

The Missing Quadrant

A Treatise on Women In Ministry

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August 8, 2018



With the onset of discussion surrounding what women can and should be able to do in the

church, it occurs to me that the problem may not necessarily be because the ladies are seeking a higher position (although there is no higher position in God's work than “mother”), but the problem may actually fall within the structure of the church itself. The scriptures recognize only two official church offices: the elder/bishop and the deacon. With respect to the office of elder/bishop, there is no difference in basic *duties* between the “elder” and the “bishop”, except, perhaps, relating to magnitude or coverage, the work of the bishop possibly covering more than one church; for both titles represent people who oversee the spiritual (and temporal) welfare of the church(es). Neither is there any difference in the *criteria* for *doing* the work or for being *set aside* for this work. The offices of elder/bishop and deacon are both established by God for men only, following the injunction that man was created first and, therefore, *represents* the women in his life; and therefore, the same principle applies to women in the church. Eve was created out of Adam's rib and he named her, thus showing his supervisory (not to be confused with “superiority”) function with respect to his wife. This relationship was established by God *before* sin entered the world.

It seems obvious to me that churches of any size cannot possibly run effectively with these two male offices only. Even though God chose to establish these two offices Himself, I cannot perceive any church of any size being able to function without other offices, such as, and including, treasurer, church clerk, music director (sometimes called “minister of music”), and others, some of which are discussed

below. Apparently, God is allowing His churches to establish other offices to meet the needs of each individual church, through His guidance.

God has a special work for women in His church. The fact that He does not specify any specific office for the ladies does not negate from her work at home or from her work or office in ministry, but allows His church more flexibility in the church's ability to assign ministerial functions for women to meet the specific needs of the individual churches. The office of “deaconess” for women has had quite a history dating back possibly to New Testament times. Romans 16:1-2 *suggests* that Phoebe may have been a deaconess (Greek: *diakonon*) supervising (Greek: *prostatis*) “many” in her church at Cenchrea. In some churches the office of deaconess was considered an office of “ordination”¹ and in some denominations was considered a clerical position (clergy), but this is without scriptural support for either activity/designation. With respect to Phoebe's position, if it did exist in an *official* capacity, it would have been set up by a specific church rather than established by scripture, for the closest possible reference in scripture I find is the reference to “women” in 1st Timothy 3:11, which, in the context of deacons, would seem to suggest their wives were also expected to help, but would not necessarily seem to refer to the wives of deacons *only*.

These three positions in the church can be charted as below. Please note the missing quadrant:

Church Offices	Men	Women
Spiritual Duties	Elder\Bishop (Overseer, Apostle, Minister, Pastor, Priest, Chaplain, Parson, “Clergy” ²)	
Temporal Duties	Deacon (“waiter”)	Deaconess (“waitress”)

Because there are specific needs of women, especially for mothers and families, needs that the gentlemen find awkward to impossible to perform, I recommend that our churches establish the position of “Bible Worker/Mother in Israel”, with functions and criteria as outlined below. I believe such an office

1 The word “ordain” is a loaded term. In its simple definition, it is “to set aside to establish or order by appointment, decree, or law” [Merriam-Webster], but different churches have added their own embellishments to the term to fit their specific needs. According to this simple definition, the term “ordination” does not require “laying on of hands”, although God uses either of two methods (anointing with oil and laying on of hands) to set aside officials in His church.

2 I would have a difficult time applying the term “Clergy” to elders who also carry secular responsibilities in other fields such as a secular job or business. It seems as if clergy should be full time in the ministry (or retired from such) with secular activities being no more than a hobby. Though Paul was a “tent maker”, I suspect he only used it as a hobby, as he was virtually a nomad.

for our ladies will greatly enhance the work of the church as we enter into the final stages of earth's history as we know it.

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labor, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work. Place the burdens upon men and women of the church, that they may grow by reason of the exercise, and thus become effective agents in the hand of the Lord for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness. {RH, July 9, 1895 par. 8}

The *functions* of these positions can be charted as follows:

Functions	Men	Women
Spiritual Duties	<p>Elder/Bishop Lead (oversee) the church: 1st Tim 5:17; Tit 1:7; 1st Pet 5:1-2.</p> <p>Judge doctrinal issues: Acts 15:1-6</p> <p>Protect the church from false teachers: Acts 20:17, 28-31; Tit 1:9-13.</p> <p>Teach and preach: 1st Tim 3:2; 2nd Tim 4:2; Tit 1:9; Acts 6:2-4.</p> <p>Exhort and admonish in sound doctrine: 1st Tim 4:13; 2nd Tim 3:13-17; Tit 1:8.</p> <p>Visit the sick and pray: James 5:14; Acts 20:35.</p>	<p>Bible Worker/Mother in Israel³ This office represents a limited female counterpart to the elder, rather especially working with the ladies and families. It carries the exceptions of not having to lead the church, judge doctrinal issues, or protect the church from false teachers; these functions being particularly applicable to overseers. (See RH, July 9, 1895 par. 8)</p> <p>Specific duties can include: Supervise the deaconesses. Visit and care for the sick. Look after the young. Minister to the poor. Read and explain the scriptures. Pray with the families. Teach health and dress reform. Advisory board to the board of elders.</p> <p>Other teaching (Sabbath School, for example) and preaching can be done if it does not usurp the authority of the men. 1st Tim. 2:12.</p> <p>In this work, when done through the power of the Holy Spirit, the ladies can have power that exceeds that of the men.⁴</p>
Temporal Duties	<p>Deacon (Acts 6:1-6) Feeding the less fortunate. Grounds and plant management Distribution of goods. Helping with the widows. Assisting the elders with the communion service.</p>	<p>Deaconess Female counterpart to the deacon, but working with the ladies. Assisting the Bible Workers. Preparing the table and elements for the communion service. Care for the baptismal and choir robes, as</p>

3 Note: I recommend that this office be added to our official offices in our churches. "Mother in Israel" is a term the prophetess Deborah applied to herself in Judges 5:7. It should be noted here that Deborah was temporarily an *acting* judge when Barak abdicated his responsibilities to her. She did her work from the palm tree, rather than from the gate (government offices of the day).

4 "The Lord has a work for women, as well as for men. They may take their places in his work at this crisis, and He will work through them. If they are imbued with a sense of their duty, and labor under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they will have just the self-possession required for this time. The Saviour will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of his countenance, and will give them a power that exceeds that of men. They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach. Their labor is needed." {RH, August 26, 1902 par. 5}

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Criteria for appointment:

Criteria	Men	Women
Spiritual Duties	Elder/Bishop (1 st Tim 3:2-7; Tit 1:5-14) Laying on of hands (ordination) ⁵ Husband of one wife ⁶ Obedient children Good reputation in the community Not a novice Blameless (vigilant, sober, good behavior, hospitable, apt to teach, not greedy)	Bible Worker/Mother in Israel Laying on of hands (ordination) ⁷ Modesty in dress and deportment Meekness, purity Not a novice Blameless (vigilant, sober, good behavior, hospitable, apt to teach, not greedy, aid to husband if married)
Temporal Duties	Deacon (1 st Timothy 3:8-13) Laying on of hands (ordination) ⁸ Husband of one wife Obedient children Blameless (vigilant, sober, good behavior, hospitable, not greedy —wives the same way)	Deaconess No specific method of ordination Modesty in dress and deportment Meekness, purity Blameless (vigilant, sober, good behavior, hospitable, not greedy, aid to husband if married)

⁵ Titus 1:5.

⁶ In the Greek: μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα (*mias gynaikos andra*), or literally in the English: “one woman man”.

⁷ RH, July 9, 1895 par. 8.

⁸ Acts 6:3.