίαν (Iounian) a Woman's Name?

Church fathers such as Chrysostom (Chrysostom, *Romans*, 31), as well as modern scholars including Mounce (Mounce, *Romans*, 275–76) and Epp (Epp, *Junia*, 23–27) support reading “Junia” as a woman's name.

- Abernathy states that Ἰουνίαν (*Iounian*) (or Ἰουνιάς, *Iounias*) was consistently translated as the feminine “Junia” until the 13th century, when the Greek accent shifted to produce Ἰουνιᾶν (*Iounian*) and the masculine “Junias” (Abernathy, *Romans* 9–16, 369).
- Some commentators (e.g., Murray, *Romans*, 229–30; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 423–24) believe Paul most likely intended “Junias,” proposing that this is an abbreviated form of the common male name Junianus (Abernathy, *Romans* 9–16, 369).
- Dunn, however, notes that while “Junia” appears in over 250 instances in ancient literature, there is not one instance of “Junias.” Dunn concludes that “the assumption that it must be male is a striking indictment of male presumption regarding the character and structure of earliest Christianity” (Dunn, *Romans* 9–16, 894).

Were Andronicus and Junia Apostles?

Early Church Fathers. Hippolytus lists Andronicus (but not Junia) as one of the 70 apostles whom Jesus sent out in Luke 10 (Hippolytus, *On the Seventy Apostles*). Chrysostom identifies both Andronicus and Junia as apostles, but he does not elaborate on whether they might have been among the 70 or James' group (Chrysostom, *Romans* 31).

Modern Interpreters. Dunn says the phrase “well known to the apostles” in Rom 16:7 is best interpreted as “prominent among the apostles” (Dunn, *Romans* 9–16, 894). Dunn understands Andronicus and Junia to be a married couple (Dunn, *Romans* 9–16, 895). He counts them among the earliest Palestinian Christians and suggests that they were personally appointed by the risen Christ prior to His ascension, which might include them among the 500 who saw the risen Lord or among the apostles with James (1 Cor 15:7). Dunn remains uncertain about Andronicus and Junia's connection with Rome; they might have been considered apostles of Rome, or they could have played a role in planting house churches there (Dunn, *Romans* 9–16, 895).



Summer of Lies

LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

Sanday and Headlam state that Andronicus and Junias were included among a larger body of apostles than the Twelve, suggesting that they were among the Palestinian Jews who dispersed after Stephen's execution. They present three primary reasons for accepting Andronicus and Junias as apostles (Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 423–424):

1. the church fathers understood them to be apostles
2. the use of the Greek form of *episamos* (ἐπίσημοι, *episēmoi*) literally means “stamped or marked” in a way that made them distinct among the apostles, rather than meaning “well known by the apostles”
3. the wider use of “apostle,” substantiated by the Didache, allows the title to apply to people outside the Twelve (Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 423).

Several scholars emphasize that the term “apostle” could be used in several broader senses.

- According to Palmer, the New Testament describes two categories of apostles: the Twelve, or anyone with apostolic gifts, which Palmer connects with teaching and preaching (Palmer, *Romans*, 215).
- Mounce proposes that the term “apostle” includes missionaries and evangelists. He also suggests that Andronicus and Junia were Jewish believers and likely among the first Palestinian Christians (Mounce, *Romans*, 275–76).
- Abernathy suggests that Andronicus and Junia were among the 500 people mentioned in 1 Cor 15:6, and that all 500 were appointed as apostles by the risen Christ. This would explain Paul's comment that Andronicus and Junia were ahead of him in the faith (Rom 16:7; Abernathy, *Romans 9–16*, 370).
- Schüssler Fiorenza explores in depth the possibility of a female apostle, concluding that the early Christian movement allowed men as well as women (and married couples) to serve as missionaries. She suggests that Paul uses four titles to describe missionaries: co-worker, brother/sister, deacon, and apostle (Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 169). The last title, she says, corresponds to Junia in Rom 16:7 and indicates her authority to evangelize, teach, and admonish (Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 169; see also 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 4:13).
- Although Murray acknowledges that “apostle” could refer simply to a messenger, he considers it far more likely that Paul uses this term to denote the Twelve. In Murray's view, neither Andronicus nor Junias were apostles; instead, Paul's comment in Rom 16:7 indicates that they were well known by the twelve apostles in Judea and Jerusalem (Murray, *Romans*, 230).

JOHN M. LEWIS³

Examples of Women in Leadership in the Old Testament:

- Miriam – Micah 6:4
- Deborah – Judges 4
- Jochebed – Exodus 2
- Rahab – Joshua 2 and 6
- Huldah – 2 Kings 22:14
- Esther
- Abigail – 1 Samuel 25

Examples of Women in Leadership in the New Testament:

- Anna – Luke 2
- Phoebe – Romans 16:1
- Priscilla (with Aquilla) – Romans 16:3
- Junia (with Andronicus) – Romans 16:7
- Lydia – Acts 16
- Philip's four daughters – Acts 21:9
- Lois and Eunice – 1 Timothy
- Chloe – 1 Corinthians 1:11 (Led a church Paul was overseeing.)
- Nympha – Colossians 4:15
- Eudioa and Syntyche – Philippians 4:3

Closing:

One in Christ

Galatians 3:27-29

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

³ Lewis, J. M. (2016). [Apostle, Critical Issues](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.



Summer of Lies LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

The Prophecy of Joel, Which is Confirmed in Acts:

Joel 2:28-29

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.

Acts 2:16-18

But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: “‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

What does this look like today? Promised in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament, note Paul’s direction given in **1 Corinthians 11:5**. He is giving cultural guidance to ministry established by the Holy Spirit.

*“but every wife **who prays or prophesies** with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven.”*

The Bible abounds with many examples of women who ministered prophetically. The prophetess Miriam led the women to celebrate the Lord’s triumph over Egypt (Ex. 15:20, 21). Deborah was a prophetess who functioned as a judge (Judg. 4:4, 5), and the prophetess Huldah was consulted on behalf of the king (2 Kin. 22:14–20). Other Old Testament women had prophetic ministries as well (Is. 8:3).

In the New Testament, we encounter Anna (Luke 2:36–38) and the four daughters of the evangelist Philip (Acts 21:9). Joel foretold that both sons and daughters would prophesy after God poured His Spirit out on all flesh (Joel 2:28)—a promise that was cited by Peter at the time of Pentecost (Acts 2:17, 18). **Paul encouraged women to exercise the gift of prophecy** and instructed them how to do so in the public assembly of the church (1 Cor. 11:5).

The nature of prophecy changed with the outpouring of God’s Spirit. Old Testament prophets, individually commissioned by God, were to be put to death if they misrepresented God’s message to the people (Deut. 13:1–5; 18:20–22). New Testament prophecy, on the other hand, was a gift given to many believers, and its transmission was not guaranteed as infallible. It needed to be sifted, weighed, and evaluated by the leadership of the church (1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:20, 21). Nevertheless, it was regarded as a valuable and necessary gift for the church and an area of effective ministry for women.⁴

Lydia: **Acts 16:11-15** The Conversion of Lydia

¹¹ So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis,¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days.¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.¹⁵ And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.⁵

Lydia came from Thyatira, a city in the western province of Lydia in Asia Minor. Her name originally might have been the designation of her home, “a woman of Lydia.” At the time Lydia met Paul, she lived at Philippi, a leading city of Macedonia on the European continent.

As a wealthy and influential businesswoman, Lydia sold articles dyed purple, a prized color made from certain mollusks. On this Sabbath, Lydia had gone to the river’s shore that had been designated by the Roman authorities of Philippi as a place of prayer and worship for the Jews. There she met Paul and Silas, who had been in Philippi only a short time. While

⁴ Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). *The Woman’s Study Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Ac 16:11–15). (2016). Crossway Bibles.



Summer of Lies LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

others along the river may have rejected Paul's words about Jesus, Lydia accepted them and became a believer. After Lydia and her entire household were baptized, she invited Paul and Silas to stay in her home. When Paul and Silas were thrown into a Philippian prison, Lydia visited them and attended to their needs. Her house became the meeting place of the first European church. She was not too busy to take time for hospitality (Acts 16:15).

Lydia's name appears in Scripture only twice. She was seemingly the first Gentile convert in Europe, the first Christian businesswoman, and the first believer to open her home as a worship center for European Christians. Not only to Paul and the early church but also to the generations to come, Lydia proved the importance and influence of a woman of determination, foresight, and generosity⁶

LYDIA OF THYATIRA (Λυδία, *Lydia*). A wealthy, God-fearing Gentile who is reported as the first Christian in Europe (Acts 16:14–15). Her house appears to have been a meeting place for the Philippian church (Acts 16:40).

Biblical Relevance

The name "Lydia" appears in the Bible only twice:

- Acts 16:14 describes Lydia as a native of Thyatira, a trader of purple goods and a worshiper of God. She is among a group of praying women whom Paul and his companions encounter soon after arriving at Philippi (Acts 16:13). After receiving Paul's message, Lydia is baptized along with her household (a group that could have included children, extended family, slaves, and business associates), and she insists that Paul and his fellow missionaries stay at her home (Acts 16:15).
- Acts 16:40 appears to present Lydia's house as a gathering place for the Philippian church. After Paul and Silas are released from jail, they apparently meet with the believers at Lydia's house before they leave Philippi.

These details have raised questions regarding Lydia's name and identification, her profession and economic status, her ethnic/religious background, and her role in the Philippian church.

Name and Identification

The Greek word Λυδία (*Lydia*) can be translated as "a woman from Lydia," but it also was used as a proper name.

"Lydia" was a common female name in the first-century Graeco-Roman world, and it is widely thought to be used this way in Acts 16. Recent scholarship demonstrates the use of Λυδία (*Lydia*) as a proper name for women of standing (Horsley, *New Documents*, 54; Barrett, *Acts*, 782).

Alternatively, the author of Acts might be using "Lydia" simply to describe "the Lydian woman." Lydia's hometown of Thyatira was located just inside the Roman province of Lydia, about 250 miles southeast of Philippi in modern Turkey. This interpretation helps explain Lydia's absence in Paul's letter to the Philippians

⁶ Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). [The Woman's Study Bible](#). Thomas Nelson.



Summer of Lies LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

by allowing the possibility that the woman's proper name is Euodia or Syntyche (Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller*, 214), women within the Philippian church whom Paul designates as his collaborators (Phil 4:2). The ethnic appellation also could signal that the woman was a former slave (Barrett, *Acts*, 782).

Profession and Economic Status

A Dealer of Purple

The description of Lydia as a "dealer in purple cloth" (Acts 16:14 NRSV; πορφυρόπωλις, *porphyropōlis*) may indicate that she worked with either purple textiles (Witherington, *Acts*, 492) or purple dye (Ascough, *Lydia*, 5).

Lydia's association with the purple trade is plausible. Thyatira was known for its trade guilds, including those devoted to clothiers and particularly to dyers, and Lydian women had long been associated with purple dyeing (Homer, *Iliad*, 4.141.42). An ancient inscription indicates the presence of a guild of purple merchants in Philippi (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, III.664), and Lydia's participation in this trade may have prompted her relocation to Philippi (Ascough, *Lydia*, 17).

Purple dye of the highest quality was painstakingly extracted from the murex shell, though a lesser product could be made from the madder root, and its rarity made purple goods a coveted luxury associated with royalty, wealth, and high position (Pliny, *Natural History*, 9.62; see also Dan 5:7; Mark 15:17, 20; Luke 16:19; Rev 18:12; 1 Macc 10:62; Dio Chrysostom, *Orations*, 4.61).

A Woman of Wealth

Lydia's ability to offer lodging in her home to numerous guests and the subsequent use of her home as a house church indicate that her wealth exceeded that of the average Macedonian of the time. Lydia could have gained her wealth through her purple business, an inheritance, or release from slavery. It is not clear that Lydia's home in Philippi was her primary residence. As a wealthy merchant, she could have maintained a secondary residence there for business purposes.

Although women could run businesses in the first-century Graeco-Roman world (Witherington, *Acts*, 492), they typically did so under the authority of a husband, family member, or guardian. However, Roman law permitted a woman to conduct her own affairs if she had at least three children—a status known as *ius liberorum* (see Yue, "Mirror Reading," 685; Bruce, *Acts*, 311). Because Acts identifies Lydia as the head of a household (Acts 16:15), she might have been single, widowed, or divorced (Marshall, *Acts*, 268; Ascough, *Lydia*, 45; Witherington, *Acts*, 493; Fernando, *Acts*, 444, 447). Keener hypothesizes that Lydia could have had a husband who is not mentioned in Acts because he remained uninvolved in her religious activities (Keener, *Bible Background*, 369).

Some recent scholars acknowledge that the high cost of purple goods was no guarantee that the producers themselves were wealthy (Spencer, "Women," 148), and John Chrysostom describes Lydia as "a woman and she of low condition, from her trade too" (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Acts*, XXXV). Still, it remains widely assumed that Lydia became a woman of means through her business (Haenchen, *Acts*, 494).

The author of Acts might identify Lydia not because of her wealth or social position (Peterson, *Acts*, 461) but rather because she was well known and respected within the church (compare Chloe in 1 Cor 1:11). Witherington suggests that the reference to Lydia in Acts could reflect an attempt to redefine traditional gender roles in early Christianity (Witherington, *Acts*, 336).

Ethnic/Religious Background

A Worshiper of God



Summer of Lies LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

Acts 16:13–14 describes Lydia participating in prayer on the Sabbath as “a worshiper of God” (Acts 16:13–14 NRSV; σεβομένη τὸν θεόν, *sebomenē ton theon*), a phrase used frequently to indicate a Gentile who had adopted elements of Jewish belief and practice but had not become a full proselyte (Witherington, *Acts*, 493).

It might be that Lydia’s work with purple dye precluded her full conversion to Judaism by bringing her into contact with animals that were unclean under the Torah (Murphy, “Gender Legacies,” 21).

The apparent absence of a synagogue in Philippi (see below) suggests that Lydia’s exposure to Judaism came when she lived in Thyatira (Polhill, *Acts*, 350). Josephus confirms the presence of an established Jewish community in that region beginning in the time of Antiochus II (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 12.3.4), and the Jewish population might have had significant involvement in the textile and dyeing industries (Williams, *Acts*, 283; Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 254–55).

Ascough views Lydia as a Greek woman who was pious within her own non-Jewish religious context and argues that author of Acts is purposefully vague about her background. He suggests that Lydia’s association with Judaism does not reflect the historical setting of Philippi but rather serves to maintain Paul’s typical pattern of approaching Jews (or those associated with Judaism) before he preaches the gospel to Gentiles (Ascough, *Lydia*, 87, 90).

Other Gentile believers mentioned in Acts include:

- the Ethiopian eunuch who had come to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 8:27);
- “devout converts” in Pisidian Antioch, “devout Greeks” in Thessalonica, and “devout persons” in Athens (Acts 13:43; 17:4, 17);
- Titius Justus, a “worshiper of God” who lived next door to the synagogue in Corinth (Acts 18:7)

The Place of Prayer

It is unclear whether Lydia first encounters Paul at a synagogue or at an informal prayer gathering.

Acts 16:13 indicates that Lydia first heard Paul’s message at a “place of prayer” (Acts 16:13 NRSV; προσευχήν, *proseuchēn*). Bruce suggests that the conspicuous lack of Jewish men in this passage indicates there was no synagogue in Philippi (Bruce, *Acts*, 310). However, because women were allowed to participate in limited synagogue activities, it is conceivable that Acts 16:13 is describing a synagogue (Bock, *Acts*, 533–34).

Elsewhere in the New Testament and in the Septuagint, the Greek προσευχή (*proseuchē*) is used to describe a temple or synagogue, but it appears as a genitive modifier of the word οἶκος (*oikos*) to designate a “house of prayer” (Isa 56:7; 60:7; Matt 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46; 1 Macc 3:46). Bock, following Schnabel and others, argues that προσευχή (*proseuchē*) has been used alone in extrabiblical literature to indicate a synagogue (Bock, *Acts*, 533; Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 1153), but this usage does not appear in the Septuagint or the New Testament aside from in Acts 16:13.

In the 36 obvious references to a synagogue in Acts (e.g., Acts 6:9; 18:4, 15, 23; 18:4, 19; 22:19), the author uses συναγωγή (*synagōgē*) exclusively. For this reason, προσευχήν (*proseuchēn*) in Acts 16:13 likely refers to an informal prayer gathering. Regardless of its exact referent, the description emphasizes Lydia’s pious behavior as a Gentile worshiper of God.

Role in the Philippian Church

Interpretations paint different pictures of Lydia’s involvement among the Philippian believers:

- a Pauline partner in the founding of the Philippian church (Luter, “Partnership,” 419);
- a patron of the apostolic ministry (Keener, *Bible Background*, 369);
- an authoritative leader who presided over the communion meal, preached to both men and women, and perhaps baptized new converts (Murphy, “Gender Legacies,” 28).



Summer of Lies

LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

Women experienced significant freedom and authority in the pagan cults that would have existed in Philippi (Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice*, 127). Within this context, the Philippian church might have been more willing than other Greek churches to let women play prominent roles (Keener, *Bible Background*, 368). However, beyond Lydia's faith and hospitality, definitive claims about her role in the Philippian church overstep the limited evidence.

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AARON DEVINE AND KARELYNNE GERBER AYAYO⁷

Article #4:

What then is the restriction? It can't be women teaching per se, since Paul commands

TEACHING:

- Cretan women in a letter written roughly at the same time to "teach others what is good" (Titus 2:3–5; cf. Acts 18:26).
- It could be that Paul was restricting women from public or "official" teaching. Yet this too has its difficulties, for teaching was part of what a prophet did in a public setting. To prophesy was to instruct so that "everyone will learn" (1 Cor 14:19, 31). And women were certainly active in the early Christian communities in this way (e.g., 1 Cor 11:5).
- Also, Paul taught elsewhere that when believers gather corporately, "one will sing, *another will teach*, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in tongues, and another will interpret what is said" (1 Cor 14:26). There are no gender distinctions here. Both women and men brought a teaching to the congregation.
- Perhaps the prohibition only applies to the "wife" and "husband" (and not "woman" and "man"): "I do not permit a wife to teach or have authority over her husband" (TNIV mg, NRSV mg). The difficulty is that Paul gives no clue that he is shifting from men and women in general (2:8–10) to husbands and wives specifically (2:11–15). It is true that Adam and Eve are mentioned in the following verses. But they are pointed to as the prototypical male and female, rather than as husband and wife.

The command for a quiet demeanor while learning and teaching suggests that women were disrupting worship. The men,

⁷ Devine, A., & Ayayo, K. G. (2016). [Lydia of Thyatira](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.



Summer of Lies LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

too, were praying in an angry and contentious way (2:8). Since Paul targeted women who teach men (2:12) and used the example of Adam and Eve as a corrective, **it is reasonable to conclude that there was a bit of a battle of the sexes going on in the congregation.**

The feminine side of this battle is summed up in the phrase *oude authentein*—translated “or usurp their authority” in the NLT mg and “have authority over them” in the text. The key term is *authentein* [831, 883], a word found nowhere else in the Greek Bible and only a handful of times outside the Bible. Although the infinitive *authentein* is commonly translated “to have authority over,” this is most unlikely. If Paul had wanted to speak of the ordinary exercise of authority, he could have picked any number of recurring words such as *exousia* [1849, 2026] (Titus 3:1), *epitagē* [2003, 2198] (Titus 2:15), *krinō* [2919, 3212] (2 Tim 4:1; Titus 3:12), *kurieuō* [2961, 3259] (6:15), or *archē* [746, 794] (Titus 3:1). But he did not, so we must ask, “why not?” A reasonable answer is that *authentein* has a nuance that particularly suited the Ephesian situation. “Rule” and “exercise authority” are routine. So the nuance lies elsewhere.

This nuance can be gleaned from sources contemporary with Paul. The noun *authentēs* is a literary word that means “murderer.” Wisdom of Solomon 12:6, for example, refers to Canaanite practices of sorcery and unholy rites such as “parents *who murder (authentas)* helpless lives.” By the first century AD, the lexical range expanded to include the perpetrator of crimes committed by others. The first-century Greek historian, Diodorus of Sicily, for instance, speaks of the *sponsors (authentas)* of some daring plans (*Library of History* 3.34.35.25), the *perpetrators (authentais)* of a sacrilege (1.16.61.1), and the *master-mind (authentas)* of a crime (17.5.4.5).

While the noun appears frequently, the verb *authenteō* first appears in the first century BC and only in nonliterary works. In the common Greek of the day it means to “domineer” or “gain the upper hand” (L&N 37.21). For example, one brother writes to the other about a business dispute with the foreman regarding the amount to be paid the ferryman for shipping a load of cattle: “I had my way with him” [or “I took a firm stand with him”; *authentēkotos pros auton*], and he [the foreman] agreed to pay the ferryman the full fare for shipping a load of cattle” (Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin 4.1208). The first-century rhetorician Philodemus talks of certain orators who fight every chance they get with prominent people—“with *powerful dignitaries*” (*sun authent[ou]sin anaxin; Rhetorica II Fragmenta Libri* [V] fr. IV line 14). The second-century geometrician Ptolemy states: “Therefore, if Saturn alone takes planetary control of the soul and *dominates (authentēsas)* Mercury and the moon [who govern the soul] [and] if Saturn has an honorable position toward both the solar system and its angles, then he [Saturn] makes [them] lovers of the body ... *dictatorial, ready to punish ... (Tetrabiblos* III.13 [#157]). During the apostolic era, the term *authentein* was not used of the simple exercise of authority. After the New Testament, the noun *authentēs* does not appear with this sense in Christian literature until mid- to late second century AD (e.g., Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and the Shepherd of Hermas)—far too late to provide a linguistic context for Paul—and the verb does not occur until well into the third century AD (e.g., *Hippolytus*). Studies of the Hellenistic letters argue that *authenteō* originated in the popular Greek vocabulary as a synonym for “to dominate someone” (*kratein tinos*). Biblical lexicographers Louw and Nida put *authenteō* [831, 883] **into the semantic domain “to control, restrain, domineer” and define the verb as “to control in a domineering manner”** (L&N 37.21). This matches what is found in the earliest translations: The Latin Vulgate and the Old Latin have “domineer.” “Usurp authority” appears in the older English versions (Geneva, Bishops’, KJV), and “take authority over” or “lay down the law for” in the earliest Spanish (Casiodoro de Reina) and French (Louis Segond [1910], La Sainte [1938], Jerusalem Bible [1974 Cerf edition]) translations. Some modern versions have “I do not allow women ... *to domineer over men*” (Goodspeed, NEB) and “they should ... not be allowed ... *to tell men what to do*” (CEV). This means that the NLT’s “to have authority over” should be understood in the sense of “holding sway” or “having dominance over” another.

So how do teaching and domineering fit together? The “neither-nor” structure of this verse is crucial. While some translations have two prohibitions (a woman is not permitted to teach, and she is not permitted to dictate to a man), the neither-nor (*ouk-oude* [3756/3761, 4024/4028] structure of verse 12 requires a single coherent idea (“I am permitting a woman neither-to-teach-nor-tell-a-man-what-to-do”). A bit of literary background is needed at this point. “Neither-nor” in antiquity was a poetic device. In biblical Greek (and Hebrew) it sets in parallel two or more natural groupings of words, phrases, and clauses. “He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep” is a familiar example (Ps 121:4, NIV). So what is the relationship between “teach” and “domineer”? They aren’t synonyms (slumber/sleep), antonyms (slave/free; Gal 3:28), closely related ideas (night/darkness; 1 Thess 5:5), or a natural progression of related ideas (sow/harvest/store; Matt 6:26). “Neither-nor” can define progression toward a goal or purpose: “neither hear nor understand” (that is, hearing with the intent to understand; Matt 13:13); “neither dwells in temples made with human hands nor is served by human hands” (that is, dwells with a view to being served; Acts 17:24–25); “where thieves neither break in nor steal” (that is, break in to steal; Matt 6:20). And this provides quite a good fit for 1 Timothy 2:12: “I do not permit a woman to teach so as to gain mastery over a man,” or “I do not permit a woman to teach with a view to dominating a man.” It is quite natural then to interpret verse 12 as women leaders seeking to dictate to or dominate



Summer of Lies LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

men. (See note on 2:12.)

“Neither-nor” can also correlate general and particular ideas: “Neither the wisdom of this age nor the rulers of this age” (1 Cor 2:6); “you know neither the day nor the hour” (Matt 25:13); “I neither consulted with flesh and blood nor went up to Jerusalem” (Gal 1:16–17). This is perhaps the best fit of all. “To domineer over a man” would then particularize “to teach.” What manner of teaching is Paul prohibiting? The kind that is domineering in style: “I do not permit a woman to teach *in a domineering manner* over a man.”

This would also solve a grammatical difficulty with Paul’s absolute statement: “I do not permit a woman to teach.” The word “to teach” (*didaskein*) demands an object (teach what or whom?) or a qualifier (teach how?). Only Jesus teaches in an absolute sense. “A man” cannot be the object of “teach.” The Greek *andros* (“man” in the genitive case) is the object of *authentain* (which requires the genitive; see note). A qualifier for *didaskein* needs to be in the accusative case—and there is none. This means that the second half of the correlative functions as the needed qualifier: teach how?—in a domineering fashion. The movement from general to particular is a common one in the New Testament. The closest parallel to our text is Revelation 2:20: “You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and *is teaching [didaskei] and beguiling [kai plana; NLT, “lead astray”] my servants* to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols.” How does she teach? In a misleading, deceptive fashion. Overbearing teaching fits admirably the contrast with verse 12b: “I do not permit a woman to teach a man in a dominating way over a man *but* to have a quiet demeanor” (lit., “to be in calmness”). Even more, “to teach in a domineering manner” fits well the context of 1 Timothy 2. Men were praying in an angry and disputing way (2:8). Women were learning in a disruptive fashion (2:11). Women were teaching in a domineering way (2:12).⁸

If we were to interpret **1 Timothy 2:12** without this cultural understanding, we would miss Paul’s important point: Usurping Godly authority will not be tolerated. From anyone.

NOTES

In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. (1 Corinthians 11:11)

Kraft, V., & Johnson, G. (2003). [*Women mentoring women: ways to start, maintain, and expand a biblical women’s ministry*](#) (Rev. ed., p. 25). Moody Publishers.

Not only that, but the woman is said to have a different purpose. She was created to be a “helper suitable to him.” The word helper has often been misunderstood today. Some have taken it to mean a doormat, an inferior person. Interestingly, the Hebrew word translated “helper” (*ezer*) is used nineteen times in the Old Testament (for example, Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7; Psalms 10:14; 33:20). Only four times is it used to speak of people helping people, peer helping peer. The other fifteen times it is used to refer to God helping people, a superior helping an inferior. It is never used in any of the nineteen references of an inferior helping a superior. **The term also has the meaning of someone who brings another to fulfillment.**

Kraft, V., & Johnson, G. (2003). [*Women mentoring women: ways to start, maintain, and expand a biblical women’s ministry*](#) (Rev. ed., p. 19). Moody Publishers.

THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN

⁸ Belleville, L. (2009). Commentary on 1 Timothy. In *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews* (Vol. 17, pp. 57–60). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.



Summer of Lies
LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

Galatians 3:27-29

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

What does “one in Christ” mean? How do we live this out when we make decisions on who will lead? Who is in charge? Who can minister? If we are all heirs of everything of Christ’s, how can we divide up that inheritance according to our personal preference?

Romans 3:21-26

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Salvation for male and female comes through Christ. Females do not receive Christ through their male “head”. Scripture never teaches this nor does scripture ever call a man “the priest of the home”.

1. God Created Male and Female to Rule Together

Genesis 1:26-31

*26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And **let them have** dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”*

*27 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

29 And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2. The Journey to the Forbidden Fruit

Adam’s role in the Garden: **Genesis 2:15**

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to **work it and keep it.***

- ❖ Work: abad (aw-bad’) to work, implied to serve, enslave, bond servant, compel, husbandman, keep, labor, bring to pass, servant, service, be wrought, worshipper.
- ❖ Keep/Take Care of: shamar (shaw-mar’) to hedge about as with thorns, beware, be circumspect, **guard, protect**, attend to, take heed, mark, look narrowly, observe, preserve, regard, save, sure wait, watch.

Adam is instructed by the LORD about the rules of the Garden (Note: Eve has not been created yet):



Summer of Lies LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

Genesis 2:16-17

16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, **17** but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Genesis 3:1-6

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” **2** And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, **3** but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” **4** But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. **5** For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” **6** So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Did Eve and Adam discuss the reasons behind what the LORD told Adam in **Genesis 2:16-17**? Why is the Enemy asking Eve this question? Why did not Adam say anything as he was right next to her? And the biggest question of all, why was Enemy in the Garden in the first place? Wasn't Adam instructed to guard and protect the Garden in **Genesis 2:15**? What was he to guard and protect it from if it wasn't the Enemy?

3. The Curse and its Consequences

“But what happened to Adam and Eve’s perfect union after they succumbed to temptation? God handed down punishments to the man, the woman, and the serpent. For the woman, the curse was pronounced with a sense of finality: “Your husband . . . will rule over you” (Gen. 3:16, NIV). In some cases the church has taught that Eve’s curse was God’s ultimate will for her: from now on, because of Eve’s deception, women must be ruled by men as a form of punishment. But this is not the intention of God for women; it is simply the consequence of disobedience apart from redemption! Yes, women throughout the world are oppressed by men as a result of the Fall. Look at any sinful culture and you will find the degradation of women through sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, and the lack of political and human rights. But God does not want things to stay this way. He provided a Savior who has borne the curse for us! Whenever the gospel of Christ is preached, women will find liberation from the pain of abuse, domination, and subjugation mentioned in Genesis 3:16. Consider the judgment that was placed on Adam. He was told that he would have to toil by the sweat of his brow in the fields. (See Genesis 3:19.) These solemn words refer to the curse of poverty—the tragic economic depravity that rules every pagan culture. But we don’t use this verse to teach that abject poverty is God’s perfect will for men any more than we believe that because of Genesis 3:17–19, all males should have agricultural occupations. The curse of poverty on man—along with the curse of oppression on women—was reversed because of the grace that was released into the world by the finished work of the Savior’s cross.”⁹

Romans 12:10 “giving preference to one another in honor”

“The curse is not just a judgment rendered but also is an explanation of the relationship between the man and the woman after the Fall. Alienation has come between the man and woman and between the couple and God, and that means a distortion of God’s plan, but there is no indication in the text that He has eliminated the headship of the man in marriage. God does not make His plans dependent upon perfect people or the right circumstances. The curse offers a vivid description of the conditions that exist in a fallen world: pain in childbirth, abuse of headship, and defiance rather than submission. Childbirth could not be a curse because that has always been God’s plan for producing the next generation. Nevertheless, pain and suffering now accompany the experience. Work is not a curse since that, too, was part of the Creator’s plan. The man needed a helper for his

⁹ “Ten Lies The Church Tells Women” J. Lee Grady 2000, pg. 34



Summer of Lies LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

responsibilities of dominion. Sin made the work difficult. Some suggest that the woman assumed leadership and ignored the directive which came to her through her husband (Gen. 3:6), and the man listened to his wife, abandoning his own responsibility for leadership (v. 17). In any case, both the woman and the man determined to go their own ways rather than going God's way, and this act of disobedience is what broke their fellowship with God."¹⁰

4. Women Cannot Lead. Especially when Men are Involved.

1 Timothy 2:12

"I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet."

"One reason why women are taking leadership positions is that the man has too often failed to take his place. When men are weak, women must be strong. Men should willingly step forward to lead the church in every area, but often the men are weak and lazy...someone has to lead, so the women step in and take control." David W. Cloud, Baptists leader, 1998 article in OTimothy Magazine

1 Timothy 5:23

"No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments."

In this verse, Paul is conversing with his protégé, Timothy. Did Paul just instruct Timothy on a piece of theology that is to be applied to all ministers for all time? Or is it an instruction for everyone everywhere?

Is this a doctrinal statement being made by Paul? How about a scriptural cure for stomach ailments?

This verse falls later in the letter amongst a list of varied instructions. It is a personal note from Paul to his son in the faith, Timothy. We get a glimpse of their caring relationship. There is personal dialogue included in scripture. There is relationship included in scripture.

Excellent resource: "How To Read Your Bible For All Its Worth" by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart

1 Timothy 2:11 *"Let a woman **learn** quietly with all submissiveness."*

Paul's instruction for women to receive instruction was actually progressive and liberating for women at that time. There is cultural change happening in scripture.

So, what does **1 Timothy 2:12** mean? Are there any extenuating circumstances?

Is Paul forbidding women to teach in any setting? Women cannot teach other women? Children in grade school? Does this show up anywhere else in scripture, declaring it a universal decree? **Titus 2:4** he tells older women to teach younger ones. **Proverbs 31** woman is described as having the teaching of kindness on her tongue. In **Matthew 28:19-20** the directive to go and teach all we know of Christ, a.k.a. The Great Commission, is given to both male and female disciples.

Is Paul forbidding women to teach men? Can women teach boys in school? If not, at what age do boys become men, and at what point are women not to teach them? Does this mean women professors cannot teach college courses to men?

In **Acts 18:24-26** Apollos was discipled by Priscilla and Aquila. Note Priscilla's name is listed first indicating she is the primary instructor. In **2 Timothy 1:5** Paul commends Lois and Eunice for teaching Timothy scripture. He does not correct them for not getting a man to teach nor does he question their ability to teach or the quality of their knowledge.

¹⁰ Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). *The Woman's Study Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



Summer of Lies LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

Is Paul forbidding women to teach or preach only in a church or an authoritative setting? Does the demand for silence mean it is wrong to prophesy, share testimonies, to pray publicly, to read scripture, to give announcements? Luke addresses prophecy by quoting **Joel 2:28** in **Acts 2:16-18** (see #7 below). If the Spirit falls on men and women to prophesy, do we disagree with the Holy Spirit?

Acts 21:9 “Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses.”
1 Corinthians 14:31 “For you can all prophesy one by one...”

Is this a prohibition for women to hold any position of authority over men? Political office? Management in business? Should a male quit his job if his boss is a woman? Church committee? What does Paul mean?

Let us look at what was life like in Ephesus. Who was Paul writing to?

Article #1:

Ephesus was a large and important city on the west coast of Asia Minor where the apostle Paul founded a church (see Map 7, C-2). A number of factors contributed to the prominence that Ephesus enjoyed.

The first factor was economics. Situated at the mouth of the river Cayster, Ephesus was the most favorable seaport in the province of Asia and the most important trade center west of Tarsus. Today, because of silting from the river, the ruins of the city lie in a swamp 8 to 11 kilometers (5 to 7 miles) inland.

Another factor was size. Although Pergamum was the capital of the province of Asia in Roman times, Ephesus was the largest city in the province, having a population of perhaps 300,000 people.

A third factor was culture. Ephesus contained a theater that seated an estimated 25,000 people. A main thoroughfare, some 35 meters (105 feet) wide, ran from the theater to the harbor, at each end of which stood an impressive gate. The thoroughfare was flanked on each side by rows of columns 15 meters (50 feet) deep. Behind these columns were baths, gymnasiums, and impressive buildings.

The fourth, and perhaps most significant, reason for the prominence of Ephesus was religion. The Temple of Artemis (or Diana, according to her Roman name) at Ephesus ranked as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. As the twin sister of Apollo and the daughter of Zeus, Artemis was known variously as the moon goddess, the goddess of hunting, and the patroness of young girls. The temple at Ephesus housed the image of Artemis that was reputed to have come directly from Zeus (Acts 19:35).

The temple of Artemis in Paul's day was supported by 127 columns, each of them 60 meters (197 feet) high. The Ephesians took great pride in this grand edifice. During the Roman period, they promoted the worship of Artemis by minting coins with the inscription, “Diana of Ephesus.”

The history of Christianity at Ephesus began about A.D. 50, perhaps as a result of the efforts of Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:18). Paul came to Ephesus in about A.D. 52, establishing a resident ministry for the better part of three years (Acts 20:31). During his Ephesian ministry, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 16:8).

The Book of Acts reports that “all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:10), while Paul taught during the hot midday hours in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9). Influence from his ministry undoubtedly resulted in the founding of churches in the Lycus River valley at Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossae.

So influential, in fact, was Paul's ministry at Ephesus that the silversmiths' league, which fashioned souvenirs of the temple, feared that the preaching of the gospel would undermine the great temple of Artemis (Acts 19:27). As a result, one of the silversmiths, a man named Demetrius, stirred up a riot against Paul.

During his stay in Ephesus, Paul encountered both great opportunities and great dangers. He baptized believers who apparently came to know the gospel through disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-5), and he countered the strong influence of magic in Ephesus (Acts 19:11-20).

After Paul departed from Ephesus, Timothy remained to combat false teaching (1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 4:3; Acts 20:29). Many traditions testify that the apostle John lived in Ephesus toward the end of the first century. In his vision from the island of Patmos off the coast of Asia Minor, John described the church of Ephesus as flourishing, although it was troubled with false teachers and had lost its first love (Rev. 2:1-7). In the sixth century A.D. the Roman emperor Justinian (A.D. 527-565) raised a magnificent church to John's memory in this city.

Ephesus continued to play a prominent role in the history of the early church. A long line of bishops in the Eastern church lived there. In A.D. 431 the Council of Ephesus officially condemned the Nestorian heresy, which taught that there were two



Summer of Lies LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

separate persons, one divine and one human, in the person of Jesus Christ.¹¹

Article #2:

At the site of the old temple, a foundation of charcoal and skins was laid over this low, marshy place, and Alexander the Great led in the construction of a new temple of Diana which became one of the wonders of the ancient world. It was the largest Greek temple ever constructed. In it were over one hundred external columns about fifty-six feet in height, of which thirty-six were hand carved. The doors were of cypress wood; columns and walls were of Parian marble; the staircase was carved out of one vine from Cyprus.

The temple served as the bank of Asia and was the depository of vast sums of money. It was an art gallery displaying the masterpieces of Praxiteles, Phidias, Scopas, and Polycletus. Apelles' famous painting of Alexander was there. Behind a purple curtain was the lewd and crude image of Diana, the goddess of fertility. She was many-breasted, carried a club in one hand and a trident in the other. *Horrible* is Diana of the Ephesians could be accurately substituted for "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." Diana was the most sacred idol of heathenism. Her temple was four times larger than the Parthenon at Athens, and it was finally destroyed by the Goths in A.D. 256. Of course, it was standing in Paul's day. If you want to see something of the magnificence of the place, go to Istanbul, to the Hagia Sophia. Those beautiful green columns that are there were taken out of the temple of Diana by Justinian when he built Hagia Sophia. Seeing only these columns gives us some conception of the beauty of the temple of Diana.

Around the temple of Diana were performed the grossest forms of immorality. She was worshiped by probably more people than was any other idol. The worshipers indulged in the basest religious rites of sensuality and the wildest bacchanalian orgies that were excessive and vicious. And farther inland, the worship of Diana became nothing more than sex orgies, and her name was changed from Diana to Cybele.¹²

Here is where Paul ministered and led the burgeoning church. What would converts to Christ, with this background, struggle with? What type of conversations were had after church and in their homes? What happened inside the church for Paul to write out his ban on women in authority?

1 Timothy 1:3

As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine,

1 Timothy 1:20

among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

1 Timothy 4:7

Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness;

1 Timothy 5:13

Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not.

There was a significant amount of work in aiding the new believers on how to live and interact in a Godly manner. Men and women were spreading heresies. J.L. Grady, states the background of this conflict included:

"Some of these rebellious women were actually disrupting worship services so they could teach their strange gospels. Rather than listening to church leaders who had been trained by Paul and the other apostles, these women were proudly

¹¹ Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., & Harrison, R. K., Thomas Nelson Publishers (Eds.). (1995). In *Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.

¹² McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 5, p. 900). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



Summer of Lies LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

claiming that they deserved the pulpit themselves. In some instances they may have wrested control of the meetings and tried to teach or even perform their rituals."¹³

1 Timothy 2:12

"I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet."

The key word being authority. Whose authority had precedence in this community. In our key text of 1 Timothy 2:12, the word *Exousia* is used for "authority". *Authentein* = extreme negative connotation, forceful word. Not just authority but to wrench authority away from, usurp, dominate. (See article #3 and #4 below)

Article #3:

2:12 I do not let women. The verb *epitrepō* [2010, 2205] is a present tense indicative: "I am not permitting" or "I do not permit." And the number is singular: "a woman."

teach men or have authority over them. The Greek verb *authentein* [831, 883] is not found elsewhere in Paul's writings or the NT. In the Greek of the day, the word meant "domineer." The root of the noun is *auto + entos*, meaning "to do or originate something with one's own hand." The standard lexicons define the verb as "to control in a domineering manner" and understand Paul's usage as, "I do not allow women ... to dominate men" (L&N 37.21). When Paul has exercise of authority in mind, he uses a word such as *exousia* [1849, 2026] (e.g., Rom 9:21; 13:1–3; 1 Cor 7:4, 37; 9:4–6, 12, 18; 11:10; 15:24; 2 Cor 10:8; 13:10; Eph 1:21; Col 1:16; 2 Thess 3:9; Titus 3:1). This means that Paul was highlighting the manner in which a woman taught—that is, a woman was not to teach in a domineering way (cf. the TNIV footnote). Evangelical scholarship has been largely dependent on Knight's study for its understanding of *authentein* and his translation of *authentekotos pros auton* as, "I exercised authority over him" (1984:145). But the preposition *pros* [4314, 4639] plus the accusative *auton* does not bear this sense in Greek. "To/towards," "against," and "with" (and less frequently "at," "for," "with reference to," "on," and "on account of") are the range of possible meanings. See BAGD *pros* + the accusative.

Furthermore, in the Greek, we see a "neither—nor" construction: "neither teach nor domineer" (NLT, "have authority over"). Such constructions in the NT pair synonyms ("neither despised nor scorned," Gal 4:14), antonyms ("neither slave nor free," Gal 3:28), or closely related ideas ("neither of the night nor of the dark," 1 Thess 5:5). It is also used to define a related purpose or a goal ("where thieves neither break in nor steal" [i.e., break in to steal], Matt 6:20), to move from the general to the particular ("wisdom neither of this age nor of the rulers of this age," 1 Cor 2:6), or to define a natural progression of related ideas ("they neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns," Matt 6:26). In this context it seems that the Greek correlative "neither—nor" defines a single activity. (Compare Psalm 121:4 "[God] who keeps Israel will *neither slumber nor sleep*," ESV.) This means that women here are not prohibited from roles that involve teaching men. The issue is rather the manner in which they teach—that is, they should not teach in a dictatorial or domineering way (see commentary, and see Belleville 1990:176–177).¹⁴

Article #4:

Paul's third corrective is found in a much-debated text: "I am not permitting a woman to teach." The ongoing sense of the present tense verb is to be noted. The corrective is not the commonly found categorical prohibition, "I do not permit," (aorist tense) but a restriction specific to the current situation at Ephesus ("I am not permitting [you Ephesian women]"). The NLT's "I do not let women" can be easily misunderstood as Paul's universal practice and overlooks the context of false teaching specific to the Ephesian situation. It is also important to note that Paul introduces verse 12 as a point of contrast with verse 11. The initial *but* in the Greek makes this quite clear: "Let a woman learn quietly and submissively *but* for a woman to teach ... a man I am not permitting" (my translation).

What then is the restriction? It can't be women teaching per se, since Paul commands Cretan women in a letter written roughly at the same time to "teach others what is good" (Titus 2:3–5; cf. Acts 18:26). It could be that Paul was restricting women from public or "official" teaching. Yet this too has its difficulties, for teaching was part of what a prophet did in a public setting. To prophesy was to instruct so that "everyone will learn" (1 Cor 14:19, 31). And women were certainly active

¹³ Grady, J. Lee (2006) "Ten Lies The Church Tells Women: How the Bible Has Been Misused to Keep Women in Spiritual Bondage" Page 65.

¹⁴ Belleville, L. (2009). Commentary on 1 Timothy. In *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews* (Vol. 17, pp. 54–55). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.



Summer of Lies LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

in the early Christian communities in this way (e.g., 1 Cor 11:5). Also, Paul taught elsewhere that when believers gather corporately, “one will sing, *another will teach*, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in tongues, and another will interpret what is said” (1 Cor 14:26). There are no gender distinctions here. Both women and men brought a teaching to the congregation.

Some claim that the issue is women teaching men doctrine and that Paul is stating that women cannot do so. But this misconstrues the verb *didaskō* and the term “doctrine.” To “teach” (*didaskein*) is to provide instruction in a formal or informal setting (L&N 33.224; cf. Luke 11:1). The Greek term for “teach doctrine” is *katēcheō* (cf. English “catechism”; Luke 1:4; Acts 18:25; 21:21, 24; 1 Cor 14:19; Gal 6:6). “Doctrine” as a system of thought assumes that authority lies in the act of teaching (or in the person who teaches). Yet, in the Pastorals, authority resides in the deposit of truth—literally, “the mystery of the faith” (3:9), “the message of faith” (4:6), “the faith” (4:1; 5:8; 6:10, 12, 21), and “the trust” (6:20) that Jesus passed on to his disciples and that they in turn passed on to their disciples (2 Tim 2:2). So “doctrine” with this definition was not a first-century development. That is why Paul instructed Timothy to publicly rebuke (5:20) anyone who departed from, literally, “the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ” (6:3). The teacher was subject to evaluation and discipline just like any other leader or minister.

Perhaps the prohibition only applies to the “wife” and “husband” (and not “woman” and “man”): “I do not permit a wife to teach or have authority over her husband” (TNIV mg, NRSV mg). The difficulty is that Paul gives no clue that he is shifting from men and women in general (2:8–10) to husbands and wives specifically (2:11–15). It is true that Adam and Eve are mentioned in the following verses. But they are pointed to as the prototypical male and female, rather than as husband and wife.

The command for a quiet demeanor while learning and teaching suggests that women were disrupting worship. The men, too, were praying in an angry and contentious way (2:8). Since Paul targeted women who teach men (2:12) and used the example of Adam and Eve as a corrective, it is reasonable to conclude that there was a bit of a battle of the sexes going on in the congregation.

The feminine side of this battle is summed up in the phrase *oude authentein*—translated “or usurp their authority” in the NLT mg and “have authority over them” in the text. The key term is *authentein* [831, 883], a word found nowhere else in the Greek Bible and only a handful of times outside the Bible. Although the infinitive *authentein* is commonly translated “to have authority over,” this is most unlikely. If Paul had wanted to speak of the ordinary exercise of authority, he could have picked any number of recurring words such as *exousia* [1849, 2026] (Titus 3:1), *epitagē* [2003, 2198] (Titus 2:15), *krinō* [2919, 3212] (2 Tim 4:1; Titus 3:12), *kurieuō* [2961, 3259] (6:15), or *archē* [746, 794] (Titus 3:1). But he did not, so we must ask, “why not?” A reasonable answer is that *authentein* has a nuance that particularly suited the Ephesian situation. “Rule” and “exercise authority” are routine. So the nuance lies elsewhere.

This nuance can be gleaned from sources contemporary with Paul. The noun *authentēs* is a literary word that means “murderer.” Wisdom of Solomon 12:6, for example, refers to Canaanite practices of sorcery and unholy rites such as “parents *who murder (authentas)* helpless lives.” By the first century AD, the lexical range expanded to include the perpetrator of crimes committed by others. The first-century Greek historian, Diodorus of Sicily, for instance, speaks of the *sponsors (authentas)* of some daring plans (*Library of History* 3.34.35.25), the *perpetrators (authentais)* of a sacrilege (1.16.61.1), and the *master-mind (authentas)* of a crime (17.5.4.5).

While the noun appears frequently, the verb *authenteō* first appears in the first century BC and only in nonliterary works. In the common Greek of the day it means to “domineer” or “gain the upper hand” (L&N 37.21). For example, one brother writes to the other about a business dispute with the foreman regarding the amount to be paid the ferryman for shipping a load of cattle: “I had my way with him” [or “I took a firm stand with him”; *authentēkotos pros auton*], and he [the foreman] agreed to pay the ferryman the full fare for shipping a load of cattle” (Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin 4.1208). The first-century rhetorician Philodemus talks of certain orators who fight every chance they get with prominent people—“with *powerful dignitaries*” (*sun authent[ou]sin anaxin; Rhetorica II Fragmenta Libri [V] fr. IV line 14*). The second-century geometrician Ptolemy states: “Therefore, if Saturn alone takes planetary control of the soul and *dominates (authentēsas)* Mercury and the moon [who govern the soul] [and] if Saturn has an honorable position toward both the solar system and its angles, then he [Saturn] makes [them] lovers of the body ... *dictatorial, ready to punish* ... (*Tetrabiblos* III.13 [#157]). During the apostolic era, the term *authentein* was not used of the simple exercise of authority. After the New Testament, the noun *authentēs* does not appear with this sense in Christian literature until mid- to late second century AD (e.g., Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and the Shepherd of Hermas)—far too late to provide a linguistic context for Paul—and the verb does not occur until well into the third century AD (e.g., *Hippolytus*). Studies of the Hellenistic letters argue that *authenteō* originated in the popular Greek vocabulary as a synonym for “to dominate someone” (*kratein tinos*). Biblical lexicographers Louw and Nida put *authenteō* [831, 883] into the semantic domain “to control, restrain, domineer” and define the verb as “to control in a domineering manner” (L&N 37.21). This matches what is found in the earliest



Summer of Lies

LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

translations: The Latin Vulgate and the Old Latin have “domineer.” “Usurp authority” appears in the older English versions (Geneva, Bishops’, KJV), and “take authority over” or “lay down the law for” in the earliest Spanish (Casiodoro de Reina) and French (Louis Segond [1910], La Sainte [1938], Jerusalem Bible [1974 Cerf edition]) translations. Some modern versions have “I do not allow women ... to *domineer over men*” (Goodspeed, NEB) and “they should ... not be allowed ... to *tell men what to do*” (CEV). This means that the NLT’s “to have authority over” should be understood in the sense of “holding sway” or “having dominance over” another.

So how do teaching and domineering fit together? The “neither-nor” structure of this verse is crucial. While some translations have two prohibitions (a woman is not permitted to teach, and she is not permitted to dictate to a man), the neither-nor (*ouk-oude* [3756/3761, 4024/4028] structure of verse 12 requires a single coherent idea (“I am permitting a woman neither-to-teach-nor-tell-a-man-what-to-do”). A bit of literary background is needed at this point. “Neither-nor” in antiquity was a poetic device. In biblical Greek (and Hebrew) it sets in parallel two or more natural groupings of words, phrases, and clauses. “He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep” is a familiar example (Ps 121:4, NIV). So what is the relationship between “teach” and “domineer”? They aren’t synonyms (slumber/sleep), antonyms (slave/free; Gal 3:28), closely related ideas (night/darkness; 1 Thess 5:5), or a natural progression of related ideas (sow/harvest/store; Matt 6:26). “Neither-nor” can define progression toward a goal or purpose: “neither hear nor understand” (that is, hearing with the intent to understand; Matt 13:13); “neither dwells in temples made with human hands nor is served by human hands” (that is, dwells with a view to being served; Acts 17:24–25); “where thieves neither break in nor steal” (that is, break in to steal; Matt 6:20). And this provides quite a good fit for 1 Timothy 2:12: “I do not permit a woman to teach so as to gain mastery over a man,” or “I do not permit a woman to teach with a view to dominating a man.” It is quite natural then to interpret verse 12 as women leaders seeking to dictate to or dominate men. (See note on 2:12.)

“Neither-nor” can also correlate general and particular ideas: “Neither the wisdom of this age nor the rulers of this age” (1 Cor 2:6); “you know neither the day nor the hour” (Matt 25:13); “I neither consulted with flesh and blood nor went up to Jerusalem” (Gal 1:16–17). This is perhaps the best fit of all. “To domineer over a man” would then particularize “to teach.” What manner of teaching is Paul prohibiting? The kind that is domineering in style: “I do not permit a woman to teach *in a domineering manner over a man.*”

This would also solve a grammatical difficulty with Paul’s absolute statement: “I do not permit a woman to teach.” The word “to teach” (*didaskein*) demands an object (teach what or whom?) or a qualifier (teach how?). Only Jesus teaches in an absolute sense. “A man” cannot be the object of “teach.” The Greek *andros* (“man” in the genitive case) is the object of *authentain* (which requires the genitive; see note). A qualifier for *didaskein* needs to be in the accusative case—and there is none. This means that the second half of the correlative functions as the needed qualifier: teach how?—in a domineering fashion. The movement from general to particular is a common one in the New Testament. The closest parallel to our text is Revelation 2:20: “You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and *is teaching [didaskei] and beguiling [kai plana; NLT, “lead astray”] my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols.*” How does she teach? In a misleading, deceptive fashion. Overbearing teaching fits admirably the contrast with verse 12b: “I do not permit a woman to teach a man in a dominating way over a man *but to have a quiet demeanor*” (lit., “to be in calmness”). Even more, “to teach in a domineering manner” fits well the context of 1 Timothy 2. Men were praying in an angry and disputing way (2:8). Women were learning in a disruptive fashion (2:11). Women were teaching in a domineering way (2:12).¹⁵

If we were to interpret **1 Timothy 2:12** without this cultural understanding, we would miss Paul’s important point: Usurping Godly authority will not be tolerated. From anyone.

5. Women Were Created to be Men’s Helpers.

Genesis 2:18

*18 Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a **helper** fit for him.”*

Genesis 1:26-31

26 Then God said, “Let us make man[a] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on

¹⁵ Belleville, L. (2009). Commentary on 1 Timothy. In *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews* (Vol. 17, pp. 57–60). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.



Summer of Lies

LIE #3: Women Are Not Created to be Leaders

the earth.” 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” 29 And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

From the Genesis 1 text, we can identify the LORD’s design of:

Man and woman were both created in God’s image.

Male and Female were created equal in nature.

Women share in the responsibility and authority to create and care for society.

With this understanding, we move to the verse in Genesis 2 with the word “helper”.

What does the word literally mean:

HELP:

5828 עֵזֶר [*`ezer /ay·zer/*] n m. From 5826; TWOT 1598a; GK 6469; 21 occurrences; AV translates as “help” 19 times, and “help meet” twice. 1 help, succour. 1A help, succour. 1B one who helps. (Strong’s Hebrew Lexicon)

“Brings another to fulfillment.” The Hebrew word is *`ezer*.

Of the nineteen times *`ezer* is used in the Old Testament, fifteen times it is used to refer to God helping people.

Exodus 18:4 *“My father’s God was my helper...”*

Deuteronomy 33:7 *“Hear, O Lord, the cry of Judah; bring him to his people. With his own hand he defends his cause. Oh, be his help against his foes.”*

Psalms 10:14 *“But you, O God, do see trouble and grief; you consider it to take it in hand. The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless.”*

Psalms 33:20 *“We wait in hope for the Lord; He is our help and our shield.”*

Psalm 59:4 *“I have don o wrong, yet they are ready to attack me. Aries to help me; look on my plight.”*

The four other times it is used to refer to people helping people.

MEET: (Believe this is the only place these two words are combined)

(Heb. *kenegdo*, lit. “corresponding to what is in front of him”)

The word “meet” is most commonly used in contemporary English as a verb meaning “to come face to face with”; “to come together”; “to join”; “to settle or fulfill.” In contemporary English the word occurs only as an adjective meaning “suitable or right.” **Philippians 1:7; Mark 7:27; Luke 15:32; Matthew 3:8; Col 1:12; 2 Kings 10:3**

Summer of Lies
LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh”
Genesis 2:23

Article #1:

MEET

The word “meet” is most commonly used in contemporary English as a verb meaning “to come face to face with”; “to come together”; “to join”; “to settle or fulfill.” In contemporary English the word occurs only as an adjective meaning “suitable or right.”

In the KJV the word occurs as a verb in the sense that we are familiar with. There are several examples of its use as an adjective, of which perhaps the most well-known is Genesis 2:18: “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.”

Some other examples are: “If any man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Timothy 2:21, KJV), rendered as “useful to the Master” (NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV), “useful to the owner of the house” (CEV), and “ready for the Master to use” (NLT);

“Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace” (Philippians 1:7, KJV), where the KJV “meet” is “right” (NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV) and “only natural” (CEV): “You have a special place in my heart. So it is only natural for me to feel the way I do”;

“But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it unto the dogs” (Mark 7:27, KJV) where the KJV “meet” is rendered “right” (CEV, NCV, NIV, NLT), “fair” (NRSV), “good” (NASB, NKJV), and “proper” (NASB, footnote);

“It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found” (Luke 15:32, KJV), rendered as “But we had to celebrate” (NASB, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV), “We should be glad and celebrate!” (CEV), and “It was right that we should make merry” (NKJV);

“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Matthew 3:8, KJV), where the KJV “meet for” is rendered “in keeping with” (NASB, NIV) and “worthy of” (NKJV, NRSV); the CEV has “Do something to show that you have really given up your sins” and the NLT, “Prove by the way you live that you have really turned from your sins and turned to God”;

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Colossians 1:12, KJV), where the KJV is rendered “qualified ... to share” (NASB, NIV, NLT, NRSV, RSV) and “qualified to be partakers” (NKJV); the CEV has “I pray that you will be grateful to God for letting you have part in what he has promised his people in the kingdom of light” and the NCV, “And you will joyfully give thanks to the Father who has made you able to have a share in all that he has prepared for his people in the kingdom of light”; “look even out the best and meetest of your master’s sons, and set him on his father’s throne, and fight for your master’s house” (2 Kings 10:3) where the KJV “best and meetest” is rendered “best and most worthy” (NCV, NIV), “best qualified” (NKJV, NLT, NRSV), “best and fittest” (NASB), and simply “best” (CEV).¹⁶

Article #2:

HELPMEEET

A “helpmeet” is a “companion” or “helper,” the word often being applied to one’s wife or husband. The word derives from a misreading of Genesis 2:18 in the KJV, “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” The word “meet” simply meant “suitable.”

(also See MEET)

As the Bible text was read aloud, however, the two words “help meet” were thought to be one word: “helpmeet.” In the early eighteenth century the word “helpmate” was coined with the thought that “mate” made better sense than “meet.”

¹⁶ Manser, M. H., Fleming, N. B., Hughes, K., & Bridges, R. F. (2000). *I Never Knew That Was in the Bible!* (electronic ed., p. 288). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

Other translations bring out different shades of meaning of the KJV “an help meet for him”: the NASB and NIV give “a helper suitable for him”; the RSV, “a helper fit for him”; the NCV, “a helper who is right for him”; the NKJV, “a helper comparable to him”; the NRSV, “a helper as his partner”; the CEV, “a suitable partner for him”; and the NLT, “a companion who will help him.”¹⁷

Article #3:

Adam could find no “comparable helper” in spite of his careful research into the animal kingdom (Gen. 2:20). God had said it was not good for the man to be alone. The process of naming the animals taught Adam what God already knew: Adam could find among them no suitable companion to whom he could relate physically, intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually.

THE FULL EQUALITY OF MEN AND WOMEN

Full equality is seen in the statement of God’s intent (Genesis 2:18). The verse expresses God’s intention to make a “helper comparable to” Adam. Other English translations of the Hebrew phrase *etzer kenegdo* render it “a fitting helper for him” (RSV), an “aid fit for him” (Anchor Bible), “suitable helper” (NIV), and “a helper who is right for him” (God’s Word). Unfortunately, each of these translations seems to suggest that woman was created *for the benefit of* man. Understood in this way, the text would support the assumption of many that females are by nature and by God’s intent subordinate to males.

But this is *not* implied in the Hebrew phrase. In fact, this phrase guards against just this sort of misinterpretation of male-female relationships! Psalm 33:20 uses the exact word translated “helper” here in Genesis to describe God. The psalmist declared, “Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.” Likewise, God is identified as man’s helper (*etzer*) in Exodus 18:4 and Psalm 70:5. Being a “helper” does not indicate subordination or that the person who helps exists for the benefit of the one being helped.

What Genesis 2:18 emphasizes is that only one who is fully a person—completely human as Adam was human and thus “comparable to him”—could meet the needs of Adam or any other human being.

Full equality is implied in the means God used to create woman (Genesis 2:22). God took a rib from Adam and used it as the basis for forming Eve. If God had made Eve as He formed Adam—from the dust of the earth—there would have been no *essential connection* between man and woman. Woman would have been a separate and subsequent creation. By using Adam’s rib, God further affirmed the identity of man and woman as humans who were equally possessors of the divine image-likeness.

Full equality was expressed in Adam’s response to Eve (Genesis 2:23). Gordon Wenham, in the *Word Biblical Commentary*, noted that this verse scans as Hebrew poetry. He captured its essence when he described Adam as “in ecstasy,” bursting into poetry on meeting his perfect helpmeet. Adam understood fully the fact that in Eve God had created a person who was “flesh of my flesh”—a person who shared with him all that it means to be human.

In the deepest sense, Adam and Eve—and the men and women who have descended from them—are not “different” but one.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE MIRACLE OF WOMAN’S CREATION

Materialists who adopt an evolutionary view of men and women tend to define male and female by their physical characteristics [men are stronger] and supposed evolutionary roles [women are nurturers,

¹⁷ Manser, M. H., Fleming, N. B., Hughes, K., & Bridges, R. F. (2000). *I Never Knew That Was in the Bible!* (electronic ed., p. 214). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

men hunters].

Christians who have misunderstood the message of woman's creation in Genesis 2 have tended to *limit* women's roles. Women are supposed to stay at home, rear children, and care for their husbands because God created them to be "helpers." For generations, this religiously based bias kept women in Western society from studying to be doctors or scientists.

Yet rightly understood, this miracle of God's creation of woman as a "helper comparable" to man emphasizes the equality of the sexes. God has gifted each sex with every capacity provided to humanity as a whole. Women do not come behind men in intellectual, emotional, or spiritual gifts. And only when we affirm, as Adam did, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh," will we experience to the full all the wonderful ways in which God intends us to be helpers of one another.¹⁸

"In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God."

1 Corinthians 11:11-12

6. Paul's Written Legacy of Women in Ministry.

Romans 16:1-16

*I commend to you our sister **Phoebe**, a servant [deaconess] of the church at Cenchreae, **2** that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.*

***3** Greet **Prisca** and **Aquila**, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, **4** who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. **5** Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved **Epaenetus**, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. **6** Greet **Mary**, who has worked hard for you. **7** Greet **Andronicus** and **Junia**, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. **8** Greet **Ampliatius**, my beloved in the Lord. **9** Greet **Urbanus**, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved **Stachys**. **10** Greet **Apelles**, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of **Aristobulus**. **11** Greet my kinsman **Herodion**. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of **Narcissus**. **12** Greet those workers in the Lord, **Tryphaena** and **Tryphosa**. Greet the beloved **Persis**, who has worked hard in the Lord. **13** Greet **Rufus**, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well. **14** Greet **Asyncritus**, **Phlegon**, **Hermes**, **Patrobas**, **Hermas**, and the brothers who are with them. **15** Greet **Philologus**, **Julia**, **Nereus** and his sister, and **Olympas**, and all the saints who are with them. **16** Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.*

Note the inclusion of many women's names. They are bolded for your reading convenience. What does this suggest of Paul's stance on women in leadership?

Also note verse 7: *Greet **Andronicus** and **Junia**, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners*

Depending on what manuscript you read, it will list Junia (feminine) or Junias/Junianus (masculine).

Excerpt from the forward of "*Junia: The First Woman Apostle*" by Eldon Jay Epp:

The points Epp brings forward and develops are quite clear: For the first seven centuries of the church's life Greek manuscripts did not employ accents, but when accents did become common practice in the manuscript tradition, and insofar as those accents can be identified, they uniformly identify the name as feminine. To put the point sharply: there is no Greek manuscript extant that unambiguously identifies Andronicus's partner as a male. That consistent pattern coheres with the evidence offered by early Christian writers for the first thousand years of the church's life and well into the second thousand years. Theologians as diverse as Origen, Ambrosiaster, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Theodoret, John Damascene, Peter Abelard, and Peter Lombard, assume that the partner of Andronicus is a woman by the name of Junia. Particularly impressive is Chrysostom's observation concerning Junia: "How great the

¹⁸ Richards, L. (1998). *Every miracle in the Bible* (p. 38). Nashville: T. Nelson.

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

wisdom of this woman must have been that she was even deemed worthy of the title of apostle." Only with the thirteenth century Aegidius of Rome, and especially with Martin Luther's translation, did the view arise that Junia was in fact a male, Junias. Finally, and not of least importance, the female name Junia is a widely attested Roman name, but there exists no evidence for the use of the masculine forms Junias or Junianus.

The above forward was written by: Beverly Roberts Gaventa Helen H.P. Manson Professor of New Testament Literature and Exegesis Princeton Theological Seminary

Examples of Women in Leadership in the Old Testament:

Miriam – Micah 6:4

Deborah – Judges 4

Jochebed – Exodus 2

Rahab – Joshua 2 and 6

Huldah – 2 Kings 22:14

Esther

Abigail – 1 Samuel 25

Examples of Women in Leadership in the New Testament:

Anna – Luke 2

Phoebe – Romans 16:1

Priscilla (with Aquilla) – Romans 16:3

Junia (with Andronicus) – Romans 16:7

Lydia – Acts 16

Philip's four daughters – Acts 21:9

Lois and Eunice – 1 Timothy

Chloe – 1 Corinthians 1:11 (Led a church Paul was overseeing.)

Nympha – Colossians 4:15

Eudioa and Syntyche – Philippians 4:3

7. The Prophecy of Joel, Which is Confirmed in Acts:

Joel 2:28-29

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.

Acts 2:16-18

But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: “‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

What does this look like today? Promised in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament, note Paul's direction given in **1 Corinthians 11:5**. He is giving cultural guidance to ministry established by the Holy Spirit.

*“but every wife **who prays or prophesies** with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the*

Summer of Lies
LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

same as if her head were shaven.”

The Bible abounds with many examples of women who ministered prophetically. The prophetess Miriam led the women to celebrate the Lord’s triumph over Egypt (Ex. 15:20, 21). Deborah was a prophetess who functioned as a judge (Judg. 4:4, 5), and the prophetess Huldah was consulted on behalf of the king (2 Kin. 22:14–20). Other Old Testament women had prophetic ministries as well (Is. 8:3).

In the New Testament, we encounter Anna (Luke 2:36–38) and the four daughters of the evangelist Philip (Acts 21:9). Joel foretold that both sons and daughters would prophesy after God poured His Spirit out on all flesh (Joel 2:28)—a promise that was cited by Peter at the time of Pentecost (Acts 2:17, 18).

Paul encouraged women to exercise the gift of prophecy and instructed them how to do so in the public assembly of the church (1 Cor. 11:5).

The nature of prophecy changed with the outpouring of God’s Spirit. Old Testament prophets, individually commissioned by God, were to be put to death if they misrepresented God’s message to the people (Deut. 13:1–5; 18:20–22). New Testament prophecy, on the other hand, was a gift given to many believers, and its transmission was not guaranteed as infallible. It needed to be sifted, weighed, and evaluated by the leadership of the church (1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:20, 21). Nevertheless, it was regarded as a valuable and necessary gift for the church and an area of effective ministry for women.¹⁹

8. Submission

Submission covers a multitude of relationships. For a Christian, it appears to be involved in ALL of them. Understanding how submission permeates our lives as a Christian, helps us to apply it as the bible intends.

The word translated “submissive” (Gk. *hupotassō*) means literally “to place under, to line up under”—for example:

Christ

1 Cor. 15:28 “The Son of Man will be made subject to Him... (that is God the Father)

Christians

Heb. 12:9 “How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live.”

James 4:7 “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

Eph. 5:21 “Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ.”

Eph. 5:24 “Now as the church submits to Christ...”

Husbands & Wives

Eph. 5:22 “Wives submit to your husbands as unto the Lord.”

{Eph. 5:25 “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,”}

Col. 3:18 “Wives submit to your husbands as it is fitting in the Lord.”

Titus 2:5 “...be subject to your husbands that no one will malign the word of God.”

1 Pet. 3:1, 5 Submission can win over an unsaved husband.

Parents

Luke 2:51 “Then He went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.”

{Eph. 6:1-4 outlines expectations of children to parents.}

¹⁹ Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). *The Woman’s Study Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

Masters

Titus 2:9 "Teach slaves to be subject to their master"

1 Pet. 2:18 "Slaves submit to your masters w/all respect..."

{Eph. 6:5-9 vs.9 *Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that He who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with Him.*}

Secular authorities

Rom. 13:1 "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established."

Titus 3:1 "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men."

1 Pet. 2:13 "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men"

Church officials

1 Pet. 5:5 "Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older"

Roles within Relationships outlined in Ephesians 5 and 6:

Ephesians 5:15-21

15 *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

Ephesians 5:22-33

22 *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

Ephesians 6:1-9

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. 5 Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, 6 not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

7 rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. 9 Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

Note the different relationships Paul is addressing. Is he directing how all relationships are to operate for all time or how Christ is to operate within all the relationships that are present in the current culture when Ephesians was written?

From the article “A Christian Understanding of Submission” by Alan F. Johnson on Christians for Biblical Equality website, the concept of cultural expectation is unpacked at length:

Christians living under such a widespread social system were expected, as Christians, to follow the rules that were essential to the patriarchal social order, including the strict honor-shame observance. They were also given strong arguments from biblical texts and Christian theology for doing so. This applied even to the attitude and behavior of Christian slaves who were, in submission, to serve their masters. But note well, however, that the ultimate reason for submitting was not to endorse the validity of the status inequality of slaves to masters, but to yield to their masters because by so doing they were serving Christ (Eph. 6:5-8). Wives also were to honor their husbands and submit to them. But, again, not to endorse the validity of male superiority and rule over wives, but as submitting to Christ (Eph. 5:22). But is this the whole story? Not at all. If it were, modern advocates of the ancient patriarchal order structures might have more credibility. However, the New Testament itself also contains the command for Christians to “submit to *one another* in the fear of Christ” (Eph. 5:21). This emphasis on “mutual submission,” to my knowledge, is not found in the pagan and patriarchal world order of the first century. “Mutual submission” is a unique practice related to Christ, the Christian community, and the gospel realities. It is to this aspect of New Testament teaching that I want to now turn.

<http://www.cbeinternational.org/resources/article/priscilla-papers/christian-understanding-submission>

Resources:

Christians for Biblical Equality

<https://www.cbeinternational.org>

“Epic of Eden, A Christian Entry into the Old Testament”

Sandra L. Richter

IVP Academic

“God’s Women – Then and Now”

Deborah Gill and Barbara Cavaness

Grace & Truth

“10 Lies the Church Tells Women: How the Bible Has Been Used to Keep Women in Spiritual Bondage”

“10 Lies the Church Tells Men: The Truth About Women, Power, Sex and God - and Why it Matters”

J. Lee Grady

Charisma House

“How God Sees Women: The End of Patriarchy”

Terran Williams

The Spiritual Bakery Publications

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

“Recovering From Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: How the Church Needs to Rediscover Her Purpose”

Aimee Byrd

Zondervan

For the official Assemblies of God Position on Women in Ministry:

http://ag.org/top/beliefs/Position_Papers/pp_downloads/PP_The_Role_of_Women_in_Ministry.pdf

Lie #6

Women who exhibit strong leadership qualities pose a serious danger to the church.

WHEN DELEGATES TO the Southern Baptist Convention’s annual meeting gathered in 1929, leaders agreed to allow the president of the Women’s Missionary Union (WMU) to address their group for the first time. But when she stood to speak, a number of male delegates got up from their chairs and stormed out of the room in protest. They caused such a commotion that the Baptists were forced to hammer out an odd compromise: they decided that the WMU president could speak only if she gave her report in a Sunday school room rather than in the main hall.

The reason for this uproar was that certain male clergy were afraid that by allowing a woman to speak from a pulpit, they would be violating what they called “the dictum of St. Paul”—the apostle Paul’s directive in 1 Timothy 2:12 that prohibits women from having “authority over a man.” It isn’t clear why this poor WMU president was not considered to be exercising as much authority over her male audience when she spoke in a smaller room. In fact, what the Baptists did in this case was irrational. The same can be said for the completely illogical way the church today views the issue of women in spiritual authority.

In a previous chapter we addressed the cultural context of Paul’s words in his letter to Timothy, and we noted that his injunction was issued to solve a local problem in the Ephesian church caused by certain uneducated women who were spreading dangerous gnostic doctrines. Yet today, because so many conservative Christians have viewed 1 Timothy 2:12 (“I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man”) as a universal injunction—to be applied to all churches at all times—we have cultivated a bizarre fear of strong women who preach or teach. This is a strange view indeed, for three reasons:

- First, we know from Scripture that women held the office of prophet under the Old Covenant and that under the New Covenant the apostle Paul himself placed women in positions of authority in the early church, even at a time when females in secular society were barred from pursuing education or leadership roles.
- Second, the Bible challenges men and women alike to be strong and courageous in their faith and in their response to the Great Commission. There is no reason to assume that Jesus intended only males to evangelize the world. Both men and women are

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

called to “go” and to “teach.” Timidity is never portrayed as a virtue in the Scriptures, for either gender.

- Third, the history of Christianity is full of examples of strong, godly women who achieved remarkable breakthroughs for the kingdom of God. To say that women should not display spiritual strength or do exploits in the name of Jesus is to discredit everything that Christian women have done throughout history to further the gospel.

If we want to stake a claim that women shouldn’t lead the church, are we prepared to say that everything women have done to expand the kingdom of God was a mistake? Is The Salvation Army an illegitimate organization because a strong, vocal woman preacher was a driving force behind it? Do we really want to negate the countless missionary breakthroughs made in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in China and India, since so many women—such as Amy Carmichael (1867–1951), Bertha Smith (1888–1988), or Marie Monsen (1878–1962)—were responsible for the pioneering work there?

If we look at the history of revival movements, it is clear that whenever there has been a deepening of spiritual passion and holiness in the church and a corresponding call to evangelism, women have responded to the call to ministry even when it was culturally unacceptable for them to do so. This was true during the Second Great Awakening in the United States, which unleashed an army of women to fund missionary movements and to lead the abolitionist cause. It was also obvious in the early days of the Pentecostal revival, which mobilized women preachers to blaze trails in foreign and domestic mission fields. These women, including healing evangelist Lilian Yeomans (1861–1942), Carrie Judd Montgomery (1858–1946), Minnie Draper (1858–1921), Ida Robinson (1891–1946), Aimee Semple McPherson (1890–1944), and Florence Crawford (1872–1936), started churches that still flourish today.

These women were not looking for a spotlight or a pulpit, nor were they out to win an argument or to prove that women are better than men. They were prayer warriors who loved the Word of God and used it skillfully to combat the evils of their day. They were mothers of the faith who nurtured new converts with the milk of salvation and trained their disciples to pursue spiritual maturity. They were brave pioneers who conducted nightly evangelistic campaigns and healing crusades in tents with sawdust floors at a time when Pentecostals were often run out of town by rock-throwing antagonists.

These women were reluctant leaders. They weren’t seeking to usurp authority over men, nor did they oppose male leadership. They were not eager to become public speakers; most of them went through a painful process of objection, surrender, and consecration before they crucified their timidity and relented to the call of God. Aimee Semple McPherson, who founded the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel in Los Angeles in 1923, described this anguish in her autobiography.

When she heard the Holy Spirit tell her to “Go,” Aimee said: “I knew . . . that if I did not go into the work as a soul-winner and get back into the will of God, Jesus would take me to Himself before He would permit me to go on without Him and be lost. Oh, don’t you ever tell me that a woman cannot be called to preach the gospel! If any man ever went through one hundredth part of the hell on earth that I lived in, those months when out of God’s will and work, they

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

would never say that again. With my remaining strength, I managed to gasp, ‘Yes—Lord—I’ll—go.’ And I did.”

Women who have given their lives to serve Jesus on the front lines deserve our respect. But in the American church, we typically have turned our backs on our sisters when they have dared to suggest that God has drafted them into His army. The strongest and most determined of these female warriors learned to endure the ridicule, but we will never know how many women gave up the fight and abandoned the call because the church required them to bury their spiritual gifts.

Adding Insult to Injury

Women in many denominations today have encountered rejection when they stepped out in public ministry. Jill Briscoe, a prominent evangelical author who pastors a church with her husband in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, told *Christianity Today* in 1996 that she was silenced a few years ago when she began to teach the Bible to a group of three thousand teenagers at a youth conference.

“I introduced my subject and opened the Scriptures and read them and began to explain them,” Briscoe said. “At that point a pastor stood up and told me, ‘Stop! In the name of the Lord!’ and said that I was out of order. He then rebuked my husband, saying that he should be ashamed to allow his wife to usurp his authority. He then took his young people out, and several other people followed.”

In some Charismatic and Pentecostal circles, the label “Jezebel” is often pinned on women who have teaching or leadership skills or who are bold enough to express their opinions to their pastors. The insulting implication is that any Christian woman who steps outside the lines of ecclesiastical propriety and presumes to speak for God or displays any level of courage is labeled rebellious or conniving.

In some cases, godly women have been accused of being witches because they broke with religious tradition and stood in a pulpit. I witnessed this sick attitude with my own eyes a few years ago while I was attending a prayer conference with several thousand Charismatic Christians in Colorado. When my friend Cindy Jacobs, an internationally known Bible teacher and prayer mobilizer, was introduced as the keynote speaker, two ministers who were sitting in front of me turned to each other and began to pray quietly as Cindy approached the podium. The men had no idea that I could hear them.

These men were prominent leaders I respected, but I was shocked when I heard their whispers. “Lord, we bind the power of the devil from bewitching this audience,” one of the men said, adding, “We bind the power of Jezebel in the name of Jesus.” These men obviously believed that because Cindy was a woman, the crowd would automatically come under a spirit of deception when she taught them. They didn’t have the gall to challenge Cindy openly, but they felt it necessary to ask God to neutralize the negative impact they believed would result when a female taught the Bible to an audience that included a large number of men.

Pinning the Jezebel label on a woman of God is a blatant attempt at character assassination. After all, Jezebel was the personification of evil. We read in 1 Kings 18–19 that she wielded tyrannical power over Israel through her spiritual ties to the cult of Baal. From her position as queen, sitting beside King Ahab, Jezebel was responsible for the murder of many of Israel’s true

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

prophets. Her strategy was to intimidate the righteous followers of God while promoting Baal worship—so that the sexual perversion associated with her brand of paganism would eventually control the entire country.

This queen was eventually overthrown, along with her wicked husband, but she is mentioned again in the New Testament as a metaphor for sexual immorality and occult deception. In the apostle John's message to the church in Thyatira (Rev. 2:20), he issues a warning from Christ about "the woman Jezebel" who "calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols."

Jezebel was most likely not this woman's real name. John used a form of code language in the Book of Revelation to protect the vulnerable churches from persecution. He pinned the name Jezebel on this self-appointed female church leader in Thyatira because she was claiming to speak for God and yet was promoting sexual sin and idolatrous worship. She represents the ultimate false prophet, and it is insidious to compare her to godly Christian women who are teaching and preaching the truth of the gospel.

It is offensive to suggest that a woman who loves Jesus Christ, walks in personal holiness, and upholds the Word of God with integrity is influenced by a "spirit of Jezebel"—just because she is female! Yet I have lost count of the number of women who have told me that they were accused of being a "Jezebel influence" because they functioned as a pastor, an evangelist, or even a lay leader.

Julie Nelson,* who at one time co-pastored a church with her husband, Mike,* in Tampa, told me that she struggled for years in her denomination because women who held positions in public ministry were viewed with suspicion by most male pastors. Julie was often shunned, and her husband was told that he had a spiritual problem because his wife "was not in total submission" to him. "The men in our group were considered weak and 'not in charge' if their wife had a ministry," she said.

After many years of ministry together, a leader in their denomination told Julie's husband that he should stop sharing his most intimate concerns and dreams with her. This unusual brand of marriage counseling was designed to keep him in a position of dominance—by forcing his wife to be less involved in his life!

"The counselor was basically accusing me of being a Jezebel," Julie said. "Mike heeded his counsel, and it almost led to the destruction of our marriage. But we were able to regroup; we began to communicate again, and we eventually moved on to a new church where I was allowed to function in my ministry gifts."

Silly Superstitions

Five hundred years ago, Protestant reformer John Knox taught that God brings a curse on a nation if it is governed by a woman. Never mind the fact that most nations in that period were led by wicked kings who did not honor the law of God or abide by any rule of Christian integrity. Yet Knox believed the moral condition of a nation would abruptly deteriorate if a queen took the throne.

In a tract he wrote in 1558 titled "The First Blast Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women," the Scottish reformer wrote: "If women take upon them the office which God hath assigned to men, they shall not escape the divine malediction." Although he directed most of

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

his attack toward two Roman Catholic queens, Mary Tudor of England and Mary Guise of Scotland, and he referred to them both as “Jezebels,” Knox made it clear that he believed God always opposes women who hold positions of authority.

That same view still lingers in the modern church. In the early 1980s, when so many religious conservatives were active in the political arena in the United States, some of them opposed President Ronald Reagan’s appointment of Judge Sandra Day O’Connor to the Supreme Court. Their fundamentalist views of male headship in society did not allow for a woman to assume a top position in civil authority.

Justice O’Connor did not lead our nation to ruin, any more than Margaret Thatcher’s eleven-year term as prime minister triggered the downfall of Great Britain. In fact, in the mid-1990s, some of the most vocal women elected to the U.S. Congress were Bible-believing, evangelical Christians who stood bravely against the status quo by challenging legalized abortion, the tobacco industry, and foreign aid to countries that tolerate religious persecution.

Our society has become more accepting of women in roles of authority in the secular realm. Yet Christians continue to reject women who have the spiritual gifts necessary to provide pastoral leadership, administrative ability, or prophetic insight to our churches and denominations. Clergy in some groups have been afraid even to allow lay women to lead church committees or serve on church boards.

In many churches in the United States, Christian men have developed a superstitious notion that if they listen to a woman preach, attend a Sunday school class taught by a woman, or allow a woman to provide any form of spiritual counseling to them directly, they are violating an unwritten law that forbids women from occupying a place of authority in their lives. They also fear that if they do this, they will come under some type of spell that leaves them deceived and spiritually weakened.

I know some men who will not watch a television broadcast or a videotape of a sermon by someone like Charismatic Bible teacher Joyce Meyer because they feel that to listen to her would rob them of their spiritual authority as men. Some men will not read a book by a female Christian author! And some evangelical pastors advise the men in their church never to receive spiritual counsel from a woman, even their wives, since doing so violates the mistaken notion that God intended only men to preach to men.

This behavior is rooted in a fear that if a man submits to a woman by listening to her counsel, his own maleness will be diminished. How foolish! If the Bible is our guide and not cultural bias, then we need to consider the many times in Scripture in which women influenced men or exercised godly authority over them. We also need to see that there are instances in Scripture when men affirmed and honored the spiritual leadership of women.

Judges 4 tells us that at one time in history a woman held the highest position of spiritual authority in Israel. Conservative Bible scholars have struggled with this passage, and some go so far as to teach that Deborah’s leadership was not God-appointed at all. They quote Judges 17:6, which says that the inhabitants of Israel “did what was right in [their] own eyes,” and then maintain that this climate of disobedience resulted in a “curse” of female leadership. That argument doesn’t make sense, however, because Judges 17:6 applies to a time period after Deborah’s reign.

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

The Bible clearly states that God anointed Deborah as judge over Israel, gave her wisdom and prophetic counsel, and granted a forty-year period of peace as a result of her effective leadership. (See Judges 4:1–5; 5:31.) And the men who honored her authority were blessed.

We read in Judges 4:8 that Barak, Israel's chief military commander, refused to go into battle without Deborah after she unveiled the Lord's strategy to defeat the Canaanites. It was not an admission of fear on Barak's part when he asked Deborah to accompany him into the fray. He was not a "mama's boy" who felt unsure about his masculinity. On the contrary, Barak recognized that Deborah was an anointed servant of God and that the mantle of heaven's authority rested on her. Because she had the plan of victory, he wanted to stay close to her. He simply refused to fight without the Lord's prophet by his side.

In today's church, we need an army of Baraks who are so desperate to hear the word of the Lord that they are willing to humble themselves and receive it from whomever God chooses to speak through—even if that prophet is a woman. We as men need to swallow our male pride and our haughty "I know better than you, dear" attitudes. If we are truly walking in spiritual brokenness, we will not care whether the Holy Spirit speaks through a man, a woman, a child or a donkey. We will simply want God, and we will place no stock in the imperfect clay vessel God chooses.

Where Are the Priscillas?

In Acts 18:24–28, we read that a skilled preacher named Apollos, a zealous convert from Judaism, was teaching the message of Jesus in Ephesus. But because he had never been instructed properly about water baptism or the infilling of the Holy Spirit, Paul's co-workers, Priscilla and Aquila, "took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately" (v. 26).

Was Apollos spiritually emasculated when he submitted to Priscilla's correction? Absolutely not. His ministry was strengthened because of the helpful input he received from this wise disciple, who most likely functioned in an apostolic role as a teacher and church planter. She is commended by Paul as one of his "fellow workers" in Romans 16:3. And in 1 Corinthians 16:16, the apostle urges his followers to submit to "everyone who helps in the work and labors." Since "everyone" in this passage obviously includes Priscilla as well as Junia, Phoebe, and the other women who assisted Paul on his apostolic team, we can clearly see that he asked the early church to acknowledge the authority of the women who worked with him.

Apollos most likely felt indebted to Priscilla and her husband for their mentorship. She became a mother in the faith to him. What would have happened in the New Testament church if Apollos had been too proud to receive correction and theological instruction from her? It's possible he would have fallen into serious error, thereby thwarting the work of God in Asia Minor and perhaps even derailing his ministry. What similar pitfalls could be avoided in our day if more men were willing to receive counsel, correction, and insight from seasoned women ministers?

There are numerous other examples in the Scriptures of godly women who provided counsel, instruction, or correction to men. The prophetess Huldah was sought out by King Josiah's top leaders for her advice about the spiritual condition of their nation (2 Kings 22:14–20). When the elderly prophetess Anna recognized that the baby Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, she

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

proclaimed His identity to His parents and to all who came into the temple. She was, in fact, one of the first people on Planet Earth to publicly proclaim the gospel of the New Covenant. And the apostle Paul mentions a total of seven women when listing his trusted co-laborers; these were women who functioned as pastors, evangelists, deacons, or apostles.

It seems odd that Christian men would have difficulty accepting the authority of women when every man has had to submit to the instruction and discipline of his own mother. In the Christian family we expect a mother to exercise authority: she not only provides nurturing love and sustenance to her children but also brings swift discipline when necessary, and her children benefit most when her instruction is rigorous. Don't we need the same qualities in our spiritual mothers? Shouldn't we expect them to rule with godly authority?

In African American churches in the United States there has been a long-cherished tradition of acknowledging "church mothers." These are usually the wisest, most mature women, those who have walked with God for many years and who are viewed as saintly models of virtue and spirituality. Although their primary role is to teach the younger women, these matriarchs often have broad authority to speak to the entire congregation—and when they speak it is with the authority of a mother. They are always seated in the front of the church. When one of them has a word of reproof to offer, it can sting. When one of them has an exhortation, the attitude of most people in the room is, "Look out, Mother has a word from God."

Most Christian men, whether they admit it or not, would not be where they are today had it not been for the Priscillas and other spiritual mothers who came alongside them at the right time and gave a timely word of encouragement or counsel. Because of insecurity, we think our masculinity is deficient if we admit we need the insights that these women provide. The church as a whole would be better off if we would ask God to shatter our male pride so we can make room for these women to function in their divine giftings.

Strength Is Her Clothing

Nowhere in the Bible are women called to be weak. A careful study of women in Scripture reveals that the godly women who served His purpose in their generation displayed courage, endured hardship, and exercised the kind of faith that overcomes impossible odds. Righteous women in the Bible did not sit in the back of the church with their mouths shut or wait until they got permission to challenge injustice.

The great women of the Bible were fearless. Remember the Jewish midwives, who put their own lives in jeopardy in Egypt to protect the infants who had been sentenced to death by Pharaoh. Remember Rahab, who disobeyed the authorities in Jericho because she knew God was with the Israelite spies. Her faith saved her household and placed her in the lineage of Christ.

Remember Deborah in Judges 4, who led her nation into a forty-year period of peace because she sought the Lord's battle strategy and believed He was able to overthrow an army that outnumbered Israel's. Remember Jael, whose bravery led her to drive a tent peg through the head of Sisera—thus ending the war with the Canaanites. Remember Esther, who placed her own life on the line because she believed God could use her to turn the heart of a king and save thousands of lives.

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

If we examine the “model woman” described in Proverbs 31, it’s obvious that she is not a mousy housewife or a timid wallflower. She did not allow patriarchal society to define her worth in terms of her sexuality, her appearance, or her mundane domestic duties. We are told that she “girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms” (v. 17, NKJV). This doesn’t mean she was a female body-builder; the passage refers to her strength of character and her readiness for spiritual battle.

She was prepared for a fight if the enemy attacked, and the fact that “her lamp does not go out by night” (v. 18, NKJV) infers that she is also a woman of persevering prayer. Genuine spiritual mothers are watchful. They keep a vigilant eye on the church, ready to launch countermeasures when they see danger approaching. Notice also that “strength and dignity are her clothing” (v. 25). She does not allow her self-image to be created for her by the media or by what religious protocol demands or by what men say she can or can’t do. She puts on strength and dignity. She knows who she is in Christ. Her identity is in Him. Although she recognizes her limitations in the natural realm, she knows that the Spirit of God dwells in her. She confidently declares, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13, NKJV).

A major misconception in the church today is that women were created to be weak and shy and that it is abnormal or even perverse for a woman to display qualities of strength. Most often this lie is based on an erroneous interpretation of 1 Peter 3:7, which refers to women as “the weaker vessel” (KJV). In the New American Standard Bible, the passage says:

You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

—EMPHASIS ADDED

Notice that this passage does not directly say that women are weaker. Rather, it exhorts husbands to treat their wives with consideration and respect “as if” their wives were weaker. Peter was most likely not talking about the physical realm. He was not referring to the fact that women are more prone to osteoporosis or breast cancer or that they experience discomfort and hormonal problems during their monthly menstrual cycles. He is simply acknowledging that because of the curse of sin, women are at a disadvantage and need to be protected. He is not putting them down or relegating them to inferior status.

But let’s remember that even if women are weaker vessels in one sense, this state has absolutely nothing to do with their fitness for spiritual ministry. After all, what is important for a person in ministry is that the anointing of God is flowing through the vessel—*whether it is weak or strong*. A man who is strong in the natural sense of the word but who has no anointing from God will not accomplish anything of lasting benefit for the kingdom. A woman who is weak in the natural but who moves in the power of the Holy Spirit can change nations.

Rather than argue about whether women are weak, can’t we acknowledge that we are all just clay vessels? Whether male or female, we are frail in our humanity and in our tendency to sin. None of us who aspire to the ministry can ever hope to see lives changed by Christ’s presence if we rely on our own fleshly abilities. We are called to glory in our weakness so that He might be strong in us.

Summer of Lies
LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

It's time for the weaker vessels to come forth. Christian women who have lived in the shadows of insignificance need to arise and put on strength. This is the hour that Joel foretold, a time for both the sons and the daughters to prophesy. Women of God, arise! You can't be silent anymore.

* Names have been changed to protect privacy.

Chapter 6
Questions for Discussion

1. Why is it so unfair to compare the evil Jezebel with a Christian woman who aspires to a position of leadership in the church?
2. Give three reasons why we can't universally apply 1 Timothy 2:12 ("I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man") to all churches in all time periods.
3. Describe how Barak responded to the leadership of Deborah. How should we apply this today in the church?
4. Why is it significant that Priscilla was involved in bringing theological correction to Apollos' ministry?
5. Read Proverbs 31:10–31, and list the qualities you admire in this virtuous woman. Which qualities indicate that she was a strong person?
6. What do you think the apostle Peter meant when he described women as "weaker vessels" in 1 Peter 3:7?

Do you not know that you are [each] an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age; the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the Devil's gateway: You are the unsealer of that [forbidden] tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. On account of your desert—that is, death—even the Son of God had to die.

—TERTULLIAN (A.D. 155–220)

Woman was evil from the beginnings, a gate of death, a disciple of the servant, the devil's accomplice, a fount of deception, a dogstart to godly labours, rust corrupting the saints; whose perilous face hath overgrown such as had already become almost angels. Lo, woman is the head of sin, a weapon of the devil, expulsion from Paradise, mother of guilt, corruption of the ancient law.

—FROM A COLLECTION OF VIEWS ON WOMEN COMPILED BY SALIMBENE
A THIRTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCISCAN MONK (1221–1288)

[A woman] is more carnal than a man, as is clear from her many carnal abominations. And it should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which is bent as it were in contrary direction of a man. And since through this defect she is an imperfect animal, she always deceives. . . . Since [women] are feebler both

Summer of Lies
LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

in mind and body, it is not surprising that they should come under the spell of witchcraft.

—DOMINICAN INQUISITORS HEINRICH KRAMER AND JAMES SPRENGER
IN A 1486 TRACT IN WHICH THEY ARGUED THAT WOMEN
ARE THE SOURCE OF ALL WITCHCRAFT

No wickedness comes anywhere near the wickedness of a woman. . . . Sin began with a woman and thanks to her all must die.

—FROM THE APOCRYPHA
ECCLESIASTICUS 25:19, 24²⁰

Lie #1 God created women as inferior beings, destined to serve their husbands.

MOST ISRAELITES WHO traveled through the Sinai desert with Moses probably knew about the daughters of Zelophehad. While other women hid inside tents and covered themselves head to foot with heavy veils, these girls—Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah—defied the patriarchal system of their day and earned a special place in biblical history.

We rarely hear sermons about Zelophehad’s daughters today, even though they are mentioned in the Bible in three places (Num. 27:1–7; 36:1–12; Josh. 17:1–6). Maybe this is because many church leaders simply don’t want to empower women or are afraid to do so. But it is time we unlocked these women’s secret for a new generation.

It is time for all of God’s daughters to understand who they are, how their heavenly Father views them, and what He has commissioned them to do in His kingdom. The daughters’ portion must be claimed.

You may have been told that as a woman you have only second-class status in the church or that your role is limited because of your gender. You may have even been told that women are less valuable to God or less useful. But the Bible contradicts this view.

In fact, the Old Testament contains accounts of three sets of daughters who were empowered and given their full inheritance—in an age when boys were preferred over girls and women had no civil rights. The stories of these daughters are recorded in Scripture so that you, too, will muster the courage to claim your inheritance.

At a time when most women in Israel lived like prisoners in polygamous households, the daughters of Zelophehad must have spent lots of time outside their tent. They were curious. They had a zest for life. And they refused to be confined by the limitations of their culture.

Why did they think differently than other women of that era? My theory is that their parents had a special love for these girls, and Zelophehad—who had no sons—must have decided after his first daughter was born that he was content to raise a house full of women. He recognized their value. He was generous with his affection and instilled in his daughters a sense of personal destiny.

²⁰ Grady, J. L. (2013). [*Ten lies the church tells women: how the bible has been misused to keep women in spiritual bondage*](#). Charisma House.

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

Zelophehad probably showered his daughters with gifts, held them in his lap after dinner, and told them stories about the exodus from Egypt while he tucked them into bed. They knew their daddy loved them, and his affirmation nurtured a sense of empowerment.

I can imagine these playful girls dancing and singing next to their father's goat pens as they did their chores. Their ankle bracelets jingled as they skipped past the tents in Manasseh's encampment.

Neighbors might have even complained about all the giggling that came from Zelophehad's household. They may have shouted to Zelophehad's wife, "Tell those girls to be quiet!"

But these girls were not easily silenced. They were God-ordained troublemakers who would soon make history.

As the girls blossomed into women, their confidence grew. They must have started talking among themselves about the problems with patriarchy, finally asking the most forbidden questions: "Why don't the women have any privileges around here? Why can't women own land? Why can't we get an inheritance when we cross the Jordan?"

The Bible tells us that after Zelophehad's death, his daughters went to Moses and made a daring proposal: "Why should the name of our father be withdrawn from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers" (Num. 27:4).

We can't even begin to imagine how bold and audacious was this request. Women in Israel did not ask for rights. Yet the daughters of Zelophehad risked their reputations by approaching the leader of their nation to ask for something revolutionary.

What is most remarkable is that Moses took their request seriously and sought God about it. Most church leaders who restrict women's involvement in ministry don't pray about this issue at all. They simply consult their denominational policies and traditions, such as "No women in the pulpit," "Women can't teach men," or "Women shouldn't be allowed to lead," and then they reinstate man-made rules that quench the Holy Spirit.

But Moses asked God, and God had a surprising reply: "The daughters of Zelophehad are right in their statements. You shall surely give them a hereditary possession among their father's brothers, and you shall transfer the inheritance of their father to them" (v. 7).

In that moment, God contradicted centuries of prejudice and wrong-headed tradition. He made it clear that in His kingdom, women are not afterthoughts or appendages. They have equal value with men and full rights to His benefits. When God looks at redeemed mankind, through the blood of Jesus Christ, He does not limit women from full participation in His kingdom purposes.

A Daughter's Double Portion

Hidden in another Old Testament book is the story of Achsah, the daughter of Caleb. (See Joshua 14:13–19.) Like Zelophehad's daughters, this daring young woman also claimed territory in the land of Canaan.

Can you imagine what it would have been like to grow up in the household of Caleb, one of Israel's champions of faith? The giants who ruled Canaan did not intimidate this man—and I suspect he imparted that same fearlessness to this young girl.

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

The Bible tells us that when Caleb inherited his territory in the land of Judah, his daughter approached him with a bold proposal: she asked him for land, in a day when women were not considered worthy of owning anything.

But the story does not stop there. Achsah said to her father: “Give me a blessing; since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water” (v. 19). Caleb, not one to deny his little girl anything, gave her “the upper and the lower springs.”

Achsah had spunk. She wasn’t satisfied with the status quo. Not only did she boldly ask for land, she asked for more! She pressed forward until she got the water necessary to turn the dry desert into a garden.

Why is this obscure passage included in the Scriptures? I believe the Holy Spirit has woven a subtle theme throughout the Bible, pointing to the fact that redeemed women will inherit the kingdom. They will not live on the sidelines while men partake of heaven’s blessings. They will not be penalized from full participation in the church simply because of gender.

Today, God is calling for women of faith to arise and claim land for Him. He is looking for women who have a giant-killer mentality. Dare I say it? He is looking for women with an *apostolic spirit*—women who carry the Great Commission in their hearts, whose burden for souls weighs so heavily upon them that they cannot rest until the whole earth has been filled with His glory.

God wants women who are not content to simply work in the nursery and lead women’s luncheons. (Nothing against the nursery, but the church has lost so much of its power by limiting women’s gifts to domestic functions.) It is time for women to shake loose from the trappings of religious culture and step into their full potential.

Women can still perform domestic functions within the church (as can men, since all of us are called to be servants). But women can also plant churches, disciple new believers, counsel the addicted, heal the sick, perform miracles, cast out devils, own and run successful businesses, open soup kitchens, feed the poor, get elected to political office, and transform nations for Christ. There is so much territory yet to be claimed.

Perhaps you did not know you could ask for the nations. Perhaps you did not even realize that God has a role for you to play in the evangelization of the world. But as you get to know the Father more intimately, you will come to understand that He is eager to give you more when you are willing to ask for it.

A Beautiful Company of Women

There is yet a third Old Testament reference to daughters who claimed their inheritance. They are the daughters of Job—Jemimah, Keziah, and Keren-happuch—who are described as the most beautiful women in the land. (See Job 42:12–15.)

Job must have had special affection for these girls. After all, he had lost all ten of his original children years earlier when a storm destroyed his house. When God restored Job’s fortunes and gave him double for all that had been taken from him, Job had ten more children. It is interesting to note that the Bible says Job had seven sons and three daughters—and then it provides the names of the girls only.

Then Job 42:15 says: “In all the land no women were found so fair as Job’s daughters; and *their father gave them inheritance among their brothers*” (emphasis added).

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

Why are the daughters' names mentioned but not the sons' names? Why is there a reference to the girls' beauty? And why are we told that they were given an inheritance?

Again, the Holy Spirit is showing us God's heart for women. Although men have abused, marginalized, and oppressed women—even in the church—God will have the last word on this subject. This passage in Job, one of the oldest books of the Bible, offers a glimpse into the last days. It signifies a day when women who are empowered by the Holy Spirit will be fully restored to their place of spiritual authority.

Like Job, human beings were stripped of their dignity and spiritual power because of sin. But when Jesus Christ purchased redemption at Calvary, His blood paid not only the full price for our transgressions, but it also broke the power of shame, guilt, and oppression off women. It made them beautiful again and restored to them their rightful spiritual inheritance.

Do you know that the Lord sees you as beautiful? Perhaps your self-image has been marred by life's disappointments and tragedies. Many women struggle to find their identity in Christ because of sexual molestation, domestic abuse, or the shame of abortion or fornication. Don't let the mistakes of the past or the wounds inflicted by people stop you from gaining your inheritance.

God calls you beautiful. He can take your filthy rags and give you a new wardrobe—one of righteousness and purity. Regardless of the pain of your past, He has a glorious future planned for you.

God has placed a passion in my heart to see women take their full place in the church and society. Perhaps that's because I have four daughters of my own.

As soon as my first daughter, Margaret, was born twenty years ago, I realized that girls are special. So my wife and I kept having more. Meredith was born in 1987. Gloria arrived two years later. Charlotte came along in 1992. Four girls in seven years!

I tell people that I have been drowning in a sea of estrogen since the day we brought that first baby girl into our home. But I have no regrets. I know that the Father does not look at girls as inferior. He did not make them to serve as appendages to men. He created women with unique callings that must be released.

Most of my income today is being spent on their college education, and more will be spent on weddings. I could never deny my daughters any good gift. How much more is the Father willing to lavish His blessings, spiritual gifts, and empowering grace on His girls?

Although you may have experienced gender prejudice in the church, this tragic attitude does not reflect the Father's heart for you. It is His good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Are Women Second Class?

Mission agencies in England told Gladys Aylward that she would never be an effective minister in China. In the 1930s, British women were rarely sent to the foreign field to preach; females could go as missionaries only if they were schoolteachers or nurses. Gladys wasn't a teacher or a nurse, but she couldn't resist the call of God. So she raised enough money to buy a one-way train ticket to China, then went there with little money and no knowledge of the language.

Her story, which climaxed with her brave efforts to save dozens of Chinese orphans from invading soldiers during the Japanese occupation, was the subject of the classic 1964 motion picture *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, starring Ingrid Bergman. Yet despite the impact Gladys

Aylward made on China, and despite the lives she protected from certain death, this humble spinster viewed her work as second-rate.

She once admitted this publicly: “I wasn’t God’s first choice for what I’ve done for China. There was somebody else . . . I don’t know who it was—God’s first choice. It must have been a man—a wonderful man. A well-educated man. I don’t know what happened. Perhaps he died. Perhaps he wasn’t willing . . . and God looked down . . . and saw Gladys Aylward.”

Aylward’s humility is certainly admirable. Yet it is sad that she believed her gender relegated her into an inferior category, as if women are God’s discount-rate substitutes when His prime, first-choice candidates don’t respond. This was also the opinion of Kathryn Kuhlman, one of the most prominent healing evangelists of the twentieth century. She too believed that God commissioned her to preach only because His first choice, a man, did not answer the call.

Although huge crowds jammed municipal auditoriums all over the United States to hear Kuhlman speak, and many were regulars at her Monday night Bible studies at First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, she often apologized for the fact that she was female. She assured her audiences that she knew her “place” as a woman, and she begged people not to think of her as a woman preacher even though she performed marriages and funerals (not to mention many documented healings) and was referred to as “pastor” by some of her followers.

Kuhlman made a strange admission when she said, “I’d give anything if I could have just been a good housewife, a good cook. And I’d like to have had a big family. It would have been nice to have a man boss me around.”

Did God draft Kathryn Kuhlman and Gladys Aylward into the ministry at the last minute because a man said no to the Holy Spirit? If not, why would these chosen vessels view themselves as second-class ministers? It’s because of a lie.

It’s a lie that tells women they aren’t good enough and they will never measure up to a man’s worth or abilities. It’s a lie that tells women they weren’t created on the same level with men. It’s a lie that says God made man first and then created woman as an afterthought. All these lies have been promoted for centuries by religious people.

It is obvious from the words of St. Augustine (a.d. 354–430) and John Knox (1505–1572)—two celebrated fathers of the Christian faith quoted at the beginning of this chapter—that gender prejudice is certainly not a new problem in the church. This is pride in its most insidious form, a religious pride that has been baptized and institutionalized by men who claim to represent God without realizing that their attitudes grieve the Holy Spirit.

A Theology of Male Chauvinism

Although Jesus modeled a revolutionary new paradigm of empowerment by affirming women as coheirs of God’s grace, the church throughout the centuries has not adopted His perspective of gender equality except during rare periods of spiritual revival. In fact, Christian attitudes toward women have in many cases more closely resembled the degrading treatment of women seen in Hindu or Muslim cultures than what Jesus called His disciples to demonstrate.

The Gospel narratives describe Christ’s radical acts of liberating women, acts that present a totally new view of women that has never been duplicated by any other religion on earth. But tragically, since the earliest days of the New Testament church, patriarchal attitudes have remained in control, partly because leaders found it easier to live in their traditional ruts than

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

to allow their minds to be renewed by the Holy Spirit, who tells us that “in Christ, there is neither male nor female” (Gal. 3:28).

Jewish patriarchal tradition, which was deeply ingrained in the synagogues of Asia Minor in the first century, infected the church in its infancy and continued the tradition of separating men and women during worship—keeping the educated men apart from the “ignorant” women. As ecclesiastical structures evolved, we find in the writings of most early church fathers a shockingly blatant prejudice against women—if not outright hatred of them.

Tertullian, a respected church father who lived in the North African city of Carthage in the second century, blamed the world’s problems on females, and his opinions were modeled by the earliest followers of Christianity. He wrote: “You [women] are the devil’s gateway; you are the unsealer of that [forbidden] tree; you are the first deserter of the divine law; you are she who persecuted him whom the devil was not vigilant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God’s image, man. On account of your desert [i.e., punishment] that is, death—even the Son of God had to die.”

Respected church fathers of subsequent eras, including the most revered reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin, also viewed women with contempt. Not only did they consider women unfit for spiritual service, but they also viewed them as having only a domestic role in life. The theology they concocted said that women were put on earth simply to serve in the home, have sex with their husbands, and bear children.

Martin Luther, who was not concerned about sounding politically correct in his views, was insulting when he taught on the role of women. He believed that if women die during childbirth, there is no great loss since women have no real function in life other than to have babies! He wrote: “If women get tired and die of [child]bearing, there is no harm in that; let them die as long as they bear; they are made for that.” I doubt any pastor or Bible scholar would have the gall to level such an insult on Christian women today. But similar insults are still repeated regularly.

During the 1800s, when the education of women became more common (until then it was considered improper for women to learn anything other than domestic skills), Christian clergymen who opposed the trend actually taught from their pulpits that women were destined by God to be ignorant—and that as a result, schooling them was contrary to divine order. Some even theorized that females had fewer brain cells.

One such sermon from a British pastor, Dr. David Thomas, delivered in London in 1853, infuriated the cofounder of The Salvation Army, Catherine Booth. She wrote Dr. Thomas a strongly worded letter, rebuking him for his chauvinism and predicting that women would one day overthrow such a theory after they were given equal access to educational opportunities.

Booth wrote: “The day is only just dawning with reference to female education, and therefore any verdict on woman as an intellectual being must be premature and unsatisfactory. . . . A brighter day is dawning and ere long, woman will assume her true position, and rise to the full height of her intellectual stature. Then shall the cherished dogma of ‘having a cell less in her brain’ be exploded and perish before the spell of her developed and cultivated mind.”

Today, one hundred fifty years after Catherine’s Booth’s prophetic declaration, her words ring true. Women today excel in all disciplines of learning and have made inroads in all professions.

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

Yet the church is still dragging its feet, forever mired in religious tradition. The ghosts of institutionalized male chauvinism still haunt our churches, our Bible colleges, and our seminaries, and the David Thomases of our day are still telling women that they are less capable, less spiritual, less qualified and less anointed by God for service.

The underlying idea that women are created by God to serve men as subordinates has produced a familiar subset of lies that have been taught from pulpits and in Sunday school classes—and even in women’s Bible studies taught by other women. Perhaps these statements sound familiar to you:

- Women are more fit for cooking, cleaning, and childcare because they have a God-given inclination for domestic activities.
- Because woman was created to serve her husband, a godly wife shouldn’t pursue a career or place her career ambitions above her husband’s.
- Because Eve was “given” to Adam as his sexual partner, it is a wife’s responsibility to fulfill her husband’s sexual desires even if she does not agree with his requests.

These statements have no biblical basis. And no scientific study has ever proven that women are genetically engineered to be more proficient at mopping floors, ironing clothes, or changing diapers. As the father of four girls, I can attest to the fact that my daughters did not come into this world with an innate understanding of how to clean their rooms or make their beds!

Certainly women possess a nurturing and protective instinct that makes them good mothers. But it is a cultural bias, not a spiritual or scientific principle, that women were “made” for the kitchen or the laundry room. This is the most common form of male chauvinism, a burden placed on women by selfish men who want someone to wash their dishes.

In a Christian home where the husband and wife relate to each other as equals and “giving preference to one another in honor” (Rom. 12:10), they will always find a way to share job responsibilities fairly. It’s perfectly acceptable if the husband cooks dinner; some of the most famous chefs in the world are men. Millions of American women do “men’s chores” such as taking out the garbage, mowing the lawn, and making household repairs. Recent childcare studies have shown that even though nature requires a mother to breast-feed her infants, family bonds are healthier when fathers also participate in the care of young children.

Because of personal preferences and physical limitations, there are some domestic tasks women will favor. In fact, many women enjoy fulfilling the role of a stay-at-home mother. But is this every married woman’s God-given inclination? Is the role of housewife and full-time mother her only option?

We insult women when we spiritualize condescension by suggesting that God created Eve in order to provide Adam with a maid, cook, and laundress. Regardless of how a Christian couple decides to provide for their financial needs or how they will divide childcare and household duties, the important issue is that they listen to the Holy Spirit’s guidance and seek His will for their situation.

The essence of this low view of woman is rooted in the misconception that the first female, Eve, was created by God as an inferior creature with deficient physical strength, less astute mental capacities, and limited spiritual giftedness and that because of her weakness she was meant to live in a state of subordination to Adam. It is the idea that because Eve was deceived

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

by the serpent, she must forever be punished for her disobedience by living in the shadow of her superior male counterpart.

We must read Genesis 1–3 without the lens of cultural prejudice. When we study the Bible, we must *read it* rather than *read into it*. We will discover that the Scriptures do not teach that women have been relegated to second-class status or that they are destined to live in a state of subjugation. These ideas are not implied in the biblical narrative, so why is this view of women still so pervasive among Christians today?

Was Eve Inferior?

The most insulting position taken by the evangelical Christian community is that the first woman in the Garden of Eden was created as an inferior creature who was placed at Adam's side as a subordinate. This view is taught even in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches that claim to empower women for ministry.

We often misread the biblical account of Eve's creation in Genesis 2:18–25, in which Adam is provided a "help meet" (v. 18, KJV). The Hebrew word used here is sometimes translated as "companion" in more modern Bible versions. It is a word that denotes intimacy and partnership. But through the centuries, "help meet" has been wrongly used to imply that Eve was some type of domestic appendage.

The fact that Eve was presented to Adam to *help* him does not make her inferior. On the contrary, God had already said, "It is *not good* for the man to be alone" (v. 18, emphasis added), acknowledging that Adam was in an inferior condition without a mate. In the ideal marriage, a wife is a help to her husband, and he is a help to her in return. He is also her "help meet." Their need for each other and their deep sense of mutual dependence are what make marriage so satisfying.

After Eve's creation, God did not tell her: "You are Adam's helper; I command you to serve him well." She was not created for servitude; she was fashioned to be a co-laborer with Adam so they could rule together over creation, as they were commissioned to do in Genesis 1:28: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

The command to *rule* was not directed only to Adam. Eve was also commissioned with divine authority. The call to exercise godly leadership and righteous authority is programmed into the spiritual DNA of all women. Yet so many Christians today believe that God no longer offers the daughters of Eve a place of spiritual influence. Is it no wonder that the church has struggled to make an impact on society, when we have denied half the world's Christians their rightful place of rulership?

In the account of Eve's creation, we read that after Adam wakes up from divine surgery and realizes his wife was taken out of his side, he announces, "She is part of my own flesh and bone!" (Gen. 2:23, NLT). This was an amazing revelation to the man. He recognizes that she is his co-equal, a perfect and desirable mate. Then the passage states: "This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are *united into one*" (v. 24, NLT, emphasis added).

Throughout Scripture the concept of *union* is the most important biblical theme relating to marriage. The uniqueness of holy matrimony is that a man and a woman can unite in a physical

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

and spiritual harmony that supersedes that which can be achieved in any other human relationship. Marriage is not about who is in control or who serves whom. It is about *becoming one*. But a married couple cannot enjoy this deep level of oneness if the man views the woman as an inferior person.

Adam was made in the image of God. The fact that Eve was taken from his side indicates that she also was created from the same divine essence. In certain pagan cultures in the ancient world, people believed that the gods made man out of divine matter and woman out of animal matter. But this is not the case in the biblical story. Both male and female are the children of God.

Some theologians have taught that since Adam was created first and Eve later, it proves that man is superior to woman. But this is a sexist interpretation that makes no sense unless we also believe that Adam was inferior to the rest of creation—which God made before He formed Adam from the dust of the earth! Eve, in fact, was presented to Adam not as an inferior being, but as the crown of God’s creation to bring the man from a state of incompleteness to a state of fulfillment. She was not his superior, but she complemented the man so perfectly that she could stand beside him as his equal.

Theologians have argued that the word *help meet*, also translated as “a helper suitable for him,” places woman in a subordinate position in her relationship with man. Yet scholar Rick R. Marrs of Pepperdine University notes that the word *help meet* in Hebrew *is often used for God*. When the Almighty is described as “our Helper,” we certainly do not assume that He is our inferior! Neither should we draw this conclusion when the word is used to describe Adam’s partner—or her daughters.

Eve is called *ezer*, the Hebrew word for “help,” in Genesis 2:18. This is the same word that is used to describe God as a divine help in Deuteronomy 33:7, 26, 29; Psalm 33:20; 70:5; 115:9–11; and 146:5. Because the same word is used to describe God, it cannot imply that Eve was inferior to Adam. We should note that the term “Helper” is also used to describe the Holy Spirit in John 14–16. Is the Holy Spirit inferior to man because He is a Helper? Of course not!

We need to clarify that Eve’s subordination to man did not occur at her creation; it was a consequence of sin. God’s original plan was not that women would be oppressed, denied opportunities, beaten by their husbands, mistreated, raped, stereotyped, bullied, or shamed. God’s original destiny for woman—a destiny that was reclaimed and secured by Christ at Calvary—is that she rule on earth through the righteousness of Christ.

Before the tragedy of Adam and Eve’s fall, we see them in the garden as partners in paradise. They had been given an equal level of authority by God over creation, and they lived in a state of intimacy with God and with each other that was untainted by sin. They enjoyed equal access to God’s presence, and Eve could communicate with the Lord in the same way as Adam.

Their equality encouraged a perfection in their love for each other. The unusual description of the first couple’s relationship in Genesis 2:25, “and they were naked and unashamed” (paraphrased), denotes that their marriage was free from the hidden guilt, bitterness, and buried wounds that have the power to destroy human relationships.

But what happened to Adam and Eve’s perfect union after they succumbed to temptation? God handed down punishments to the man, the woman, and the serpent. For the woman, the

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

curse was pronounced with a sense of finality: “Your husband . . . will rule over you” (Gen. 3:16, NIV).

In some cases the church has taught that Eve’s curse was God’s ultimate will for her: from now on, because of Eve’s deception, women must be ruled by men as a form of punishment. But this is not the intention of God for women; it is simply the consequence of disobedience apart from redemption!

Yes, women throughout the world are oppressed by men as a result of the Fall. Look at any sinful culture and you will find the degradation of women through sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, and the lack of political and human rights. But God does not want things to stay this way. He provided a Savior who has borne the curse for us! Whenever the gospel of Christ is preached, women will find liberation from the pain of abuse, domination, and subjugation mentioned in Genesis 3:16.

Consider the judgment that was placed on Adam. He was told that he would have to toil by the sweat of his brow in the fields. (See Genesis 3:19.) These solemn words refer to the curse of poverty—the tragic economic depravity that rules every pagan culture. But we don’t use this verse to teach that abject poverty is God’s perfect will for men any more than we believe that because of Genesis 3:17–19, all males should have agricultural occupations.

The curse of poverty on man—along with the curse of oppression on women—was reversed because of the grace that was released into the world by the finished work of the Savior’s cross. God’s plan to draw all of His fallen creatures back into fellowship with Him through Jesus Christ includes the strategy to restore both men and women to a place of rulership that the first couple enjoyed before Eve listened to Satan’s seductive whispers. Through the cross, women overcome the curse that befell Eve, and they can once again eat from the tree of life.

It is at the tree of life, the place of restored relationship and intimate communion with our heavenly Father, that we find woman’s ultimate calling. Yet we have tried to define a woman’s destiny by the act of disobedience that occurred at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God has offered woman redemption through Christ and deliverance from the curse of sin—yet our tendency is to continue to blame her for Eve’s deception. God created woman primarily for fellowship with Him, yet we often try to define her worth and value only in terms of what she can do for her husband.

The lie says women were made to serve men as inferior partners. The truth, as revealed in Scripture, is that women were created by God as co-equal, joint-heirs of His grace. The lie says women must find their ultimate purpose in serving a man. The truth says that women’s ultimate destiny can be discovered only as they seek to become disciples of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 1

Questions for Discussion

1. Can you think of a recent example of male chauvinism you’ve seen in your church or in the broader Christian community?

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

2. God described Eve as Adam's "helper" or "help meet." Explain what you think this means in light of the fact that the same Hebrew word for "helper" is used to describe God.
3. Explain why is it illogical to conclude that Eve was inferior to Adam just because she was created after him.
4. Marriage is supposed to be a union in which a man and woman learn to flow in harmony as one. If you are married, do you feel you and your spouse treat each other as equals? If not, why not?
5. Part of the curse of sin for Eve was that her husband would "rule over her" (Gen. 3:16). Explain why this is not the ultimate destiny for a Christian woman.

God maintained the order of each sex by dividing the business of life into two parts, and assigned the more necessary and beneficial aspects to the man and the less important, inferior matters to the woman.

— EARLY CHURCH FATHER JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (A.D. 347–407)

A woman's intellect is normally more feeble and her curiosity greater than those of a man. . . . Women should not govern the state or make war or enter the sacred ministry. Thus they can dispense with some of the more difficult branches of knowledge which deal with politics, the military arts, jurisprudence, philosophy and theology. . . . Their bodies as well as their minds are less strong and robust than those of men.

—FRANCOIS DE SALIGNAC DE LA MOTHE-FENELON
IN *THE EDUCATION OF FEMALES*
PUBLISHED IN THE LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Woman has no call to the ballot-box, but she has a sphere of her own, of amazing responsibility and importance. She is the divinely appointed guardian of the home. . . . She should more fully realize her position . . . is the holiest, most responsible, and queenlike assigned to mortals; and dismiss all ambition for anything higher, as there is nothing else here so high for mortals.

—FUNDAMENTALIST LEADER JOHN MILTON WILLIAMS
IN *WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE* (1893), WHICH USED THE BIBLE TO OPPOSE
THE MOVEMENT TO GIVE WOMEN THE RIGHT TO VOTE

We don't believe there's a place for women elders in the church. When the apostle Paul said that a woman should not "teach or exercise authority over a man" (1 Tim. 2:12), he did not follow that statement with a cultural argument. Rather he went all the way back to creation to show that women weren't intended to dominate men. The reasons he gave are that the woman was created after the man, and that she was deceived when acting independently of his leadership.

—CALIFORNIA PASTOR AND AUTHOR JOHN MACARTHUR
IN A STATEMENT ON WOMEN POSTED ON HIS "GRACE TO YOU" WEB SITE

Lie #2 Women are not equipped to assume leadership roles in the church.

TOO MANY YEARS have passed for most of us to remember that Christian leaders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries aggressively opposed the effort to grant women the right to vote in the United States. In 1920, Roman Catholic bishops in Massachusetts ruled that women would be considered “fallen” if they entered the political arena. Other denominations passed rulings decrying the suffrage movement, predicting that if women began voting they would forsake their domestic duties and trigger the downfall of civilization.

Some preachers jumped on the anti-woman bandwagon and launched an effort to “re-masculinize” the church—out of fear that women would somehow come to dominate it. One of them, Horace Bushnell, a Congregationalist theologian, predicted that if women started voting, their brains would swell and they would eventually lose their femininity—and their morals.

Evangelist Billy Sunday (1863–1935) was among the leaders of his day who were concerned that the church was in danger of being feminized. In his popular sermons he often criticized what he called “plastic, spineless, effeminate, sissified, three-caret [*sic*] Christianity.” Perhaps this fear of feminization is at the root of modern opposition to ministry opportunities for women. But for the most part, those who fight the idea of women’s ordination today are still using the same cultural arguments and misinterpreted Bible passages that were used by medieval church patriarchs. Old lies don’t die easily.

This was most obvious in June 2000, when the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the nation’s largest Protestant denomination, passed a policy that states: “While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.” One Baptist leader who opposed the measure, Robert Parham of the Baptist Center for Ethics in Nashville, Tennessee, told a reporter in Orlando, Florida, that the fifteen-million-member SBC “has pulled up the drawbridge to the 21st century and locked its members into a 19th-century cultural castle.” Why is it that the church always seems to be fifty or one hundred years behind the times when it comes to making social progress?

Why must we drag our feet so clumsily when the Holy Spirit is urging us to break free from religious traditions that hinder His work? In the 1950s and 1960s, when American society was coming to terms with the ugliness of racial discrimination, the white evangelical church should have led the way in calling for justice for our African American brethren. But instead, many white churches opposed desegregation and even used the Bible to fight it.

The same is true today regarding the issue of women in ministry. We live in a culture in which qualified women serve as governors, senators, mayors, university deans, corporate presidents, ambassadors, and even military commanders. Women have achieved remarkable status in diverse fields including space exploration, medicine, business, and athletics. Yet a majority of evangelical churches remain closed to the notion of a woman assuming the role of senior pastor. As a result the world views the church as ignorant, insensitive, and irrelevant. Sadly, we deserve that label.

Did Jesus Believe Women Could Lead?

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

This strong church bias against women in leadership is peculiar when we examine Jesus' own inclusive attitudes toward the women who followed Him. As we have noted already, Jesus affirmed the equality of women in the midst of a culture that denied them basic human rights. He called them to be His disciples during a time when religious leaders taught that it was disgraceful even to teach a woman.

We read in Luke 8:1–3 that the women who followed Jesus were a vital part of His traveling ministry team. This passage says:

The twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.

—EMPHASIS ADDED

These women were not just stragglers who stayed at the back of Jesus' entourage watching Him from a distance while they cooked meals for the men. They were Jesus' disciples in the fullest sense, and we have every reason to believe that He commissioned them to minister in His name.

When Jesus sent the Holy Spirit upon the church, as recorded in the Book of Acts, many of these same women were in the upper room and received empowerment on the Day of Pentecost. Those who were Christ's disciples had been commissioned to go into all the earth as witnesses, but they had been instructed to wait until the Holy Spirit came upon them to empower them to fulfill this commission. (See Acts 1:4–5.) When the Holy Spirit came to fulfill this promise of empowerment for ministry, both men and women—including His own mother—received Him. This was noted by Peter, who then recited the verse from Joel's prophecy: "*Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy*" (Acts 2:17, emphasis added).

If Christ commissioned solely men to the ministry of the gospel, why did He send the power for that mission upon both men and women?

The women in the upper room were not the only women Jesus commissioned. In the story of His visit with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7–42), we read that after He revealed His true identity to her and she pronounced His forgiveness of her troubled past, she began telling others about Him (vv. 28–29). Here we see perhaps one of the clearest pictures in the Bible of Christ as an ordainer of women.

The Gospel account tells us that after her encounter with the Savior, "from that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman" (v. 39). Why would the Messiah send this woman into her village to tell others about His power if He was opposed to the concept of women in ministry?

Even more intriguing, this was the first recorded instance in which Christ commissioned someone to evangelize beyond the narrow confines of the Orthodox Jewish community. To prophetically demonstrate that the gospel would ultimately spread to "Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8), He sent a woman evangelist to preach!

We must remember the cultural context of this passage. In Palestine at the time of Christ and, indeed, in all of the Roman world, women were not considered reliable witnesses. Men were taught that the testimony of a woman was not to be trusted because women were considered

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

ignorant and easily deceived. Yet, to whom did Jesus choose *first* to reveal His resurrection on Easter morning? And whom did He commission *first* to tell others that He had triumphed over the grave? Was it not His brave women disciples who were willing to identify with His death while His male followers hid from their persecutors?

Because of cultural biases, Christ's male disciples did not believe the testimony of the women when they gave the astounding report about the open tomb. Yet Jesus appeared to the Twelve and confirmed the witness of the women, and by doing so He intentionally refuted the idea that women could not offer faithful testimony. Indeed, He affirmed the ministry of the women and challenged His narrow-minded male followers to do the same.

After His resurrection, Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, "Go to My brethren, and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God'" (John 20:17). Was He not affirming her as a witness of the gospel? Was she not commissioned by Christ Himself both to go and to *speak* for Him? Why then do we deny women the opportunity to carry the same message?

Jesus offered similar affirmation to His disciple Mary of Bethany when she broke the alabaster vial of costly perfume and poured it on His head. (See Matthew 26:6–13.) Although it is not clear in this passage why Mary performed this expensive sacrificial act, it appears that her worship was a heartfelt response to a divine revelation of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God who would take upon Himself the sins of the world.

Because Mary had followed Jesus so closely, sat at His feet as a student, listened to His teachings, and believed He was the Messiah, she realized that He was the Son of God who had been sent to earth to pay the ultimate price of mankind's redemption. Because she understood this, Jesus announced to everyone in the room: "For, when she poured this perfume upon My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial" (v. 12).

We could say that Mary of Bethany is a female counterpart to the apostle Peter, who was commended by Jesus when he received a similar divine revelation and announced, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16, NKJV). After Jesus commended Mary for her understanding of His heavenly mission, He said of her: "Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be spoken of in memory of her" (Matt. 26:13).

In essence what Jesus was saying to Mary was, "Finally someone really understands! One of My disciples really grasps the concept I've been trying to explain! I was beginning to wonder if any of you would figure it out. But Mary understands it. She anointed my body for burial because she knows I will die for all of you as your Savior promised by God. Her eyes have been opened!"

In Palestine's patriarchal culture, no rabbi would have honored a woman in such a way. Most religious leaders at that time spoke only to men, and they certainly did not affirm women as worshipers or students of the Torah. Yet here Jesus paid a woman the highest compliment because she understood His prophetic, redemptive purpose before most of His other followers. How ironic that in an environment in which women were not even considered worthy of being taught—and certainly could not learn theology—a woman was one of the first to grasp the

mystery of redemption. This alone is enough evidence that Christ intended women to learn at His feet so they could be equipped to become ministers.

A Gospel That Empowers Women

In conservative Christian circles women are expected to live contentedly in the background—presumably to focus on domestic duties—because this is their humble, God-ordained “place” in life. It’s a place of invisible service and of godly but quiet influence over children and the home, or perhaps over the church nursery, Sunday school class, or women’s Bible study.

Women, of course, are told it is an honor to live in the shadow of their husbands or other male authorities and a disgrace for them to assume a place of significant spiritual authority. But we need to ask: Where did we get this warped idea when it was not the perspective of Jesus Christ, nor is it promoted anywhere in the Scriptures?

The Bible, in fact, contains a rich record of women who were placed in authority by God. We must consider the way God used them before we attempt to pull an isolated Scripture out of context to build a doctrine that restricts the ministry opportunities of women. Consider the following biblical women and the level of authority they were given:

- **Miriam.** There is no question that Moses’ sister was considered a leader in ancient Israel. This is confirmed in Micah 6:4: “Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt and ransomed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam” (emphasis added). She represented the authority of God to the people in the same way Moses did. She spoke for God. That’s why she is described in Exodus 15:20 as a prophetess.

She is also the first person in the Old Testament we see leading congregational worship. Oddly enough, many churches today will not allow a woman to hold the position of worship leader even though Miriam was a forerunner for this vital ministry.

- **Deborah.** Among the judges of Israel, Deborah was the only one who held the respected position of prophet other than Samuel. She is referred to as a prophetess in Judges 4:4, and her attentiveness to God’s purpose and strategy resulted in an impressive military victory for Israel that secured peace for forty years. (See Judges 5:31.) She was married, but her husband, Lappidoth, did not share her position of spiritual authority, and we know little about him. Deborah functioned as a civil ruler and was so respected for her anointing and spiritual insights that Barak, Israel’s military commander, refused to go into battle without her.

Deborah, called “a mother in Israel” (Judg. 5:7), presents an intriguing problem for conservative church leaders today who want to promote the view that women cannot function in senior positions of spiritual authority. She doesn’t fit in their narrow doctrinal mold, and that’s why we never hear sermons about her. She is an oddity, but we can’t ignore the fact that the biblical record affirms her godly leadership as well as her intense passion to see God’s enemies defeated. We need more women like her today—women who are anointed with supernatural wisdom and who are brave enough to charge into the enemy’s camp with faith.

- **Huldah.** After fifty years of paganism and spiritual adultery in Israel, King Josiah assumed the throne and rediscovered the Book of the Law, which had been hidden in

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

the temple. When it was read aloud, he immediately repented and turned to the Lord, then sent his high priest to seek out a faithful follower of God who could speak for Him. To whom did they turn? To Huldah, a prophetess who obviously had remained faithful to the Lord during one of the darkest periods in Israel's history. (See 2 Kings 22:14.)

We know little about this woman except that she lived in Jerusalem with her husband, Shallum, and that her prophetic message to Josiah came true. The fact that Israel's high priest, Hilkiah, and his associates sought her out to make their inquiry of the Lord shows that she had earned a reputation for hearing from God. It is odd that a group of spiritual leaders operating under the Old Covenant in Israel looked to an anointed woman of God for advice when some Christian leaders today—in the New Covenant age—would consider Huldah “out of order” for assuming a place of influence in the church.

- **Esther.** Although she did not function in a place of ecclesiastical authority, Esther's life proves that God can and does use women in strategic positions of influence to further His purposes. Indeed, he singled out this young Jewish woman and thrust her into the place of an intercessor and deliverer, not unlike Moses, and her prayers and courageous actions literally saved her people from genocide.

And like Moses, Esther was a shy person. She was tempted to shrink back from her dangerous assignment, but her cousin Mordecai warned her not to be a coward. He told her: “If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14, emphasis added).

There are many women today in the church who have been called to act boldly, and they, like Esther, struggle with fear. They are called to preach, and their words hold the power to bring salvation and deliverance to many. Yet how many men in our churches are willing to be like Mordecai, to challenge these women to speak out? It seems we prefer that the women remain silent!

- **Phoebe.** Paul commended this woman to the church at Rome and asked them to “receive her in the Lord” when she arrived from Cenchreae to work among them (Rom. 16:1–2). Although he refers to her as a diakonon, the Greek word for deacon, the word is translated servant in many Bible versions. But it is more accurate to place her in the category of deacon with men such as Stephen and Philip, for the same Greek word is used to describe them.

Paul's commending of Phoebe to the Roman church is also his way of enduing her with apostolic authority, and he obviously expected the early Christians to follow her instructions when she arrived. Most likely she was not coming to Rome to organize Sunday school luncheons. She was sent by Paul to carry out specific plans, probably related to evangelism and church planting. Let's remember that deacons in the New Testament were often powerful ministers who worked miracles when they preached (consider the example of Philip in Acts 8:5–6). It is entirely possible that Phoebe's ministry was of this caliber.

- **Priscilla.** Along with her husband, Aquila, this woman was a noted laborer in the early church, and it was this couple's influence that helped launch the apostolic ministry of

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

Apollos. (See Acts 18:24–26.) It would be safe to say that they also functioned as apostles, since Paul refers to them in Romans 16:3 as “fellow workers in Christ Jesus.” We are told that they had a church “in their house” (v. 5) and that this brave couple “risked their own necks” to save Paul’s life (v. 4).

Many scholars note that Paul always uses Priscilla’s name first when he refers to this couple, doubtless because her teaching gifts were stronger and more recognized by the early church. If only we had men today who were secure enough in their own giftings to allow their wives to excel beyond them at preaching, teaching, or other realms of public ministry!

There will, in fact, be situations in which a woman is called to public ministry or to a position of spiritual authority when her husband is not. There is no rule in Scripture that says women leaders must be married or that their husbands must assume some sort of umbrella of authority over them if the woman functions in this role.

- **Philip’s daughters.** We are told in Acts 21:9 that Philip the evangelist had four daughters who were “prophetesses.” We know nothing about them, but we can assume that their influence was significant enough to be mentioned in the biblical record. Obviously they were engaged in public speaking, and their words carried the same level of authority as the words of Agabus—a male prophet who is described in the same passage. Philip’s daughters were in essence women preachers who experienced a high level of respect for their spiritual insights and level of gifting.

The term “prophetess” used here is taken from the same root word used in Acts 15:32 to describe two male prophets, Judas and Silas. Therefore it is obvious that prophets and prophetesses have the same function and anointing; female prophets are not classified in a lower category simply because of their gender.

Bible translators have been known to play tricks with words when dealing with gender issues. In some cases, for example, they have translated the word for “deaconesses” as “wives of deacons,” when there is no reason to believe these women were in some type of subordinate class. But if we examine the word diakonon, there is no convincing case that God created two categories of people: deacons and deaconesses, as if the women belong in a secondary category. The same is true of prophets. Their gender is irrelevant.

- **Lois and Eunice.** The apostle Paul commends these two women—Timothy’s mother and grandmother—for shaping the young man’s ministry through their instruction and example. Although it is an obscure passage, it is a crucial one because so many churches today use Paul’s letters to Timothy to justify misguided policies that limit the scope of women’s ministry. It is ironic that people twist Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 2:12 (“I do not allow a woman to teach”) in order to make a blanket prohibition against women teaching men, when in 2 Timothy 1:5 he commends Lois and Eunice for teaching Timothy the faith!
- **Junia the apostle.** Paul’s reference to this woman in Romans 16:7 has created quite a controversy in recent years. Because she is referred to as an apostle, Bible scholars and translators have assumed that she could not have been a woman—since females can’t

possibly function in an apostolic role. For this reason the name is often translated “Junias” or is considered a contracted form of the name “Junianus.”

Attempts to change the gender of Junia did not begin until the thirteenth century, after the name became uncommon among Europeans. Anyone in the first century would have easily recognized Junia as a common Latin name for a woman. As to whether she was an apostle, theologian Craig Keener makes this point: “Those who favor the view that Junia was not a female apostle do so because of their prior assumption that women could not be apostles, not because there is any evidence in the text.”

There are several other examples of women who held positions of spiritual authority in the New Testament church. Chloe obviously led a church that Paul was overseeing (1 Cor. 1:11), and Nympha had a church “in her house” (Col. 4:15). We can assume that these women held pastoral positions. (Conservative scholars, of course, believe they were simply “hosting” the churches in their homes— and perhaps preparing sandwiches and cookies for the after-church fellowship time.)

Paul also refers to two other women, Euodia and Syntyche, as “women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel” (Phil. 4:3). Like Jesus, the apostle Paul had women disciples whom he trained and commissioned to preach and evangelize on the front lines. Where are the women who “share the struggle” of apostolic ministry today? How tragic that the church in the twenty-first century has not empowered an entire army of women with the authority necessary to take cities and nations for Christ.

Why Were No Women Included With the Twelve Apostles?

Many conservative theologians argue that if Jesus really believed in empowering women for leadership, He would have appointed one or more females to serve among His twelve disciples. It is assumed that since all the Twelve were male, only men can occupy the top positions of authority in the church.

But again, we must take into consideration the culture of Jesus’ day. Women were not allowed to occupy any positions of authority in first-century Palestine. Jesus challenged the gender prejudice of Jewish and Roman culture by allowing women to follow Him, by recognizing them publicly, by affirming their spiritual insights, and by commissioning them to be His witnesses. But many scholars believe that to appoint a woman to serve among the Twelve may have been so radical that it would have put their lives in danger immediately.

There was also a prophetic and symbolic reason why Jesus chose to assemble a dozen male followers to represent Him. Dr. Kenneth E. Bailey, a biblical scholar and expert in Middle Eastern studies, believes that although Jesus had many disciples who followed Him in Judea and who ministered in His name throughout the region of Israel, He chose to empower twelve men as His key representatives because He was making a prophetic statement to the Jewish people—and specifically to the religious leaders of His day. To the Jews, the number twelve represented the government of God’s kingdom. It was the number of the tribes of Israel—a number with its origins in the sons of Jacob.

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

By selecting these men, whom the Bible refers to as “the Twelve,” He was saying to the rabbis and Pharisees that He was creating a “new Israel.” Even as the twelve tribes crossed the Jordan River from the wilderness and conquered Canaan, settling in the land and establishing the ancient kingdom of Israel, so would these Twelve—representing the new message of salvation in Jesus Christ—establish a new and enduring kingdom that would endure forever.

If Jesus had chosen women to serve in this symbolic group, Dr. Bailey points out, then the message of a new Israel would have been confusing—since the twelve tribes of Israel were led by the Old Testament patriarchs: Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Gad, Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Benjamin, Dan, Ephraim, Isacchar, and Zebulon.

In the revelation of the apostle John, this prophetic imagery is further developed in his vision of a vast, heavenly city—“the new Jerusalem,” which represents the glorious church. In John’s vision, we are told that the city has twelve gates that represent the twelve tribes of Israel, as well as “twelve foundational stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev. 21:14).

By choosing His Twelve and sending them out as a prophetic witness to “the lost sheep of the tribes of Israel,” Jesus was saying to the Jews: “My message is from the God of your fathers. In fact, before Abraham was, I existed. I have been sent by the God of Israel—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to call you to a new and living way of salvation. And I will build My glorious church with these new and living stones.”

By picking twelve men to serve in this symbolic foundational role, Jesus was not making a sexist statement, nor was He denying women a future role in the building of His church. He was, as He often did in His parables, using prophetic symbolism as a means to reach the Jews with His message.

It is also important for us to recognize that even though Jesus selected twelve Jewish males to lead the early church, He was in no way signaling that future leaders of the church must be Jewish. To the contrary, the Holy Spirit showed the early disciples that the gospel was also sent to the Gentiles—and within a few years Gentile apostles emerged.

Thus, we must see that just because the first apostles were male, this does not set a precedent for all time. Women, including Priscilla and Junia, were already functioning in fivefold ministry roles by the time the early church began penetrating Europe and Asia Minor.

Who Said Women Can’t Lead?

Jackie Rodríguez was a Florida housewife and mother of one small child when she began to accept invitations to preach in churches in her city. Her husband, Nuño, a pastor in Orlando, was baffled by his wife’s decision to step out and assume such a high-profile role. But Jackie never once asked for a speaking engagement. Churches called her and begged her to minister.

“I didn’t ask to do this,” she told Nuño once when he questioned her motives. “I have not once picked up the telephone and called anyone to ask them to schedule me. God is opening these doors.”

It was not an easy road for Jackie. In Hispanic culture, where *machismo* is a dominant force, women are expected to function in a purely domestic role. And Jackie soon found that *machismo* is also a powerful influence in Hispanic churches. When pastors heard her speak, they were shocked. She spoke with authority, but they could not reconcile her obvious

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

anointing with the cultural traditions that held a vice-grip on their minds. To them, Jackie was violating an unwritten law of Spanish culture.

“Who do you think you are?” pastors would ask her. “You are coming across too strong. You are a woman!” they would scream. Some of the Hispanic women also opposed her, but Jackie pressed through the resistance and ultimately gained respect.

Looking back on her earliest years in ministry, Jackie realizes that she had to oppose a stronghold of prejudice. “We Hispanic women have been under slavery,” she says now. “The Hispanic pastors told women that they should be quiet. They told them to show up at church and then to shut up!”

Jackie no longer fights this battle every day. In 1999, she and her husband became associate pastors at The Church of the People, a twelve-hundred-member Hispanic Charismatic congregation in Mission, Texas, on the far eastern border of Mexico. Jackie began preaching sermons and airing a Spanish-language broadcast, *Waves of Revival*, that reaches thousands in the Mexican cities of Reynosa and Matamoros. She also began broadcasting to the entire region a television program featuring her relevant preaching. And people started responding to her message.

There are some leaders in the church today who would say that Jackie Rodríguez’s ministry is illegitimate. If they could, they would yank her off the podiums and platforms where she stands and pull her TV and radio programs off the airwaves because they believe her gender disqualifies her from carrying the message of the gospel. How did they arrive at such a warped conclusion?

The prophet Joel predicted that one day the Holy Spirit would be poured out on the church and as a result, “sons and *daughters* [would] prophesy” (Joel 2:28, emphasis added). This passage clearly indicates that when the New Testament age began, both men and women would be empowered and commissioned to carry the message of the gospel to the world. God’s Holy Spirit would no longer rest simply on isolated individuals as was the case under the Old Covenant. In the Pentecostal age, *all* believers—regardless of gender, ethnicity, or social status—would have full access to the graces of the Spirit and would speak the utterances of God.

If preaching were to have been limited to men only, Joel would not have mentioned *daughters* in his prediction. He would have said instead, “In the last days, I will pour out My Spirit, and your sons will prophesy while your daughters serve quietly in the background and pray for the men.”

That is not what the Bible says. It clearly states that women will preach. They will lead. They will be on the front lines of ministry. Like Deborah, they will take the church into enemy territory and watch as the Lord gives victory. Like Esther, they will not keep silent. Like Phoebe, they will co-labor with apostles to establish churches in unevangelized regions.

If this is the clear mandate of Joel 2:28, why do churches that pride themselves on faithful adherence to a literal translation of the Bible reject it? There is no biblical basis for the popular notion that prophesying or preaching is a uniquely masculine act. Both genders have been called to minister in the Holy Spirit’s power, and we grieve Him when we restrict the full release of that power by forbidding women to speak God’s Word or use their talents in His service. We

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

will answer to God for limiting His work by restricting the flow of His Spirit through women who have been called to speak for Him.

Over the years I've heard countless arguments used to restrict women from preaching or leading churches. When I was involved with a Charismatic campus ministry in the 1980s, the top directors gathered on one occasion to decide what speakers to invite to a conference for Christian college students. All the speakers selected were men. When someone suggested that we invite Joy Dawson, a popular Bible teacher affiliated with Youth With A Mission, the president of the group said it would not be appropriate if Joy preached.

"It will be OK if she *'shares'* the Word," the leader said, "But she can't preach. Women *share*." The idea was that if women are put in a place of public ministry and are asked to speak, they must do it meekly (or sheepishly) to somehow demonstrate that they are not being forceful in the presence of men. How ridiculous! Perhaps the men are afraid that the women will preach better?

There is no biblical basis for the idea that women cannot raise their voices against injustice, challenge sin in the church, or call sinners to repentance. There is no scriptural requirement that when women pray, prophesy, lead worship, teach seminars, establish new churches, start drug rehabilitation centers, minister in prisons, or preach sermons, they must do it less passionately than men. Why then do so many Christians, even in the twenty-first century, still believe that women who proclaim God's Word boldly are either "masculine" or "out of order"? On more than one occasion I have even heard ministers snidely suggest that women who preach in an authoritative style must be lesbians—because, they say, they "want to do a man's work."

We need to understand that the Bible does not lock women into the stereotypical mold of silent wimps. God does not set limits on the volume level of a woman's voice. In the Book of Proverbs, godly wisdom is portrayed as a fearless woman who stands in the middle of the city and "cries out" with a loud voice. (See Proverbs 8:1–11.) She declares: "To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men" (v. 4). Not only does she preach authoritatively, but she preaches to men. This allegorical woman is not leading a women's Bible study in her home. She is evangelizing men in the central square of a major city. Yet how many leaders of major denominations in the United States would tell this woman preacher to sit down and shut up?

Catherine Booth, cofounder of The Salvation Army, was often criticized by the male clergy of her day because she conducted a public ministry and provided strong leadership to her evangelistic organization. Her detractors often used the argument that it was "against nature" for a woman to preach because God created females to be weak, gentle, and subservient. Mrs. Booth pointed out in her most famous 1859 treatise, "Female Ministry: Woman's Right to Preach the Gospel," that objections to women in the pulpit were purely because of cultural biases and traditions.

In the rigid Victorian culture that Mrs. Booth challenged, women were viewed as delicate, decorative ornaments. They were honored as beautiful but silent moral examples, and they were encouraged to influence the morals of their nation as long as they did it in appropriate ways—perhaps by ministering to the sick in hospitals or by hosting teas to raise money for

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

charitable causes. Yet Booth forcefully argued that women can and should be trained to preach and lead. They are not, she insisted, just decorations or silent influencers.

She wrote: “We cannot discover anything either unnatural or immodest in a Christian woman, becomingly attired, appearing on a platform or in a pulpit. By nature she seems fitted to grace either. God has given to woman a graceful form and attitude, winning manners, persuasive speech, and, above all, a finely-toned emotional nature, all of which appear to us eminent natural qualifications for public speaking.”

It is tragic that eloquent women preachers like Catherine Booth had to defend their skills and anointing to clergy in the nineteenth century. It is even more tragic that equally anointed women preachers today must continue to defend themselves. When are we going to stop quenching the Holy Spirit by denying our sisters their right to prophesy? To keep them silent is to tune out the voice of the Spirit. To reject them is to reject the Lord’s messengers.

Chapter 2

Questions for Discussion

1. Why is it significant that on Easter morning, the resurrected Christ revealed Himself first to His female followers?
2. Read Deborah’s story in Judges 4–5. Why do you think traditionally minded Christians don’t preach sermons about this Old Testament prophetess?
3. Based on the writings of the apostle Paul, women in New Testament times apparently served as deacons, pastors and even apostles. If someone challenged these Scriptures and claimed that women were never given authority in the early church, how would you respond?
4. Why do you think Jesus did not appoint any women to be among the twelve leading disciples?
5. Joel 2:28 says that God’s “daughters” will “prophesy” in the last days. What does this mean?
6. For years Christians taught that it was not “feminine” for women to speak publicly. How would you respond to this argument?

Out of respect to the congregation, a woman should not herself read in the law. It is a shame for a woman to let her voice be heard among men. The voice of a woman is filthy nakedness.

—FROM THE JEWISH TALMUD

Men should not sit and listen to a woman . . . even if she says admirable things, or even saintly things, that is of little consequence, since they came from the mouth of a woman.

—ORIGEN (A.D. 185–254)
THE EARLY CHURCH FATHER

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

Women have no creative power, inventive genius or originality. Rather [they are] creatures of instinct and imitation, beautifully adapted to what nature intended.

—ANONYMOUS BRITISH DOCTOR

IN AN 1869 PAMPHLET OPPOSING WOMEN MEDICAL STUDENTS

Nowhere was the power of divine healing ever given to be administered by any woman. Women have their rightful places, but when you put one in the pulpit it is unscriptural.

—REV. DALLAS BILLINGTON OF AKRON BAPTIST TEMPLE

IN HIS 1952 ATTACK ON EVANGELIST KATHRYN KUHLMAN

The creational pattern of male headship requires that women not hold the formal position of the authoritative public teaching office in the church, that is, the office of pastor.

—1985 STATEMENT OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

Lie #3 Women must not teach or preach to men in a church setting.

ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ has been called the best preacher among evangelist Billy Graham's five children. That's one reason hordes of women began packing twenty-five-thousand-seat civic arenas in 2000 to attend her series of Just Give Me Jesus revival meetings. Her audiences heard an articulate Bible expositor whose North Carolina accent, rapid-fire cadence, and sweeping gestures seemed eerily similar to her father's. Yet this preacher wears a dress and understands the pain of childbirth. She also amazed TV viewers in May of that year when she clearly explained the plan of Christian salvation on a *Larry King Live* broadcast after King asked her, "How can you be so sure you are going to heaven?"

Suddenly, many Americans were asking the obvious question: Is Billy Graham going to be replaced by his *daughter*?

Lotz is indeed a powerful public speaker, and those who have heard her teach the Bible say she just may be the person God chose to assume her father's mantle. Yet many evangelicals in the United States—including her fellow Southern Baptists—still cannot endorse her anointed ministry. In fact, when she stood to address a group of conservative pastors at a 1988 conference, many of them literally turned their backs on her—and turned their chairs around as well. Never mind honoring her famous father. These conservative ministers could not submit themselves to a woman preacher by facing her!

Lotz is not the only Christian woman who has been subjected to public humiliation because she dared stand in a pulpit to deliver the word of the Lord. We are familiar with her story because she is the daughter of a celebrity, but there are hundreds of thousands of women in this country who have similar tales of rejection.

There have even been cases in which women were reprimanded just for being physically near a pulpit. Several years ago, my friend Brenda J. Davis, the editor of *SpiritLed Woman* magazine, was invited to sing at a friend's wedding in New York. Though she and her friends were all

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

members of the same church, the engaged couple had decided to get married at a more traditional Baptist church where their parents were long-time members.

On the day of the wedding, Brenda walked to where she was to stand on the platform—three feet from the lectern—and began to sing, as the pianist played behind her and the bridal attendants took their places near the front of the sanctuary. Suddenly, with no warning, a group of six men in dark suits bolted from their seats in the first three rows and rushed toward Brenda.

“No! No! No!” one of the older deacons said gruffly, interrupting the second line of the song. “We don’t allow women in the pulpit! No women in the pulpit! You can’t stand here!” The other men, obviously flustered, were waving their hands frantically as they shooed Brenda off the podium to a spot on the side of the sanctuary.

“At first I thought the building was on fire,” Brenda told me. “Then I thought they were talking to someone behind me.” She stopped her song awkwardly in mid-sentence, and her accompanist abruptly quit playing. Once Brenda had been repositioned and the deacons were seated, the piano music resumed. But Brenda found it hard to smile at the audience, especially when she realized that the bride and groom were mortified by the behavior of the deacons.

These men were incredibly rude, but I’m sure they justified their behavior by citing chapter and verse in the Bible, claiming that God forbids women from holding any position of influence in the church— particularly if that position allows them to teach or preach. (I must admit I find it odd that we have invented a “no women in the pulpit” rule considering that the Bible never once refers to pulpits!) In many conservative churches in the United States, this “no women in the pulpit” argument is always based on one verse in the Bible, 1 Timothy 2:12. They claim that this command issued by the apostle Paul is universal and must be applied to all women at all times in the most literal sense. But the logic used in this argument is seriously flawed, and the typical misinterpretation of this verse has placed women in spiritual bondage for centuries.

What Did Paul Really Mean?

Before we delve deeper into the specific cultural context of the apostle Paul’s instructions, we need to examine 1 Timothy 2:12 closely. And as we do, we need to apply the most important rule of biblical hermeneutics: We must interpret this verse not solely on what it says or on what we think it says, but on what the rest of the Bible says about the subject being addressed in the passage.

People who misuse 1 Timothy 2:12 to deny ministry opportunities to all women at all times usually pride themselves on being so-called biblical literalists. “The Bible says it, I believe it, and that settles it!” they say smugly. But in actuality, taking the Bible “literally” can sometimes lead to serious error.

For example, what if we take 1 Timothy 5:23 as a literal, universal command to the church? In it, Paul tells Timothy, “No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.” Is this verse to be applied to all ministers of the gospel? Does it give ministers the freedom to drink alcoholic beverages? My Anglican friends would say yes, but many conservative evangelicals insist that the drinking of wine or any other alcoholic beverage is sinful. (Or they insist that wine, in Christ’s day, was actually grape juice—

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

an argument that has no basis in scholarship.) They obviously do not accept a “literal” interpretation of Paul’s advice to Timothy in this case.

That’s because 1 Timothy 5:23 was not meant to be applied as a doctrinal statement for all churches through the ages. It is not to be used as a rule of medicine or morality. It is a personal message from Paul to his son in the faith, and it gives us a glimpse of the apostle’s caring relationship with him.

What about 1 Corinthians 11:5, which says, “Every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head”? There are members of some conservative Christian denominations, particularly Mennonites, who take this verse literally and require women to wear a covering or bonnet on their heads while in church. But most Christians today accept the view that this passage of Scripture pertains to a specific cultural issue in first century Corinth and that it is not a universal command.

Many parts of Scripture, of course, are to be applied universally. But in Paul’s epistles, often his instructions are offered to bring correction to specific situations that had arisen in the early church. In 1 Corinthians 8, for example, he deals with the issue of whether Christians should eat meat that has been sacrificed to pagan idols. Since we don’t encounter such circumstances in modern society, we must be careful how we apply Paul’s words when dealing with corresponding contemporary issues.

Let’s look again at Paul’s words to Timothy and ask some important questions about how literally we are to take his instructions. 1 Timothy 2:12 appears below in several translations:

And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.

—NKJV

I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.

—NIV

I allow no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to remain in quietness and keep silence [in religious assemblies].

—AMP

I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly.

—NLT

Now let’s use some commonsense logic as we seek to understand what is being said here.

Is Paul forbidding women to teach in any setting?

Are his words, “I do not allow women to teach,” a blanket prohibition? Does this mean women cannot teach other women? Does it mean women cannot teach children in grade school? If we interpret the Bible properly, by looking at the whole of Scripture, we would have to say that Paul is certainly not making a universal decree about women teaching.

After all, he tells older women to teach younger ones in Titus 2:4. Throughout the Old Testament God commands mothers and fathers to teach their children. The “virtuous woman” of Proverbs 31 is described as having “the teaching of kindness . . . on her tongue” (v. 26). And Jesus’ Great Commission—which was given to all His disciples, male and female—commands us to teach His gospel throughout the world. (See Matthew 28:19–20.)

Is Paul forbidding women to teach men?

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

If so, does this mean it is unacceptable for women to teach boys in school? If not, at what age do boys become men, and at what point are women not allowed to teach them anymore? After high school? Does this mean women professors cannot teach college courses because adult males are in the class?

Again, we have to look at other places in Scripture where we see examples of women teaching men. We read in Acts 18:24–26 that Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, offered biblical teaching and correction to Apollos. In 2 Timothy 1:5 Paul commends Lois and Eunice for teaching the Scriptures to young Timothy. If the Bible prohibited this type of teaching, why would the instruction of these women be presented in a favorable way?

Is Paul forbidding women to teach or preach only in a church service?

Does his demand for “silence” mean it is wrong for women to share testimonies in church, pray publicly, read Scripture, or give announcements? It would seem odd for there to be any speaking limitations on women in church, since we are told that both men and women will “prophesy” in the New Testament age. (See Joel 2:28.) And we have examples in the Book of Acts of women prophets, such as Philip’s daughters. (See Acts 21:9.) Also, when Paul gives instructions for the use of prophecy in the church in 1 Corinthians 14, he does not limit the gift to men. In fact, he says, “For you can *all* prophesy one by one” (v. 31, emphasis added).

Does Paul mean that women are allowed to speak in church except when they are speaking “authoritatively”?

If so, how do we distinguish between authoritative and non-authoritative speech? Is a prophecy authoritative? Is a sermon delivered in a Sunday morning worship service authoritative, but a Wednesday night Bible lesson is not? And who is the judge of a sermon’s level of authority?

What about music? Is a song that teaches a truth from the gospel authoritative? If so, it is wrong for a woman to sing to an audience of men since the song is a form of teaching? This seems like a silly question, but there are churches in this decade that limit the gifts and ministries of women in these kinds of ways. In fact, I know of a woman who was told she had to stand with her back facing the congregation when she led worship. If she faced the crowd, she was warned, she would be out of order because she was assuming a position of authority over the church!

Is Paul’s instruction a blanket prohibition against women holding any position of authority over men?

Does this mean women should not hold political office or be placed in management positions over male employees in the business world? Does this mean a Christian man cannot stay in his job if his boss is a female? (I know of conservative evangelical men who have quit their jobs for this reason!)

Do Paul’s words here mean a woman cannot lead a church committee? Or does the prohibition apply only to full-time employees of the church, such as pastors? Numerous women in the Bible, including many in the New Testament church, held positions of significant spiritual authority. So a blanket rule against women in authority does not seem logical and in fact would be unscriptural.

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

If Paul's words cannot be applied universally, what was the specific situation in Ephesus that required him to write these rather harsh words? To understand them we must consider what life was like in Ephesus in the first century.

Bible scholars have documented the fact that bizarre gnostic heresies were circulating throughout the region at that time, and these false teachings posed a serious threat to the infant Christian churches that were budding in that part of the world. That's why so much of Paul's message to Timothy deals with how to guard against false teaching. In a few instances, Paul actually mentions the fact that women were spreading these dangerous doctrines (1 Tim. 4:7; 5:13).

When Paul introduces his reason for writing this entire book, he says, "As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct *certain men* not to teach strange doctrines" (1 Tim. 1:3, emphasis added). What is translated as "certain men" is the indefinite Greek pronoun *tisi*. An indefinite pronoun does not indicate gender. Paul is saying, "Instruct certain people not to teach strange doctrines." Later in 1 Timothy, it becomes evident that women were doing the teaching of these strange doctrines, at least in part. A major purpose of this entire epistle was to correct unbiblical teachings being presented by women.

In their excellent book *I Suffer Not a Woman*, Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger explain that certain cultic worship practices involving female priestesses of the Greek fertility goddess, Diana, had invaded the church of that day. These women priests promoted blasphemous ideas about sex and spirituality, and they sometimes actually performed rituals in which they pronounced curses on men in an attempt to spiritually emasculate them or to declare female superiority.

This teaching most certainly bred unhealthy attitudes among some women in the Ephesian church. These women were completely unlearned, but they were spreading false doctrines, and in some cases they were claiming to be teachers of the Law and demanding an audience. They were most likely mixing Christian and Jewish teachings with strange heresies and warped versions of Bible stories. Some even taught that Eve was created before Adam and that she "liberated" the world when she listened to the serpent. Because of the spreading of these kinds of fables and hoaxes, chaos threatened the church.

Some of these rebellious women were actually disrupting worship services so they could teach their strange gospels. Rather than listening to church leaders who had been trained by Paul and the other apostles, these women were pridefully claiming that they deserved the pulpit themselves. In some instances they may have wrested control of the meetings and tried to teach or even perform their rituals.

Paul had to bring serious discipline to the situation quickly or the church would have been infected with a deadly virus. So he forbade these domineering women teachers from spreading their lies, and he commanded all the women in the congregation to be submissive so they could learn correct doctrine. The seriousness of the problem demanded a severe response.

To gain more insight into what was really going on in Ephesus at the time, we need to look closer at the phrase "or to have authority over men." The Greek word for "to have authority

over” is *authentain*, and it is the only time in the New Testament this word is used. Normally, the Greek word *exousia* is used for “authority.”

Bible scholars have noted that *authentain* has a forceful and extremely negative connotation. It implies a more specific meaning than “to have authority over” and can be translated “to dominate,” “to usurp” or “to take control.” Often when this word was used in ancient Greek literature it was associated with violence or even murder.

We can assume that because this word is used here, women in the Ephesian church were dominating church meetings, usurping the authority of church leaders and proclaiming themselves teachers when they had never been properly taught. So Paul called for an end to the madness. In essence he was saying, “Enough! I am not going to allow these know-it-all women to teach in your church anymore, nor I am allowing them to overthrow or usurp the authority of the leaders I appointed to teach you.”

Paul’s decree was not so much about the gender of those who were usurping authority but about the fact that they were not trained to teach and yet were pretending to be experts on Christian doctrine. In fact, Paul uses equally strong words when he warns Timothy about the men who were spreading false doctrines in Ephesus. He tells Timothy that he has “delivered over to Satan” two men, Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1:20), because they were spreading blasphemous heresies.

In Titus 1:10–11, the same solution was given by Paul to men who were spreading false teachings. “For there are many rebellious men . . . who must be silenced.” Yet, we would never generalize these instructions to say that because male false teachers were spreading heresies, then all male teachers must be silenced.

In his day, Paul would have been thrilled to have more skilled *men and women* who could teach the truth! A few women did serve as part of his apostolic team, such as Phoebe (Rom. 16:1), Priscilla (v. 3, NKJV), and Junia (v. 7, NKJV). But in the early church period most women were uneducated. We will discover that Paul’s desire for women to “receive instruction” in 1 Timothy 2:11 was actually a liberating message to first-century women—because they lived at a time when Jewish rabbis and Greek philosophers taught that women were not worthy of learning anything.

Aren’t Women Supposed to Be Silent?

Although the Bible is full of accounts of women who taught, prophesied, and delivered messages from God, many churches today teach that women cannot minister publicly—or hold positions as priests or pastors—because the apostle Paul supposedly issued a universal command telling women to be “silent.” The verse most often cited is 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, which says:

Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

But we must remember that in Greek and Middle Eastern culture during the first century, women did not have educational opportunities, and in fact it was considered disgraceful for

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

them to learn. Greek philosophers, including Aristotle, held the view that women were ignorant, unteachable, and distracting because of their sexuality.

But the Christian message burst on the scene in Greece with a radical new idea that was best summarized by Paul in Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, *there is neither male nor female*; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (emphasis added). Because of the gospel, women were truly liberated from the curse of subjugation that had resulted from the Fall. They were no longer to be viewed as sex objects or as ignorant inferiors or as the property of their fathers or husbands. Along with men, they were called to be disciples of Christ. They too were called to learn at the feet of Jesus.

Paul calls on women to learn the Scriptures “quietly” and “with entire submissiveness.” (See 1 Timothy 2:11–12.) They are also commanded to be “silent” in 1 Corinthians 14:34. Obviously, from what we know of the message of the entire Bible, this is not intended to be a universal command to keep women’s mouths shut at all times.

We must remember that all Christians—both males and females— are told in 1 Timothy 2:2 to lead “a tranquil and *quiet* life” (emphasis added). Does this mean men are supposed to refrain from speaking? Of course not.

Paul’s words about silence are simply calling for *teachableness* in his new female followers. Because women had not been trained to understand the Scriptures (in fact, they had been denied this opportunity!), he was calling them to embrace the discipline of learning the Word of God. In order to become faithful disciples in the true rabbinical tradition, they needed to approach the Scriptures with reverence and a submissive attitude. They could not be disciples if they were know-it-alls or if they opposed God’s Word or if they flippantly questioned it. Humility is the only posture a disciple can take if he or she expects to please the Master.

Paul was calling women to listen and to learn. He was not telling them to shut up and be invisible. He was inviting them to enroll in the seminary of the Holy Spirit and to become active followers of Christ. He was not commanding them to shut their mouths and fade into the background of the church. And if Paul was calling women to learn, then he fully expected them to teach and preach what they had been taught when the process of discipleship was complete.

Again, as we examine the passage in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 we must look to the whole of Scripture for its interpretation. We know from preceding chapters in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians that Paul permitted women both to pray and to prophesy publicly. Just a few verses prior to his statement about silence, in fact, he tells the Corinthians that “all” people in the assembly should desire to prophesy. (See 1 Corinthians 14:1.) He also says that “if *all* prophesy,” unbelievers in the assembly will come under spiritual conviction and be converted (vv. 24–25, emphasis added). Paul never limited the gift of prophecy to males.

Therefore he cannot be referring to this type of prophetic speech when he says, “It is improper for a woman to speak in church.” He is obviously referring to a type of speech that was creating problems in the church at Corinth. It had created such a disturbance, in fact, that the church’s leaders had sought Paul for his corrective advice about the problem.

The Greek word for “speak” in this passage is the present infinitive form, which can be translated “continually speaking up.” It implies a type of speech that was disruptive, annoying, or shameful. Most likely, there were women in this church who were continually interrupting

the teacher to ask questions or possibly to disrupt the meeting or usurp the speaker's authority. Although the Jewish rabbinical tradition allowed men in the assembly to ask questions during a teaching, and the New Testament church continued this practice for all believers, things had apparently gotten out of hand in Corinth.

The Secret to Interpreting 1 Corinthians 14

Actually there is another possible way to interpret this difficult passage about silencing women in 1 Corinthians 14. Many scholars of the New Testament who are familiar with the technicalities of the Greek language insist that part of this chapter is actually a quote taken from another source—a letter written to Paul by the leaders of the church in Corinth. This letter is referred to by Paul in chapter 7, when he mentions “the things about which you wrote” (v. 1). Most of the specific issues Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians, in fact, are topics that were included in that letter.

Paul's seemingly restrictive words about women in chapter 14 take on a different light when we consider that he was very likely quoting a letter from church leaders who were imposing on the young Corinthian congregation a harsh, anti-woman position that was rooted in their rabbinical Jewish traditions. Consider this portion of the passage below, with the quoted section set apart:

26 What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret;

28 but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.

29 And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.

30 But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent.

31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted;

32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;

33 for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

34 LET THE WOMEN KEEP SILENT IN THE CHURCHES; FOR THEY ARE NOT PERMITTED TO SPEAK, BUT LET THEM SUBJECT THEMSELVES, JUST AS THE LAW ALSO SAYS.

35 AND IF THEY DESIRE TO LEARN ANYTHING, LET THEM ASK THEIR OWN HUSBANDS AT HOME; FOR IT IS IMPROPER FOR A WOMAN TO SPEAK IN CHURCH.

36 Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?

37 If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.

38 But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

39 Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.

40 But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.

There are several reasons scholars believe that verses 34 and 35 of this passage are quotes from the letter Paul is answering. The most important clue is that the Greek symbol η (with a

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

grave accent) is used at the beginning of verse 36 to signal to the reader that the preceding statement is quoted. Because Greek does not have what we know as quotation marks, this device is used instead.

This would explain why verses 34 and 35 seem to contradict everything that Paul has said up to this point about the full participation of all believers in New Testament worship. The apostle has spent several chapters telling the Corinthians that all can “prophesy one by one” (v. 31). He even stated in 1 Corinthians 11:5 that women can pray and prophesy publicly. So why would he contradict himself in 14:35 by saying that women cannot speak in church?

It is also curious that verse 34 says women are not allowed to speak “just as the Law also says.” What law is this verse referring to? There is no law in the Old Testament that says women cannot speak. There is no reference to a Scripture given here. That’s because it is not referring to an Old Testament law but to a Jewish rabbinical tradition that the Corinthian church had adopted.

The harshness of the language in verse 35 gives us another clue that this “Law” is actually a man-made rule invented by the same type of legalistic Judaizers that Paul publicly opposed in the churches of Galatia and Colossae. The phrase, “It is improper for a woman to speak in church,” can actually be translated, “It is shameful for a woman to speak.”

Do we honestly believe this verse reflects the heart of God? Is this the view of the apostle Paul, who ordained women to serve with him in apostolic ministry? It cannot be. Paul is quoting those who held to a degrading view of women—and who actually described women in Jewish writings as vile and disgraceful.

And because Paul opposed this degrading view of women, he responds to the Corinthians in verse 36 with a sharp answer: “Was it from you that the word of God first went forth?” Another translation says, “What? Came the word of God out from you? Or came it unto you only?” (KJV).

This strange response makes no sense if we believe that Paul penned verses 34 and 35. But if he is contradicting the statements made by the Judaizers of Corinth, then we can understand the defiant tone of verse 36. To paraphrase the apostle, he is saying, “What! You are going to silence women when the gospel of Jesus was first preached by women after they saw Him at the tomb on Easter morning? Do you really think the gospel is only for men?”

This passage is one of the most misunderstood parts of the Bible. I believe the only way it can be logically interpreted is to accept the fact that Paul is responding to a quoted statement. This view was repeated by theologian Kenneth S. Kantzer in *Christianity Today*: “In 1 Corinthians 14 we are caught in an intricate interplay between quotations from a missing letter from the Corinthians and Paul’s solutions to problems the letter had raised. The verse is clearly not repeating a law of Scripture and cannot be taken as a universal command for women to be silent in church. That interpretation would flatly contradict what the apostle had just said three chapters earlier.”

How ironic that we have actually been using a statement written by a group of first-century legalists—men who wanted to burden the New Testament church with stifling Jewish rules and traditions—to shackle Christian women who are called to liberty in the Holy Spirit. Whom do

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

we want to follow: the apostle Paul, who invited women to preach, pray, and prophesy in the assembly, or the legalists, who believed that it was “obscene” for women to speak in public?

This verse, so often used to put a bit and bridle in the mouths of godly Christian women, was never intended to keep females from teaching the Bible, proclaiming the gospel, or aggressively sharing their faith. How ridiculous! Didn't the Holy Spirit fall on all the believers on the Day of Pentecost? On that day, weren't the women as well as the men empowered to be witnesses of His resurrection? Didn't Peter remind them of the prophet Joel's prediction that “your sons and your daughters will prophesy” (Acts 2:17)? Weren't all Jesus' followers—male and female—commanded to go into all the world to make disciples and to teach all nations? (See Matthew 28:19–20.)

We have overlooked the obvious message of the Bible and then taken one obscure passage from Paul's writings and twisted it to keep women in a place of subjugation and insignificance. I'm sure the devil has laughed in delight at the way we have actually helped him silence the spreading of the gospel! By telling women that it is virtuous for them to sit in the back of the church with their mouths closed, we have kept them off the mission field.

Thankfully, women through the centuries who had the fire of God burning in their hearts did not listen to the naysayers who told them they should be quiet. What would have happened if the great missionary Amy Carmichael had been content to stay in her comfortable home in England because of the misguided belief that women are not supposed to speak for God? Because Amy obeyed and preached with fervor, thousands in India found salvation through her Dohnavur Fellowship, and scores of young Indian girls were pulled out of the evil system of Hindu temple prostitution.

What would have happened if Southern Baptist missionary Bertha Smith had adhered to her own denomination's restrictive policies about women in ministry? Because this brave missionary pioneer knew she could not keep silent about her faith, she took it to China and sparked a revival that is still felt there fifty years later.

What if healing evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson had swallowed the lie that says that women should not speak in church? She never would have blazed a trail across the United States in the 1920s with her Pentecostal message, and she never would have started the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, a denomination with a constituency of more than 5 million, more than 38,000 churches, and 49,000 ministers throughout 141 countries in 2005.

What if the great Bible teacher Henrietta Mears of Hollywood Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles had assumed that the apostle Paul's words in 1 Timothy 2:12 forbade her from teaching men? She never would have led a Bible study with a young man named Bill Bright, who went on to establish Campus Crusade for Christ and lead an estimated 147 million people to Jesus.

What would the world be like if The Salvation Army founder Catherine Booth, healing evangelist Kathryn Kuhlman, or Bible teacher Corrie ten Boom had kept their mouths shut when the Spirit of God was prompting them to shout their messages from the housetops? May God forgive us for quenching the Spirit when we have told our sisters they cannot obey His call.

Chapter 3
Questions for Discussion

1. Describe a time when you or someone you know was denied a ministry opportunity simply because she was a woman.
2. Explain why 1 Timothy 2:12 cannot be interpreted literally, without considering the cultural context.
3. Explain why the apostle Paul had to bring correction to the church in Ephesus by asking certain women to stop teaching there.
4. Why did Paul ask the women to be “silent” in the church at Corinth? (See 1 Corinthians 14:34–35.)
5. Explain why it was a radically new concept in the first century for Paul to ask women to learn with a submissive attitude.
6. Some theologians believe 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 is a quote from a letter written to Paul. If this is true, how does this change the meaning of the passage?

The woman is subject to the man, on account of the weakness of her nature, both of mind and of body. Man is the beginning of woman and her end, just as God is the beginning and end of every creature. Woman is in subjection according to the law of nature, but a slave is not. Children ought to love their father more than their mother.

—THIRTEENTH-CENTURY THEOLOGIAN THOMAS AQUINAS

[Short hair] is the symbol of the wicked fashion of rebellion of wives to their husbands' authority or of wicked daughters who rebel against their fathers. Men wear short hair as a sign that they take their responsibilities as made in the image of God and as rulers over their households. Women are to wear long hair as symbols of their submission to husband and father, taking their place with meekness as women surrendered to the will of God and subject to the authority God places over them.

—FUNDAMENTALIST EVANGELIST JOHN R. RICE

Even the single woman is not to make any decision without a male head.

—LETHA SCANZONI

AUTHOR OF THE 1974 BOOK *All We're Meant to Be*²¹

²¹ Grady, J. L. (2013). [*Ten lies the church tells women: how the bible has been misused to keep women in spiritual bondage*](#). Charisma House.

Lie #10 A MAN SHOULD NEVER RECEIVE SPIRITUAL MINISTRY FROM A WOMAN.

PROMINENT BIBLE TEACHER Anne Graham Lotz commands respect. It's obvious when she preaches that she is the daughter of evangelist Billy Graham. Many people believe she carries her father's spiritual mantle.

But back in the 1980s, Lotz did not get the respect due her when she spoke at a conference sponsored by her denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention. When it came time for her to preach, she approached the platform and opened her Bible. Then a loud commotion began in the front of the auditorium. Lotz looked down to see that several rows of men, all dressed in dark suits, were quickly turning their chairs around.⁵

Within a few minutes it became obvious what was happening. These men, all pastors, had turned their backs to this woman to protest her inclusion in the conference schedule. They were making a bold statement, albeit a rude one. In their view, it is wrong for women to teach the Bible to men, so in their flamboyantly discourteous manner they refused to face her as she spoke. They wouldn't allow themselves to hear this woman preacher's voice, even though she was Billy Graham's daughter and even though she had something profoundly spiritual to say; to them, this was just as dangerous as listening to the mythological Sirens, who lured ancient Greek sailors to their deaths on the rocky Mediterranean coast.

I heard Lotz speak at First Baptist Church in Orlando, Florida, a few years ago. The auditorium was packed with mostly male ministers and a few of their wives. Her sermon, delivered in her trademark North Carolina drawl, made me feel welcome. Her delivery style and cadence were eerily similar to her famous father's, yet she delivered it in a totally feminine manner. She called the people in the congregation that evening to repentance and a deeper relationship with Christ. When the service was over, most people would have agreed, I am sure, that Lotz had outreached most of the men who had stood in that same podium that week.

I was just grateful that no preachers staged a protest outside or stood up in the meeting and turned their chairs backward to protest the fact that a woman was speaking. Yet listening to Lotz reminded me that many women who are gifted speakers, teachers, and spiritual leaders don't have her famous name to open doors for them. Because of religious traditions and narrow and erroneous interpretations of Scripture, many men have developed the view that they can never receive anything spiritual from a woman.

WE NEED FATHERS AND MOTHERS

We all know it takes a man and a woman to create a baby. And family counselors will agree that children are best developed in a loving home that has both a mother and a father. While single parents can certainly find special grace from God to lead their families alone, God's original design has always been a two-parent family that is led by a male and a female.

Most conservative Christians would wholeheartedly agree with this arrangement, yet in their churches you will often find a strong bias against women having any public influence. Because these churches emphasize two passages of Scriptures in the New Testament that appear on the surface to limit women's ministry (1 Tim. 2:12 and 1 Cor. 14:34–35), they throw out the many other Scriptures that empower women. Then they build a rigid doctrine that forbids women to preach the gospel, lead ministries, or teach in churches.

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

As a result, they create a rather strange dichotomy. While they praise mothers in the natural, they leave no room for spiritual mothers in the church. They honor mothers for having babies and for fulfilling their wifely duties, but they ignore women who are gifted to bring souls into the kingdom of God.

I always found this concept odd, because God used women in my life from a young age. I came to faith as a child partly through the influence of Sunday school teachers. When I was eighteen, a woman who taught my Sunday morning college class led me into a deeper Christian experience. When I was in college, I listened to recorded teachings by a woman named Joy Dawson, a New Zealander who helped establish the Youth With A Mission organization. And when I got married and had a family, a Pentecostal preacher named Barbara James prayed for me, encouraged me, and opened ministry doors for me. She became like a spiritual mother. I still treasure her in that role today.

The Book of Proverbs touches on this vital truth. Solomon tells his son in Proverbs 1:8–9:

Hear, my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching;
indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head and ornaments about your neck.

Notice that the teaching of both father and mother are praised. They are compared to a wreath, which symbolizes victory, as well as expensive ornaments, which can denote godly character. Our parents' training shapes us—for good or for bad. If they instill Christian virtues and moral values in us at an early age, we will be victorious in life as adults, and we will wear the priceless gold ornaments of honesty, purity, patience, integrity, faithfulness, and compassion. You can't buy ornaments like that; they are forged only through the fires of discipline.

Paul the apostle was very aware of the godly influence a Christian mother can make on her son. Paul wrote to his beloved disciple Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:5:

For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your
grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.

Bible scholars don't know much about Timothy's upbringing, but they assume that his Gentile father was not a Christian. We don't know if Timothy grew up in a single-parent family or if his father provided any positive influence for him. What we do know is that Paul praised his mother's and grandmother's faith and credited them with leading Timothy to Christ. And we know that Paul cared for Timothy as if he were his own son (Phil. 2:22). Apparently Paul was able to fill any void Timothy suffered from the lack of a godly father.

I find it fascinating that Paul praises Lois and Eunice for their input into Timothy's life, and that his commendation was memorialized in the Bible. He specifically praises them for instilling biblical faith in the young man, who eventually became an apostolic leader in the early church. Many conservative Christians have assumed that because Paul once clamped down on a group of women in the church at Ephesus and forbid them to teach, Paul never allowed women access to the pulpit. Yet if we look at the women who served with Paul in gospel ministry, it is obvious that he empowered women and invited them to be a part of his team.

Let's consider the women who are specifically mentioned in the New Testament. (This section is adapted from my book *25 Tough Questions About Women and the Church* [Charisma House, 2003].)

1. Priscilla

A skilled teacher who had been trained by Paul himself, Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, traveled throughout the Roman world strengthening newly established churches. The Bible often mentions her name before Aquila's, most likely because she had more of a visible teaching ministry. Some scholars believe that because she was Roman, she had more access to education than Jewish women in Palestine.

In Acts 18:18–21, we see Priscilla and Aquila instructing the man Apollos, who later became a powerful apostle in the early church. Apollos did not fully understand the message of the gospel, so Priscilla and her husband adjusted his theology and reshaped his message. She emerges as one of the true spiritual mothers of the early church period, and Paul was proud to call her a “fellow worker” in Romans 16:3.

2. Phoebe

Phoebe is referred to as a deacon in Romans 16:1–2. The passage says, “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant [*diakonos*] of the church which is at Cenchrea” (v. 1). The word *diakonos* is always translated “minister” or “deacon” when applied to men, but the word is curiously translated in this verse as “servant” in the New American Standard Bible and other versions. This could be because Bible translators injected their own biases into the text. They simply assumed deacons could not be women.

In Romans 16:2, Paul refers to Phoebe as a *prostatis*, which can be translated “presiding officer.” The term definitely carries with it a significant weight of authority, so we can conclude that Phoebe was not just teaching a women's Bible study class or setting up a vacation Bible school for kids. She was an apostolic envoy for Paul, and she had been sent to carry out his directives. Paul expected the church to listen to her. Bible scholar Catherine Kroeger notes that *prostatis* is often used in the writings of the early church fathers to denote a person who presided over communion.⁶

3. Nympha

Nympha is mentioned by Paul in Colossians 4:15. He asked the leaders of the Colossian church to “greet ... Nympha and the church that is in her house.” Traditionalists have argued that this woman was simply “hosting” the church meeting while men carried out all pastoral and teaching ministry, but then this begs the question: Why did Paul mention her rather than the male leaders who were presumably in charge? Was she just a hostess, making the tea and cookies for Paul and his team? Was Paul simply fond of Nympha because she knew how to cook his favorite meal? It is more probable that she had been designated to lead the church that met in her home.

However, if we suggest that Nympha was a pastor, we trigger a divisive debate, since some Christians believe the Bible totally limits this office to men. But does it? In Ephesians 4:11, where Paul explains that Jesus gave pastors, teachers, evangelists, apostles, and prophets to the church for its edification, he makes no rules about gender. The “no women pastors” rule—so common in many denominations today—is a religious tradition, not a biblical mandate.

4. Lydia

An influential, first-century businesswoman, Lydia became the first European convert to Christianity. Because she was wealthy and politically connected, it is most likely that she played

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

a role in securing Paul's release from the Philippian magistrates. (In Acts 16:40 we learn that upon his release from jail, Paul returned to Lydia's house and demanded a trial.) Some scholars suggest that Lydia's story is included in the Book of Acts because she eventually pastored a church in her home and became a strategic member of Paul's apostolic team as he pushed the gospel westward, past Italy and all the way to Spain.

5. Junia

Junia was obviously a respected leader in the New Testament church. Up until the thirteenth century, no one questioned the name of this woman mentioned in Romans 16:7. Junia was a common name for a Roman woman at that time. However, Bible translators later began changing her name to a masculine form, "Junias" or "Junianus," because they could not accept the possibility that Paul would affirm a woman as an apostle. Actually, he says she is "outstanding among the apostles."

The original Greek manuscripts list her name correctly, and we don't need to adjust the spelling to fit our chauvinism. Paul singled this woman out because of her apostolic courage and for the fact that she suffered for her faith in prison alongside Paul. We don't have a record of her ministry accomplishments, but we can assume that she was involved in preaching and church planting.

Even early church father John Chrysostom (a.d. 347–407), who was by no means sympathetic to women, acknowledged that Junia held a powerful position in the New Testament church. He wrote in his commentary on Romans, "Indeed to be an apostle at all is a great thing; but to be even amongst those of note: Just consider what a great encomium that is. Oh, how great is the devotion of this woman, that she should be counted worthy of the appellation of Apostle."⁷

6. Euodia and Syntyche

Euodia and Syntyche were two women ministers mentioned by Paul in Philippians 4:2–3. He refers to them as "fellow workers" "who have shared my struggle" (v. 3). It is possible that they had been imprisoned with him in a crude Greek jailhouse, or perhaps they endured a difficult journey with Paul through Aegean waters. Whatever the case, they were definitely not just female members of the church at Philippi. They were leaders, and they were having a serious disagreement—so serious that Paul had to urge them to "live in harmony in the Lord" (v. 2).

We don't know why these women didn't get along. Perhaps their disagreement was over methodology or a minor point of doctrine, or perhaps they allowed jealousy or personal ambition to drive a wedge between them. We will never know what caused the tension between these two women, but we do know that Paul did not scold them because of their gender. He didn't say, "Tell those women that they don't have any business in the ministry. Women are too petty and emotional to be pastors." If Paul did not support women in such roles he would never have commended them as ministry colleagues.

We should also remember that in the old covenant, when God limited the Hebrew priesthood to an elite group of males who were descendants of Aaron, women emerged as powerful instruments in God's hand. Yet even in that dispensation He chose to use women. When God called Abram to be the father of the Jewish nation and changed his name to Abraham, He also called his wife and changed her name from Sarai to Sarah; she became a

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

“mother of many nations.” When He called Moses to lead the people of Israel through the wilderness, he also called his sister, Miriam, to a leadership position (Micah 6:4).

The prophet Deborah was single-handedly responsible for rallying the tribes of Israel to volunteer for battle against the Canaanites (Judg. 4), and her bravery spurred the Israelite army to an impressive, supernatural victory. Then a young Jewish woman named Jael put the exclamation point on the story by killing Sisera, the fugitive leader of the Canaanite army. When he came to Jael’s tent looking for asylum, she put him to sleep and then nailed a tent peg into his skull with a hammer. The Bible makes it clear that Deborah’s courage and Jael’s cunning were strategic in securing Israel’s military triumph. The women were given their proper credit even in a male-dominant culture.

Hannah was another influential spiritual mother during Old Testament times. Although she was barren, she asked God for a son so that he could grow up to be a prophet. She was concerned about the welfare of her nation, and she wanted a true prophet to confront the compromise and wickedness in Israel. When she went to the temple to pray, Eli, the priest in charge, ridiculed her for praying so passionately. He was clueless about what God was doing in Hannah, but God listened to her prayer. Her burden was rewarded when God gave her a promised son, Samuel, who ended up confronting Eli and the backslidden sons he had put in charge of God’s house. And in the end, Hannah’s prayer of victory became part of the Bible.

Another revered spiritual mother in the Old Testament is the prophet Huldah, who lived at the time of Jeremiah and offered counsel to King Josiah. At the time when she operated a small seminary in Jerusalem, most Israelites had turned away from God and turned to foreign idols. Few people remembered the Law of God anymore; in fact, copies of the Old Testament scrolls had been packed away in a storage closet in the temple. When some of King Josiah’s deputies stumbled upon a copy of the Book of Deuteronomy and read about God’s impending judgments, the king asked them to find someone in the city who understood spiritual things.

A priest named Hilkiah directed them to Huldah. She must have been the most spiritual person in Jerusalem at the time and the most aware of the true condition of the nation. We don’t know that much about Huldah other than the fact that she was the keeper of the priestly wardrobe (2 Kings 22:14). She was probably not a wealthy woman. God’s true prophets often tend to emerge from obscurity and then disappear just as fast.

But we do know that Huldah knew God. While the rest of the nation had been turning to idols, she had kept herself pure. While the rest of the nation had forgotten the Word of God, she was still studying it. She was no stranger to the forgotten book. Like any true mother, she was protective of Israel—but she was not afraid to rebuke the nation for its waywardness. When King Josiah’s representative came to her seeking spiritual direction, she offered no flattery. She declared this prophetic message from God with authority:

Because they have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore My wrath burns against this place, and it shall not be quenched.

—2 KINGS 22:17

God blessed Huldah and mightily used her to speak to the king of the nation and to the religious leaders of her day. He also pulled women from total obscurity, such as Ruth and

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

Esther, and rewarded their faithfulness; these two women even have books of the Bible named after them! And this was during the old covenant period, before Christ ushered in a new day of freedom for women.

We as men must acknowledge that God not only uses women in exceptional ways but also that we can personally benefit from their ministry. Some men are like the hard-hearted Eli, who mocked Hannah's righteous prayers and called her a drunkard. These men think they are spiritually superior to women. Like the disrespectful preachers who turned their backs on Billy Graham's daughter, they would never listen to women preach because they don't think they have anything worthwhile to say.

Other men are like the warrior Barak, who lived at the time of the prophet Deborah. She called Barak to summon an army and go up against the enemy, and he agreed on one condition: he said he would not go unless Deborah went with him to the battlefield (Judg. 4:8).

Barak did not say this because he was a wimpy momma's boy. I am sure he was a strong soldier endowed with plenty of military prowess. But he recognized that Deborah was God's appointed prophet for that time, and he knew Israel would not win the battle unless she was there to command the victory in the spiritual realm.

Barak was not a coward. His request to have Deborah nearby was not a sign of weakness. In fact, he is listed in the Book of Hebrews as a true hero of faith (Heb. 11:32). But he realized that muscles, swords, and chariots alone could not win this battle. His trust had to be in God alone. And Deborah helped him muster enough faith to believe.

I don't know about you, but I need women like that in my life. (That is why I am so blessed that my wife's name is Deborah.) I am not too proud to listen to a woman of God who has wise counsel from the Holy Spirit for me; in fact, I seek such counsel from my wife and from my spiritual mothers (as well as my spiritual fathers). Many Christian men make foolish mistakes because they don't listen to their wives when they sense danger around the corner. And many Christian men miss great blessings because they are too proud to listen to godly women who carry a message from the Lord. I pray you will not make that mistake.

Let's Talk About It

1. Do you believe the Bible limits the ways women can minister? If you were in a service with a woman preacher, would you turn your back to her like the men who protested Billy Graham's daughter? How would you respond?
 2. Paul praised Timothy's grandmother and mother, Lois and Eunice, for instilling faith in the young man. Do you have any spiritual mothers in your life? How did they influence you positively?
 3. Name some women in the New Testament who worked alongside Paul in the ministry. How did Paul treat these women?
 4. Barak listened to the prophet Deborah and was blessed with a supernatural victory on the battlefield. Can you think of a time when you benefitted from the counsel of a godly woman?
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WHAT ABOUT PAUL'S RESTRICTIONS ON WOMEN?

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

Many Christian leaders I know can quickly offer the names of several spiritual mothers who either led them to Christ or played a significant role in their spiritual formation. The influence of these women did not turn these men into sissies or lower their testosterone levels. You don't give up your masculinity when you listen to a godly woman. Most likely you will become a better man!

Hudson Taylor, a brave missionary pioneer who helped open up China to the gospel in the mid-1800s, said his mother and sister led him to the point of conversion. Billy Graham, one of the greatest evangelists of all time, and Bill Bright, the founder of the Campus Crusade for Christ movement, were both strongly influenced as teenagers by the stalwart Presbyterian Bible teacher Henrietta Mears, who led training conferences for youth in California in the 1940s.

When I first visited Nigeria in 2001, I interviewed Bishop David Oyedepo, whose Pentecostal church near Lagos, Winner's Chapel, was at that time the world's largest church building, with fifty thousand seats. When I asked him to share his testimony, he proudly shared that a white missionary woman from the Scripture Union organization led him to Jesus. (I am sure that woman did not live to see how her young convert would transform Nigeria.)

I hear this story frequently. In spite of the obstacles of male pride and stale religious tradition, God has been using His women, strategically placed, to win men to Christ, disciple them, teach them, counsel them, and inspire them.

But there is one problem. What do we do with Paul's instructions in 1 Timothy 2:12, in which he hands down a strict policy about women? If we read this passage by itself, without comparing it to other scriptures, it seems to contradict what the Bible says elsewhere. The passage reads this way in the King James Version:

But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

This is a curious passage indeed, and one that has puzzled many Bible scholars. It is confusing for several reasons:

- It seems to contradict how women have been used to speak for God in the Old Testament (as in the cases of Deborah and Huldah, for example).
- It does not seem to fit Paul's own practice, since he had women teachers (such as Priscilla) on his ministry team.
- In 1 Corinthians 11:5, Paul encourages women to pray and prophesy publicly in the local church meeting, and he invites the equal participation of all Christian believers in the exercising of spiritual gifts such as prophecy and the word of knowledge (1 Cor. 12:7–11).

So what is Paul saying in the 1 Timothy passage? If we take it at face value rather than compare it with other passages, we could conclude that women can never teach anyone, even small children. Some Christian denominations that limit women use this verse to restrict any form of "authoritative speech" that comes from women.

If this were the case, this would certainly rule out Huldah's prophecy to King Josiah. And it would also shut down Deborah's public ministry, since she went around to all the tribes of Israel and called them to battle. And what about the words of Deborah that are included in the canon of Scripture in Judges 4? Aren't her prophetic words "authoritative"? Traditionalists who

believe Paul never allowed a woman to speak or hold positions of authority in a church are forced to play games with these passages of Scripture. This is why you will rarely hear one of these people preach a sermon about Deborah or Huldah.

But what do we do with Paul's words to Timothy? Here are two possible explanations why he had to "clamp down" on these women.

Possible scenario #1: The women in Ephesus needed more instruction.

Paul actually precedes his admonition in 1 Timothy 2:12 with his instruction in verse 11 (KJV):

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

That probably sounds sexist today, but let's remember that in the culture of first-century Asia Minor, women had been denied all schooling. Except for some wealthier Roman women, females in the Middle East were sequestered at home and kept away from books and learning. Illiteracy was the rule among women. The only thing men wanted them to learn was how to cook, tend to farm animals, and raise children.

Rabbis in this time period, in fact, believed it was blasphemous to teach a woman from the Torah. Jesus, of course, contradicted this view by inviting His women followers to sit at His feet and learn from Him. And here in 1 Timothy, Paul adopts Jesus's approach by encouraging the women to learn. Yet he calls them to learn in the proper way—not as know-it-alls but with a teachable spirit.

It is possible that the newly converted women in Ephesus were jumping the gun and trying to teach the gospel when they had not learned it first. We all know that would be disastrous. If such a free-for-all spirit had continued, Paul would have had to put his foot down and say, "Enough is enough. Women aren't allowed to teach until they know what they're talking about."

Notice that Paul also mentions the deception of Eve in the Garden of Eden. Perhaps he is reminding these misguided Ephesian women that they have a lot to learn from Eve. Because she acted independently of Adam when listening to the serpent, her failure triggered a crisis. Eve was not prepared to be a teacher, but she acted like one.

The question remains, Was Paul laying down a permanent rule for all time that forbids all women from teaching and exercising godly authority? Or was he issuing a correction that only applied to this situation? Since we know that Paul authorized other women like Priscilla to teach the Bible, we must conclude that his words were to correct the situation at hand. After all, if Paul called the women of Ephesus to learn "in all submissiveness" the Word of God, then surely he expected them to become mature disciples who would eventually have the ability to teach others after sufficient training.

Possible scenario #2: The church in Ephesus was disturbed by false teachers, and some of them were female.

Ephesus was a seat of paganism and was overrun by idolatry and heresies of every imaginable variety. It was a city full of cultism, Gnostic sects, and bizarre sexual practices. Archeology has proven that it was a headquarters for the worship of Artemis, a mystic religion involving moon worship and ritual prostitution. Timothy had quite a challenging assignment when he was sent to plant a church in this wicked city.

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

One theory of 1 Timothy 2:11–14 suggests that false teachers had infiltrated the infant church in Ephesus and were leading people astray with myths and false teachings. They were teaching such notions as (1) women are superior to men, (2) Eve was created before Adam and was a type of “mother goddess,” (3) women don’t need to get married or have children, and (4) Eve actually “liberated” the world from God’s power when she listened to the serpent in the Garden of Eden. (Sounds a lot like the modern variety of militant feminism.) These false teachers were turning the Bible upside down and twisting the truth.

This would explain why Paul stepped in and put an end to this foolishness. He clamped down on the false doctrines and forbid these women from teaching their heresies. He also set the record straight about Eve by explaining that Adam was created first and that the woman fell into deception when she listened to the serpent. Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:13–14 (KJV):

For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

We also must note that 1 Timothy 2:12 does not say women cannot have authority (even though some Bible versions translate it this way). The King James Version says the women are not to “usurp” authority. The Greek word for “usurp” is *authentein*, and it is only used this once in the New Testament—leading us to believe it has a very narrow definition. It is a very violent word that means “to dominate” or even “to murder.” It implies an attempt to overthrow established authority. It can even refer to ritual castration.⁸

Whatever was going on in Ephesus, we can be certain that it fit the category of blasphemy. The teachings of these women contradicted the Bible, twisted the order of creation, and redefined and overthrew traditional sex roles—an obvious goal of the worshipers of Artemis, who promoted sexual perversion. Certainly we should never allow such false doctrines to be proclaimed from our pulpits today.

However, we cannot use the passage in 1 Timothy 2:12 to suggest that trained, Spirit-empowered women cannot teach the Scriptures with authority. Nor can we say that women who have been graced with Spirit-endued gifts of leadership, pastoral anointing, or teaching ability must limit their teaching to women only. Men who receive instruction from such women will not be emasculated; on the contrary, they will grow stronger in Christ.

I believe it is time for godly male leaders in the church to become secure enough in their manhood to give these women a platform.

Let’s Talk About It

1. The issue of women leaders seems very divisive. Why do you think it is that way?
2. Read 1 Timothy 2:11–15. How have you interpreted this verse in the past?
3. Some scholars believe the women in Ephesus had been denied education and were not ready to become teachers. Do you feel this is a possible interpretation?
4. Other scholars believe some female false teachers had infiltrated the Ephesian church. How would you handle that situation if you were in Paul’s shoes?
5. How should you treat women who have been anointed by God and trained to be in the ministry?

Summer of Lies

LIE 3: Women are not created to be leaders.

Let's Pray About It

Father, thank You for the godly women You have put in my life. Forgive me if I have ever criticized a woman of God who was called by You, just because she was female. Forgive me for having a chauvinistic attitude toward my sisters in Christ. Give me the attitude of the apostle Paul, who commended the women on his team. Give me the heart of Jesus, who sent His women followers to be the first witnesses of His resurrection. Make me a champion for women! Amen.²²

²² Grady, L. (2011). [*10 lies men believe: the truth about women, power, sex and god—and why it matters*](#). Charisma House.