



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH LAUREL, MARYLAND

The role of women in the ministry of FBCL

Preamble: The following statement has been written and approved by the Elders of First Baptist church of Laurel, MD and is both supported and taught in the pulpit ministry.

The Introduction:

Foundational to this position paper in the ministry of FBCL is the understanding and agreement upon the truth that the Bible is God's inspired and authoritative Word in our lives. The church affirms this essential belief that the Bible is "The supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried (BFM, 2000)" (Ps 19:7-11; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21).

We believe the Bible teaches that God created two complimentary sexes of humans: male and female (Gen 1:27). We believe that both men and women are created equal in the image of God (Gen 1:26-28; Matt 19:4; Mark 10:6). The differentiation in gender is unique and chosen by God for each person. We affirm that men and women are equal in essence, dignity, and value as they both are created in the image of God for the glory of God (Isa 43:7; Ps 139:13-6).

While men and women are equal in value, we find from the beginning of Scripture that God intended for men and women to have different yet complimentary roles and responsibilities within the church and the home. We reject any notion of cultural bias as we believe God has providentially instituted such roles. We look to Scripture to inform our definitions of masculinity and femininity. We acknowledge these differences as God's grace toward men and women and they are for His glory and for human flourishing (Gen 2:18-25; 1 Cor 14:33-35; Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:8-15; 1 Pet 3:1-7).

The Women of Scripture:

Let us look at the various women in Scripture and roles they fulfilled. We must also note that culturally speaking, women were oppressed during the historical period

in which the Bible was written. The plethora of examples of women in ministry ought to be an encouragement to all. Lastly, we must acknowledge that all Christians, both men and women, are charged to take forth the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20). Disciple-making is a command given to all who profess Christ as Lord. We are all ministers of the gospel.

- Jesus welcomed women and taught them (Luke 10:39)
- Women were financial supporters of Jesus' ministry (Luke 8:1-3)
- Older women should teach young women (Titus 2:3-5)
- Phoebe was a patron and deacon of the church of Cenchreae (Rom 16:1-2)
- Euodia and Syntyche contended for the gospel alongside Paul (Phil 4:3)
- Priscilla "explained the way of God" to Apollos (Acts 18:26)
- Deborah was a judge and a prophetess (Judg 4:4)
- Deborah's song was given publicly to Israel (Judg 5)
- Miriam was a prophetess and led public worship (Exod 15:20-21)
- Women prophesied publicly in the New Testament (Acts 2:17-18; 1 Cor 11:5, 14:26)
- Both men and women learned from women prophesying (1 Cor 14:31)
- Both men and women are to "instruct one another" (Rom 15:14)
- The "one another" commands are given without gender distinction. This includes to teach one another and admonish one another (Col 3:16; Eph 5:19-20; 1 Cor 14:28)

The Discussion:

Much of this discussion on the role of women in Church revolves around two passages:

- 1 Tim 2:12 - "I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; instead, she is to remain quiet." (CSB)
- 1 Cor 14:34 - "The women should be silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but are to submit themselves, as the law also says." (CSB)

We recognize that scholars with a high view of Scripture vary on their interpretation of these verses. There are likely cultural influences and isolated situations in both original texts. Based upon these realities, and careful research, FBCL elders prayerfully affirm the following:

We believe 1 Tim 2:12 is best understood as prohibiting women from preaching the authoritative and public sermon about Christ and the Scriptures in corporate

gathered worship (1 Cor 12:28-29; Eph 4:11; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 3:16; James 3:1). We believe this role is specifically reserved for qualified men in the church, such as elders/overseers/pastors (1 Tim 3:2, 5:17). Based on the previously mentioned examples of women teaching the Word, we do not believe this verse prohibits women from teaching men in all settings.

FBCL affirms a distinction between “general” and “special” teaching in the church. General teaching is the plain explanation of Biblical truths. We believe that women can, and should, do this kind of teaching, even in mixed audiences within the church. “Special” teaching is teaching within the church that bears the authority of the church, satisfies its duty to preserve the faith, and calls the church to carry forth church discipline. When Paul states that women should not teach or have authority over a man (1 Tim 2:12), we believe he is referring to this “special” teaching capacity. Paul could not have been speaking about a general capacity for teaching, because Scripture encourages, commands, and exemplifies women teaching. We believe all teachers within the church, both men and women, are under the leadership and authority of the elders. We believe that “to teach” and “to have authority” are separate ideas. Having spiritual authority is a specific duty that most naturally aligns with the office of elder, which is filled by qualified men at FBCL.

We believe in 1 Cor 14:26-40 Paul is specifically silencing certain people to maintain a certain amount of order within the gathered worship time: (1) those who speak a foreign tongue without a translator, (2) multiple people prophesying should speak one at a time, and (3) disruptive women should remain silent and ask their questions to their husbands at home. Scripture does not inform us as to how the women were being disruptive, and scholars disagree on their hypotheses; nevertheless, women are commended in Scripture to teach and to remain silent. Their silence should be viewed in light of the context to maintain order within the service.

The Conclusion:

- We **affirm** men and women are created equal, yet different, in the image of God.
- We **affirm** women can and should teach in a variety of platforms at FBCL in both gender specific and mixed groups. This includes but is not limited to: Equip classes, forums, cohorts, lectures, prayer ministry, student ministry, children’s ministry, and missional communities.
- We **affirm** women can serve the church as a worship leader.

- We **affirm** women can and should read Scripture publicly during gathered worship.
- We **affirm** women can and should pray publicly during gathered worship.
- We **affirm** women can and should serve on our committees.
- We **deny** women can be pastors/elders. We believe Scripture reserves this role for men.
- We **deny** that a woman may preach during the main weekly corporate gathered worship.
- We **affirm** that the main relationship between men and women in the church is as brother and sister in Christ.
- We **affirm** God can and will use women in a mighty way here at FBCL.