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Towards Women Leaders in the Palestinian Evangelical Church

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

TOWARDS WOMEN LEADERS

IN THE PALESTINIAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on February 19, 2018
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Vignettes	1
Context: Church History and Hermeneutics	8
Two Prominent Views	9
Hermeneutics	10
Desired Outcomes.....	11
Women in the Palestinian Arab Context.....	12
A Discussion of Women in the Spheres	16
History of Women’s Leadership in the Palestinian Evangelical Church.....	19
Exposing the Myths Taught by Traditionalist Fathers.....	20
Impact of the Inferiority Complex	22
The Leadership Role of Women in Church History	24
Conclusion	26
CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION.....	28
Women in Church Leadership	28
Evangelical Debate on the Leadership Role for Women.....	29
God’s Feminine Characteristics.....	31
Women and Moses’ Law	32
In the Beginning — Women in Creation	34
Women Leaders in Ancient Israel.....	37
Women in the Ministry and Teaching of Jesus.....	38
Women in the Early Church	40
Women in the Writings of Paul	44
Other Major Texts Concerning Women in Ministry.....	48
Headship and Submission	51
Dress in an Honorable Way	52
Authority and Headship (kephale)	52
The Priesthood of Women	55
Ordination	59
What is Ordination?	62
Ordination and Gender.....	64
Ordination and Culture	65
Ordination and Church Authority	69
Women and the Authoritative Offices	70
Redefining Leadership	71
Conclusion	73
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW	75
CHAPTER FOUR: LEADERSHIP, RELATIONSHIPS, AND GENDER	90
Men and Women Model Redemptive Gender Leadership	90
Gender and Leadership Roles	92
Evidence of Leadership Labyrinth.....	93

Human Capital	94
Gender Differences in Leadership Styles and Effectiveness	94
Prejudice	96
Gender and Psychological Differences and Societal Influence	97
Gender - Divine or Human?.....	101
Women and Men Are to Serve Together	103
The Example of Jesus Including Women in a Male Dominant Culture ..	104
Conclusion	107
CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS.....	110
Introduction.....	110
Methodology	110
Conclusion	139
CHAPTER SIX: SUGGESTIONS	141
Why Education, Equipping and Training are Essential	144
Suggestions for the Palestinian Church	145
Break the Bondage and Abolish Lies Women Have Believed for Many Years	146
Create a Role Model Based on Deborah’s Leadership	146
Engage Male Leaders in this Change.....	147
Build a Healthy Community of Both Men and Women	147
Give Affirmation to Women.....	148
Create and Offer a Platform for Others to Serve	150
Facilitate the Calling of Women with Mentors.....	150
Conclusion	152
BIBLIOGRAPHY	155
APPENDIX A	163
APPENDIX B	168

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ABSTRACT

The Palestinian evangelical church needs to proactively address the way in which most male church leaders ignore anointed women leaders who are active in the ministry of the Kingdom. Women have been actively involved in various roles in the church, but their role as leaders has not always been acknowledged officially. In this thesis, I discuss the limitations of women in leadership roles and positions of responsibility, and address the inequality in the manner in which women are treated as well as the opportunities they are offered to advance in leadership in the Arab Palestinian evangelical church.

Although the church exists in an Islamic culture, restrictions on women cannot be blamed on culture alone, for the issue is also biblical. This thesis delves deeper into a study of the interpretation of certain sensitive scriptures that reinforces these values in the Palestinian church. Theology and hermeneutics are the most significant factors that determine male leaders' interpretation of these verses and thus, this reexamination would enhance women's participation in leadership positions. Consequently, rather than Islamic cultural beliefs influencing the church, this change would allow the church to influence society. Instituting and implementing policies regarding the consecration of women and providing theological training in the Palestinian church, seminaries and Bible colleges that would empower women to lead, preach, and teach is our goal.

Chapter one explores the hierarchy, humiliation and restrictions that have been imposed on women in Palestinian society in general, and in the evangelical church in particular. Since some change has taken place in society, the issue of women in church and ministry has also been raised significantly. This chapter unfolds major issues and includes an exposition of the myths taught by the fathers of traditionalism, a description

of the leadership role of women in church history, and a discussion of women's adopted inferiority.

Chapter two includes an examination of the major relevant scriptures to see what they say and what they do not say about women in leadership, taking into consideration the lack of an agreed upon method of biblical interpretation. A cohesive survey of the Bible concerning the issue in question is presented in this chapter as well as theological and moral teachings of our Christian faith.

Chapter three aims to present and examine available literature to encourage and empower Palestinian Christian women to take leadership roles in the Palestinian evangelical church and to research some models with support from theological literature.

Chapter four investigates evidence related to the issue of gender and leadership and discusses the gender gap in leadership with prominent explanations both biblical and psychological. An approach is suggested to promote women in church leadership and to utilize the uniqueness of the assumed differences in a community of mixed gender leaders through the Holy Spirit and in love.

Chapter five presents the results of a survey to assess information pertinent to the current position of women leaders in the Palestinian church. The survey tool employed was a questionnaire that was distributed to local pastors. In this chapter, the research methodology, means of data collection, and subsequent analysis of this research is described.

Chapter six suggests practical ways to achieve the desired change by presenting the more inclusive egalitarian model of leadership. Discussion leading to consensus between the egalitarian and complementarian views on the issue as well as other practical

steps to implement change are included. One major requirement would be the building of a healthy community of both men and women. Women need men to stand with them and partner with them in ministry. Male advocates should take the initiative in their local churches, deliberately making women visible by affirming their gifts.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Vignettes

Siham, a 55-year-old married woman with adult children, is an ordained Methodist minister who pastors a church in the northern part of the Holy Land. Politically the setting is different than in Palestine, but the culture and context are the same. While her children were young they were her first priority, so she was a stay at home mother. Only when her children grew up and started their own lives did she want to find a job. She enrolled in several children's ministry courses, but her calling to ministry began to change and develop as she pursued an undergraduate degree in theology. Although it was later in her life, it was only at this point that she considered her purpose in life and how she could be of more help to her husband and family. She did not realize then that this was a stage in a process that would change her direction completely. One of the first courses she took was Child Evangelism, and she gained a new desire and a passion to study the word of God and theology and increase her knowledge of the Lord. Siham thought this would sharpen her and equip her with the right tools for evangelism and discipleship, but she never thought of the degree as a goal, nor did she seek any position. That she would one day be ordained as the first Arab woman pastor in the Holy Land never crossed her mind. "The only thing that got me into theology studies was my desire to evangelize and disciple people," Siham said. While she was working on her undergraduate degree, she began the first women's house meeting. The ministry was fruitful, and through it she started to get to know more people and become involved in their challenges. At this stage, she started acknowledging the unique issues Arab women face in the culture and family system. The door of ministry suddenly became wide open

to her, and she decided to pursue a master's degree at the college as her desire to serve became stronger. In 2013, she received an invitation from Nazareth Bible College, where she was a student, to attend a special course in church planting. It was a very intensive course with an invitation to become part of the Methodist church. Siham said that she did not hesitate and took the step to join the Methodist church. Although a Baptist, Siham's relationship with the Baptist church was unstable because of the resistance and the competitive spirit that she faced as her ministry grew. Therefore, she started attending the Methodist church's groups, and in a very short time she was approached by the Methodist leaders and was asked if she would be willing to be an ordained minister with them. Siham was surprised as she had never heard of women being ordained in the Holy Land. She had heard of women being ordained in Western churches such as in Britain, America, Korea and in Africa, but she had never heard of any case in our country and thought it unlikely to happen. Although she used to meet ordained women from abroad, she did not think that the ordination of women was possible in the Arab culture. She sought more explanations and clarifications on the issue. The Methodist leader who had mentored her and sent her biblical and theological evidence and materials on the subject of the ordination of women. She read the material, studied the matter, and finally agreed. She had to attend a very short Methodist policies training session, walk through a Sanctified Life course, study John Wesley's life, and was eventually ordained in this church.

However, Siham's difficult journey began, it was a journey of disappointments. She was shocked by people's attitudes, especially that of one of her closest male friends who became her worst critical adversary. Although very painful, Siham started to tolerate the gossiping and talking behind her back. Others were very tough on her; she lived with

continuous opposition and confrontation. Some men just criticized her and refused to listen to her. Siham struggled with feelings of bitterness and grief. This experience opened her eyes to the blindness of the Arab culture, and she recognized how much the society had been affected by Islamic culture, the majority among Arabs. She observed how male Arab Christians reacted, how furious they could become, and how threatened they could feel if their opinions were confronted or questioned by a woman. She wondered how men could feel secure due to their own male authority and power based on gender rather than enjoy the authority given to us by the Lord as His servants. Unexpectedly, this became a transitional point for Siham as she struggled to handle the opposition, to prove herself and her calling, and work hard to be well qualified as required by this huge responsibility.

Yet through this continuous humiliation, Siham realized how unique she was. Now, she is aware of her calling and that God, who called her and ordained her, will sustain her and strengthen her to fulfill her vision for His Kingdom. She realizes the immensity of the challenge, but also that for this reason she needs to stay strong. She describes some days as dim and bitter when she loses her stamina, despairing her role as an ordained minister and wondering if it would have been better to remain an ordinary lay minister. Siham could have ministered and given up the official recognition she required, but she knows this would have simply been an escape, not the right thing to do. The solution needs to take place in the whole system; change is needed. The whole culture should change its views on women allowing more women leaders to climb the church leadership ladder and fulfill their calling, working together with men. Finally,

Siham is thankful to God and grateful to all who have supported her, above all her husband who has been her greatest supporter.

In this second vignette, we meet Nadeen is a Lutheran minister serving at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Wausau, Wisconsin, but it took Nadeen sixteen years to fulfill God's call. Her journey was very difficult because of her gender and economic status. God called her to be a pastor when, at 18 years of age, she visited a Catholic church. During communion, she watched the priest consecrate the elements and at that moment, according to her story, she felt that God was calling her to the ministry of word and sacrament. Nadeen attempted to convince her Lutheran church to ordain her, but at that time the Lutheran church in Palestine did not yet ordain women. She was interested in the Hebrew Bible and felt that God was calling her to have bi-vocational ministries: the teaching and ministry of the word and sacrament. She served for three years as a director of Christian education at the Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, Palestine. During that time she thought more seriously about God's calling and became sure that God had called her to earn a Ph.D. in the Hebrew Bible and to become a pastor. However, Nadeen did not get the support of her church; her pastor told her that the Lutheran church did not need a professor in Hebrew Bible. Until today, the Lutheran church in Palestine does not believe that God has called Nadeen to be a pastor. She has experienced rejection and sexism by her own church. Even though she had three master's degrees and one Ph.D. in scripture and theology, the Lutheran church in Palestine did not recognize her gifts and God's calling for her.

Yet, she decided not to give up. It was almost impossible for Nadeen to silence the voice of God and to ignore His call. She was sure that if she did not fulfill God's call,

she would be dissatisfied with everything else in her life. God did open the door for her; she has a Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible and is a minister of the word and sacrament, but she had to leave her country and go to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). She earned her Ph.D. at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago and relied 100% on scholarships to pay her tuition and other expenses. She did not get a scholarship from the global mission of ELCA as the other international students did because her bishop in Palestine refused to support her application. She explained how difficult it was to find a scholarship, but God was faithful and He provided everything. After she finished her Ph.D. she went to Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, California to continue her studies and pursue a Master of Divinity. After she completed her program, ELCA called her to become a pastor in Wausau, Wisconsin. Although this is what she wanted, one of the problems that she now faces in America is racism. Sexism is not a big issue for her in America as it was in Palestine, but her ethnicity has sometimes been a problem, particularly when she was in her Ph.D. program. She longed to complete her education and return to Palestine to serve, but it still seems impossible. As she told me, “I am still not welcomed there.” It is interesting to note that Lutheran churches in Palestine support the daughters of their pastors to go to seminaries to finish their studies, but their ordination would be peculiar. However, Nadeen learned from this experience that when God calls someone, no one can stand in the way of the Lord, not even bishops.¹

My personal story, as an active woman leader, I am very much involved with pastoral work in the Palestinian Alliance church. However, why do I, a spiritually mature woman, do everything that any pastor does, and yet I am not recognized as a pastor? I am

¹ Vignettes one and two are part of a collection of actual stories told to the author. The names of individuals have been changed

very capable and am even working to earn a doctorate. I am as close as I can to being a pastor, but because the ordination of women is not allowed, I cannot be a pastor. I serve on a pastoral team; I preach in my church; I am invited to speak publicly at conferences and conduct training sessions. I founded a counseling and a mentoring ministry at Bethlehem Bible College, and am an educator at the college. Being a woman, I receive a double message. I hear comments such as, “You are preaching, teaching and doing other ministries; you are so gifted and anointed, so keep doing it!” Ten years ago, I also served as an elder in The Alliance Evangelical Church, but without a specific title. In practice I was an elder, but I was not called an elder. The question, then, is why I and other women are permitted to fulfill the roles of ordained elders or pastors, but without the official title. Why is this so? Furthermore, I question why a woman can preach or teach in a small group within the church, but not from the pulpit. Why are women not recognized? Why are there no official titles or any kinds of public recognition for women doing all of this?

Somehow, for reasons that will be investigated in this paper, this discussion does not exist in the Palestinian Evangelical Church; this question is not a subject for further discussion in the local church. There has been no clear resolution because, although some women are gifted and anointed as the church leadership acknowledges, they cannot fully participate in official ministry offices. Consequently, they do not and this is a major problem. Women called into the ministry need to feel free and comfortable to continue leading groups, teaching, preaching, evangelizing, discipling or ministering in other ways.

Common answers to this very question include: “Women were created to be subservient to men,” and “women, like Eve, are easily deceived and cannot be trusted to

lead or teach properly” with reference to 1 Corinthians 11:2-16,² 1 Corinthians 14:33b-38,³ and 1 Timothy 2:8-15.⁴ However, why are women entrusted with children’s ministry, women’s groups, discipleship and other roles? This is a very conflicting message.

In my own experience, I was generally satisfied until I started exercising both my preaching and teaching gifts and was confronted by the issue of gender. Only then did I begin to question the dissonance that was within me. Was I wrong proceeding in this direction? I have come to the point where I am not satisfied with the way women are being devalued. This has prompted in me the urgency to further clarify this issue. It is now my desire to pave the way for women to be fully involved in the community of believers and to work together with men in the church. The church must accommodate godly women who strongly believe in their calling and move beyond gender issues.

² I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. ³ But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man,^[a] and the head of Christ is God. ⁴ Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. ⁵ But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. ⁶ For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.

³ ³⁴ Women^[a] should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. ³⁵ If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.^[b]

³⁶ Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? ³⁷ If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command. ³⁸ But if anyone ignores this, they will themselves be ignored.

⁴ Therefore, I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. ⁹ I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, ¹⁰ but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. ¹¹ A woman^[a] should learn in quietness and full submission. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man;^[b] she must be quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. ¹⁵ But women^[c] will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

Context: Church History and Hermeneutics

The stories of these women are typical of how women are treated, not only in the Palestinian culture, but also within the Palestinian evangelical church. Women in other countries of the world are climbing up the ladder of leadership roles in the church, but not in Palestine. This research is important because the majority of evangelical church members do not realize that someone like Siham actually exists and that her story is a genuine example of a locally ordained woman in the Holy Land. A woman pastor is still uncommon in the evangelical church, as also seen in Nadeen's story. Thus, this particular topic is essential for women with leadership potential who are called to ministry roles in the Palestinian church, roles that are closed to women and, without question, reserved only for men. Such women find themselves frustrated and irritated by the hierarchy, humiliation and limitations.

In the Palestinian church, the role of women has been largely defined by the traditional role of women in the Arab Palestinian society. As a result, many women try to realize their calling, but in a different setting: they may teach in an academic setting or have a leadership position in a parachurch ministry or Christian organization. Some have founded their own ministries where they can use their leadership skills, talents and spiritual gifting to be more active in the work of the Kingdom and thus create their own new roles and opportunities not available to them in the church.

It is urgent for women who are aware of the women's movement in the Palestinian society, and the change and the progress that women have made in other evangelical churches around the world to investigate how the Palestinian church could be stimulated to deal with such change. Furthermore, it would be of interest to investigate

why so few men and women advocate for women to serve as leaders in church ministry and to study traditional norms and views as a reason for their exclusion. This topic will be discussed further as changes currently observed in Palestinian society are studied.

It is time for Palestinian Christian women to be aware of the inadequacy of the traditional church roles that have been assigned to them. This research will prove that it is not only a cultural matter, but also theological; there is no consensus on the hermeneutics of scholars. However, one of the aims of this dissertation is to find a broader consensus where change and transformation could begin. Therefore, to begin it is worthwhile to introduce the different views, current teachings, and hermeneutics that are prominent in Christian culture and churches regarding this issue. These views are historical from the writings of traditional church fathers. The most common view which contributes to the existing problem and affects the status of Palestinian women in the church today is the complementarian view.

Two Prominent Views

There are different teachings regarding women in church leadership, but the two most prominent views prevalent in churches worldwide are complementarian and egalitarian. Complementarian scholars include Grudem, Piper and Fergusson, and leading egalitarian scholars include Bilezikian, Grenz, Kroeger and Fee. While egalitarians stress the equality of both sexes, complementarians believe in “equal but distinct.”⁵ However, the complementarian perspective that women are distinct might hint at subordinate roles

⁵ Sarah Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church: Building Consensus on Christian Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 268-327, Kindle.

in the church. Sarah Sumner, in her book *Men and Women in the Church* states, “in reality men and women are always both equal and distinct,”⁶ but unfortunately, many tend to overemphasize one side at the expense of the other. This is the fault line of theology. One may ask who is right and who is wrong, but perhaps there is no right or wrong answer. Is it not possible to reach a broad consensus? Although both views give positive points, grey areas and disagreements also exist.

Hermeneutics

In the Palestinian church, apparently some of these discussions are not negotiable or even relevant; Christian Palestinian women are simply not trying to advance to senior positions in churches. Why is this the case in Palestine? Most evangelicals in Palestine are exposed to and taught only the complementarian view. Thus, to raise theological awareness it is essential to re-examine theological views as they relate to an understanding of both men and women, and to investigate the effect of culture on theological views and vice versa. The second chapter includes a study of the theological foundation that could empower women and enable them to make their greatest contributions.

The role of women in God’s church is vital, yet it is a volatile subject. An increasing awareness of this issue over the past few years is evident in other eastern countries such as Egypt and Lebanon, but not in Palestine. Recently in Egypt a female theologian, Ann Zaki, asked to be ordained, but her request was postponed for ten years. In Lebanon, two women were just ordained in the Lutheran church in 2017. Although these examples

⁶ Ibid., 270.

represent the situations of only a few women, one must question how many others are waiting for the opportunity to do that which God has called them to do. Such a scenario demands that the church develop a functioning model, if not a theology, for the whole Arab world, for Christian women in general, and for the evangelical Palestinian church specifically.

Desired Outcomes

A variety of stories of western women in ministry in evangelical churches with experiences similar to those of Palestinian women are found in literature. Pam Hogeweide wrote about a woman in her book *Unladylike* who soared through seminary at the top of her class; when every male student had a pastorate lined up, she was forced to search for opportunities as a woman pastor. Another woman felt certain that she was called to be a church pastor, but since her denomination did not allow the ordination of women, she had to choose to leave the faith group she knew and loved or remain and stifle her dreams. Sarah Cunningham's book *We Belong Together* records the story of another lady who went to seminary, but when she returned to her congregational church she found that she could not be ordained. Zaki,⁷ as mentioned above, is a case in point of a woman having her ordination postponed. Although an accomplished educator in theology, pastoral care and preaching, as the first woman to seek ordination, her request was denied for ten years. An investigation of this issue in the Palestinian church also uncovered the stories of Siham and Nadeen. Thus, one intent of this research is to learn from the progress of the western evangelical churches that have changed their views and

⁷ Anne Zaki, a theologian in the department of practical theology at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo.

policies; currently women minister in official positions in many congregations. Another desired outcome is that women would rise up and contribute in leadership positions and be ordained in the evangelical Palestinian church.

Palestinian women and men grow up in churches that expose them to only one side of the teaching; unfortunately, they learn that egalitarians' views are either theologically liberal or intellectually unqualified. Since Arab cultures are patriarchal societies that regard men as superior, they tend to follow complementarian traditions. Lesly Massey's researched study shows clearly that the status of women in the church is part of this very complex paradigm of patriarchy that has prevailed in most cultures. As Massey states, "traditional arguments for female inferiority and subjection, and the entire paradigm upon which patriarchal traditions are based simply must be challenged."⁸ His book, *Women in the Church*, is a helpful tool in searching for answers due to his thorough historical research. This inequality has had other effects as well, first on the culture and then on the church.⁹

Women in the Palestinian Arab Context

Arab women in the Arab culture have experienced discrimination throughout history and have been subject to the restriction of their freedom and rights. Some restrictions are based on religious beliefs and others are limitations of culture emanating from a mixture of tradition and religion. Much of this is in reference to Islam, known to be oppressive towards women. Women are referred to as sub-human and are considered

⁸ Lesly F. Massey, *Women in the Church: Moving Toward Equality* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2002), 5.

⁹ Ibid.

too unfit and immature to participate in society because of their caring, nurturing, and maternal natures. “Historically, Muslim women have not been treated as men's equals. Certain rulers and administrators and most legal scholars imposed a system of inequality, which they justified by their interpretations of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet.”¹⁰

Hence, women in Arab culture are assigned lower status than men. In spite of the fact that they constitute half the population and half the church, they have been marginalized. Not all Palestinians are Muslims but all live within such a culture. Steven Kelly, director of European Training Center, once stated in a lecture¹¹ that Palestinians are Christians in their religion, yet Muslims in their culture. Growing up in Palestine as a traditional Christian who later in life became part of a committed faithful community of Christians, the author of this study has experienced the same traditional practices and beliefs that reflect this system of Arab cultural values. Women have always been mocked and treated as inferior.

In the family, wives are primarily responsible for the care of the children and the house. The role of the maternal caretaker is greatly valued in Arab culture. “One of the central concerns for contemporary scholars in Middle East women's studies is to understand what shapes the lives of women. Scholarship, for a long time, narrowed it down to one single factor: Islam. In one of the earliest explorations of its importance, Wiebke, in her article “Women in Islam,” set the tone stating, “unlike any other religion

¹⁰ John L. Esposito, ed., “Women in the Islamic World: Past and Present,” Oxford Islamic Studies Online, accessed December 29, 2017, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t243/e370>.

¹¹ Steven Kelly, “God Working among the Arabs,” a lecture at the Christian Evangelical Alliance Church, Jerusalem, Holy Land, April 2017.

in history...Islam has penetrated and shaped the politics and cultures of the countries dominated by it.”¹²

Until today many Arab women believe that even social interaction between men and women who are not related should be avoided whenever possible. A woman in this context is referred to as a seductive object. This and other issues are indicative that in Arab society women have been assigned lower status than men. The issue here is how even today the church is affected by a culture and religion with which it disagrees, and why it adapts to its values. When will male church leaders act as Jesus, who spoke to women in public and was even alone with the Samaritan woman at the well, and as Paul, who had many women such as Phoebe, Junia, Lydia, Euodia, and Syntyche as co-workers in his ministries?

If the church were open to the egalitarian approach in interpreting these verses, or at least would teach and make clear that there are other interpretations and hermeneutics to explain these verses, perhaps the church would finally impact society rather than allowing Islamic cultural beliefs to influence the church. It is enough that for decades the role of women in the church have been defined by traditional Islamic culture and traditional church views. It is apparent that the mentalities prevalent in society permeate the church as well. “The church is meant to be counter-cultural in how we treat each other, including women. We are born again into a new culture, the culture of the kingdom

¹² Al-bab, “Women in the Middle East,” accessed November 24, 2015, http://al-bab.com/albab-orig/albab/arab/articles/text/women_studies.htm

of God which is a kingdom of love and justice.”¹³ One of the goals of this study is to encourage this change in the Palestinian church.

Drawing from my experience as a woman leader who is convinced she is called to serve and to be influential, I aim to take a strong stand through this study, and for this reason I have addressed and analyzed widely argued texts in Paul’s letters in this dissertation, particularly those that are commonly used by male patriarchal church leaders as an excuse to marginalize women’s involvement in public and official ministry.¹⁴

Having traced how women have been excluded from leadership roles, several questions follow: Why have there been no successful innovations to advance women in church leadership? Where are the voices of those male leaders who have accepted women in untraditional roles and included them in ministry? Why have these few male leaders who favor women in leadership been quiet and passive? Are these male figures less scholarly or less spiritual? Are their positions threatened by taking an opposing stand? Could the scriptures noted not be viewed as negotiable rather than a final statement? “Contrary to the view that the scripture texts in question are clear in their meaning and contemporary application, many faithful scholars think these texts raise more questions than they settle, especially when one seeks to understand the probable meanings they had in their original textual and historical contexts.”¹⁵ This means that those who pick and choose texts to fit their teachings do not follow the spirit of orthodox biblical exegesis

¹³ Pam Hogeweide, *Unladylike: Resisting the Injustice of Inequality in the Church* (Folsom, CA: Civitas Press, 2012), 31.

¹⁴ Texts like: 1 Timothy 2:1-15, Roman 16, Ephesians 5:21-24, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

¹⁵ Matthew Becker, “An Argument for Women Pastors and Theologians,” *The Daystar Journal*, November 10, 2013, accessed December 4, 2015, <http://thedaystarjournal.com/an-argument-for-women-pastors-and-theologians/>.

which teaches us to take the entire scripture as a whole, both Old and New Testaments, and then to take the New Testament as a whole, and then the entire Pauline epistles before going to the section that we are trying to exegete. Usually those who promote restrictions on women in leadership roles use the opposite of exegesis, which scholars call eisegesis, “a process where one leads into study by reading a text on the basis of pre-conceived ideas of its meanings. It is rare for someone to be called an ‘eisegete,’ because eisegesis has a well-earned negative reputation.”¹⁶

Since both biblical and cultural factors limit women in ministry, as stated previously, it would be worthwhile now to discuss the current trends and changes in Palestinian culture. In terms of their roles in society, women have made great progress in this age. We find women involved in business, politics, education, and in almost every other sphere of life and circle of work. Women are most commonly employed as teachers, instructors, and lecturers, but others also work in medical services as doctors, dentists, nurses or hospital and clinic administration. This represents a radical change in the status of the women in the Middle East and in Palestine.

A Discussion of Women in the Spheres

Women in business. Traditionally, Arab women have been mainly responsible for household duties, as is true today. However, a major change in modern times is that women work in the business world as well. Many women have established their own businesses or are employed in companies as leaders. This is a reflection of the change in

¹⁶ Robert Longman, “Exegesis, Eisegesis, and Hermeneutics,” SpiritHome.com, May 3, 1997, accessed December 12, 2015, http://www.spirithome.com/bible_exegesis.html#eisegesis.

attitude among women themselves as well as public opinion toward roles appropriate for women. A good example of this, is the Palestinian Business Women Forum.¹⁷

The existence of this and other such forums in Palestine is exciting because it speaks of major change in the entire community. Compared with other countries in the world it might still be found lacking, but the gradual growth of forums like this is a good sign for Palestine since the culture has been very traditional and conservative, especially concerning the issue of women working outside the home.

Women in education. In this area, Arab women have suffered harsh discrimination. Since people believed that women were more suited to household duties, there were restrictions on how much a young girl could achieve academically. Marriage was the biggest dream, as noted previously. Now, though, Palestinian women are attending universities and earning diplomas in higher education in increasing numbers. In the West Bank and Gaza, women are now graduating from universities at a higher rate than men and are outperforming their male peers at the high-school level.

Fadwa al-Labadi, associate professor of women's studies at Al-Quds University says, “the increase of women in higher education reflects changing values in what is traditionally a patriarchal society. In the last couple of decades women have become more involved in public life—they are on the streets, and they participated in protesting the last elections. This also extends to education, with the belief that women should also be educated. Women are now expected to play three roles—they have reproductive

¹⁷ “Business Women Forum-Palestine,” accessed October 10, 2017, <http://www.bwf.ps>.

responsibilities, they are the organizers of the home, and they are working in the public sphere.”¹⁸

According to al-Labadi:

Families also prefer to educate their daughters as a matter of prestige, and men prefer marrying educated women, even if their wives don't ultimately end up in the workforce. It's also become more likely that women will continue for an advanced degree after they earn their B.A., and more acceptable—desirable even—for families to send their daughters to study abroad.¹⁹

And he continues to explain:

The rising number of women earning degrees is already affecting certain aspects of Palestinian society. A recent study by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics found that in 2009, the average age of marriage for women with at least a bachelor's degree was 24.5 years, while those with only a preparatory certificate married at an average age of 17.4 years. In addition, women who attend university are more likely to have children at a later age.²⁰

Women in politics. The Arab patriarchal society restricts women from participating in public office, although some Palestinian women activists have played political roles in both the past and present. Suad Joseph, author of *Women and Power in the Middle East* is quoted in a book by Slymovics, “Palestinian women activism has a long running history going back to the British mandate time.”²¹

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, although this fact has been accepted, it is also seemingly contradicted. Individual women may hold political positions, but the normative roles of Middle Eastern women are traditional ones. However, some

¹⁸ Tiffanie Wen, “Palestine’s Women Head to College,” Bethlehem University, July 8, 2013, accessed December 4, 2015, <http://www.bethlehem.edu/document.doc?id=1296>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Susan Slymovics, *Women and Power in the Middle East* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 18.

individuals such as Hannah Al Ashrawi have challenged the norms. She appears as a sophisticated, articulate spokesperson in the international arena, but “today there are more individual women’s voices to be heard in the political arenas. Yet that doesn’t mean that women are given equal or even closer political influence.”²²

The question that is constantly asked in political and other circles is why women cannot play important roles in politics. When examined closely, it is clear that traditional views continue to influence attitudes concerning women’s involvement in politics and other spheres.

Women in the church. As expected, the status of women in the church is not very different from their status in society due to traditional influences. Moreover, the local Arab church has only one stance; women are not permitted to hold positions of pastoral authority in the church or teach with authority over men. Traditional roles given to women in the church are women’s ministries and children’s ministries. Having explored the role of women as deacons or elders, Middle Eastern women have no better leadership opportunities than women in other parts of the world.

History of Women’s Leadership in the Palestinian Evangelical Church

Dealing with this problem faced by Palestinian women begins with awareness; therefore, this chapter will unfold major issues that run through history:

- Exposing the myths that were taught by the fathers of traditionalism
- Exposing women’s adapted inferiority
- Describing the leadership role of women in church history.

²² Slyomovics, *Women and Power in the Middle East*, 232.

Exposing the Myths Taught by Traditionalist Fathers

A review of both cultural attitudes and the attitudes of church fathers toward women can provide a better understanding of modern women questioning their status in the church. A considerable number of resources prove that our church fathers' interpretations of passages such as 1 Timothy 2 were influenced by their low opinion of women. In her book, Sumner states, "Tertullian (A.D. 160-220), a well-known theologian who coined the word Trinity, developed certain aspects of the doctrines of original sin, and defended the two natures of Christ."²³ He believed that women were to blame for the entrance of sin into the world because they were more easily deceived. According to Sumner, church tradition describes the nature of women as lower than men, and such beliefs were promoted through the centuries. The following is one of Tertullian's famous quotes: "You are the Devil's gateway; you are the unsealer of that tree; you are the first forsaker of the divine law; you are the one who persuaded him whom the Devil was not brave enough to approach!"²⁴

Furthermore, Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, stated that men are always superior to women. Jerome (A.D. 347-420), while approving of women as spiritual companions, exhibited distaste for them as sexual objects. In contradiction to the high value he placed on women, he still regarded men of higher stature in honor. For example, he described women who decided to devote their lives to serving Christ as follows: "as long as a

²³ Sarah Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church: Building Consensus on Christian Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 40, Kindle.

²⁴ Catherine Kroeger, "The Neglected History of Women in the Early Church," *Christianity Today*, 1998, accessed December 4, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-17/neglected-history-of-women-in-early-church.html>.

woman is for birth and children, she is different from man as body is from soul. But if she wishes to serve Christ more than the world, then she will cease to be a woman and will be called a man.”²⁵ Augustine (A.D. 354-430) believed that God had no reason to create woman other than for procreation. One final example is Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) who said, “women are dominated by sexual appetite and men are ruled by reason.”²⁶ The truth of that statement, though, can be questioned. Aquinas also said, “Women depend on men for everything while men depend on women only in procreation.”²⁷ Although Aquinas was blind to this issue during his lifetime, wiser modern exegetes have moved us forward. For example, Perriman states, “we should not attempt to excuse the prolongation of abuse or overlook the extent to which the church has become trapped in an unjust worldview; nor should we regard these arguments as a license for immorality.”²⁸

Should the influence of such misogynistic attitudes on the beliefs of the church not be questioned? “Misogynists are called misogynist because of their degrading view of women. The word misogyny literally means “hatred of women,”²⁹ an attitude of prejudice, dislike, contempt and hatred against women and girls. This seems to be an inherited attitude still prevalent in the Palestinian church.

²⁵ Grace M. Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 54.

²⁶ Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church: Building Consensus on Christian Leadership*, 44.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Andrew Perriman, *Speaking of Women: Interpreting Paul* (Leicester, UK: Apollos, 1998), 212.

²⁹ Ibid.

The majority of Palestinian evangelicals are first generation, and “most evangelicals have no idea of what Christians believed in the past.”³⁰ Consequently, “the culture of the church has made oppression so normal that it blurs into the scenery.”³¹ Is the Palestinian church aware of this? The church’s genuineness and faithfulness to God is not in question, but has it adopted the traditionalists’ view of women’s equality with respect to church history? This needs to be investigated through a survey.

It is noteworthy now to present an alternate perspective of women in church history that existed in the late fourth century. According to Madigan and Osiek, “from the late fourth century, a movement was stirring in the West toward greater leadership roles for women.”³² In her article “The Neglected History of Women in the Early Church” Kroeger wrote, “a number of prominent leaders, scholars, and benefactors of the early church were women and - despite neglected by many modern historians - the diligent researchers can still uncover a rich history.”³³ It is important, then, to explore the role of women in church history.

Impact of the Inferiority Complex

One of the impacts of the Palestinian culture generally, and the church culture specifically, is that it not only convinces men that they are superior, but also convinces

³⁰ Mark Husbands and Timothy Larsen, eds., *Women, Ministry and the Gospel: Exploring New Paradigms* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 262.

³¹ Hogeweide, *Unladylike: Resisting the Injustice of Inequality in the Church*, 29.

³² Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, *Ordained Women in the Early Church* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 183, Kindle.

³³ Catherine Kroeger, “The Neglected History of Women in the Early Church,” *Christianity Today*, 1988, accessed June 6, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-17/neglected-history-of-women-in-early-church.html>.

women that they are inferior. Palestinian Arab women have become accustomed to their position today, so much so that the issue of fighting for the right to establish leadership roles beyond the traditional roles given to them does not even exist. This is one of the reasons that this study is an urgent tool. The fact that only two cases were found in the Palestinian context and two in the whole Arab Middle Eastern world, one of which was Zaki in Egypt, the first woman to request ordination from her congregation,³⁴ speaks to the veracity of this situation. One of the few books written specifically on this issue was by Ikram Lemii' to be discussed further in the third chapter. Briefly, in his book *Woman is the Problem or the Solution* (translated), Lemii' urges the church to deal with this issue as it did when it took a stand to accept Gentiles as equals, and later when it dealt with and solved the issue of slavery after 19 centuries. He mentions the only Arab woman he knows, Ann Zaki, who took a stand and asked for ordination.³⁵ Since no cases similar to Zaki's are evident, it proves that women believe that these inferior roles are meant to be their lot in life. Lynn Hybels believes this has to be addressed and changed when she states, "whereas a girl of any age lives out the script she learned as a child - a script too often grounded in powerlessness - a woman acknowledges and accepts her power to change, and grow, and be a force for good in the world."³⁶

³⁴ Anne Zaki, *Women's Ordination as Pastors: A Middle Eastern Perspective*, 2015 Los Angeles Conference, *Becoming New: Man and Woman Together in Christ*, December 29, 2015, accessed December 29, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9GTJQjYA7M>.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Gilbert G. Belizeckian, *Community101* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 32.

The Leadership Role of Women in Church History

While the church may have done little for women and may have provided women few ministry opportunities, women have stood out in the pages of history. Some of these women were dedicated female martyrs: “Vibia Perpetua, a 22-year-old nursing mother, and her slave Felicity...were arrested during persecution at the beginning of the third century A.D.”³⁷ The legend of St. Thecla has endeared itself to modern women as well as to their earlier counterparts. “According to the 3rd century text of *The Acts of Paul*, Thecla, a noblewoman, was converted while listening to the preaching of the apostle. Forsaking her old life, she followed Paul and endured persecution, tribulation and great peril.”³⁸

Madigan and Osiek mentioned a woman from Cappadocia named Basilina, a deacon of the great church of Constantinople. In their book *Ordained Women in the Church*, others are noted including Celerina, a deacon who received a letter whereby she was referred to as a politically and theologically influential woman deacon in Constantinople. She was in “a position to receive and influence bishops who were wavering in their theological positions and to win them over.”³⁹ Dyonesia was faithful to God and God’s work and was also an ordained deacon.

³⁷ Marlys Taege, *And God Gave Women Talents!* (St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1978), 91.

³⁸ Catherine Kroeger, “The Neglected History of Women in the Early Church,” *Christianity Today*, 1988, accessed June 6, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-17/neglected-history-of-women-in-early-church.html>.

³⁹ Madigan, *Ordained Women in the Early Church*, 32.

Another example is Catherine of Alexandria, the patron saint of scholars and philosophers. According to Kroeger⁴⁰, she allegedly debated fifty philosophers and won them all to Christ. “As a result, she was condemned to death and ultimately perished on the wheel (hence the name of the ‘Catherine wheel,’ a rotating firework).”⁴¹ Helena (225-330), mother of Emperor Constantine, was also canonized. Macrina (327-379) taught other women the Scriptures and “established a hospital described as so large that it was like a walled city or the pyramids in size.”⁴² Many other women were ordained deacons in the church; Olympias, Pentadia and Procla were three deacons of the monastery who “seem to be recognized as the leaders and the spokespersons for the monastery. Olympias was ordained as deacon while still in her thirties by bishop Nectarios, in the 4th century.” Another is “Eugenia, a deaconess and monastic superior.”⁴³ The stories of numerous other such women are recorded in history.

In addition, specific groups were widows. “They are discussed as a special group long before lengthy treatments of deaconesses appear, and their role is essentially that of ministers to special needs.”⁴⁴ Hence women and “widows were clearly part of the ordained clergy in the *Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, a 5th-century reworking of earlier material from Hippolytus’s *Apostolic Tradition*. The selection process and ordination service of widows parallels those of deacons, bishops and presbyters.”⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Kroeger, “The Neglected History of Women in the Early Church,” accessed June 6, 2017.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Taege, *And God Gave Women Talents!*, 93.

⁴³ Madigan, *Ordained Women in the Early Church*, 34.

⁴⁴ Massey, *Women in the Church: Moving Toward Equality*, 84.

⁴⁵ Kroeger, “The Neglected History of Women in the Early Church,” accessed June 6, 2017.

Besides the outstanding achievements of individuals, Kroeger explains that women stood out in the ministry of consecrated women in specialized orders. These orders included ecclesial widows, virgins, presbyteresses and deaconesses. Sometimes such women were formally ordained and sat with the rest of the clergy in front of the congregation. According to Madigan and Osiek, literature and history is full of evidence in Latin and Greek of women holding the offices of deacon and presbyters in the history of the eastern and western churches. They actually presented sixty-one eastern and four western inscriptions of known women deacons along with forty eastern and two western literary references to real women who held the office.⁴⁶ Yet according to their studies, evidence indicates that for some reason, the highest number of women in church office was in decline by the sixth century.

Conclusion

How could women's leadership role in the Palestinian evangelical church be resolved? The above evidence shows that women are not being empowered to seek ordination except in very few hard-fought cases. Although this issue is of major importance it will be imperative not to push too hard or expect results too fast. It is imperative to tackle this problem although it may be too soon to go that far within the Palestinian church. If "ordination of women tends to be a focal point simply because conclusions reached on this issue represent conclusions on all others specifically related to women in the church and society,"⁴⁷ then it might be necessary to proceed. Such an

⁴⁶ Madigan, *Ordained Women in the Early Church*, 203.

⁴⁷ Massey, *Women in the Church: Moving Toward Equality*, 166.

observation claims that policy might impact the wider aspect of women progressing in leadership roles in other areas of the culture and the church.

Hence, practical ways of releasing power in the church that would include women in leadership roles are essential. In conclusion, women must seek and be allowed to pursue education in order to challenge the oppressive culture, whether intentional or unintentional. For this to happen, courageous male leaders must be part of this change, as suggested in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Women in Church Leadership

The role of women in ministry is often in question, but what is the actual concern? As discussed in the first chapter, women are already involved in ministry. That is, women have always served in the church, parachurch ministries, and have even led missions and large ministries. Many Palestinian women play significant roles leading worship, leading Bible studies, serving in youth ministries, and even serving as spiritual leaders. Male Palestinian leaders argue that there have always been women serving in local evangelical churches; however, the real concern is that their role as leaders has not always been acknowledged with a specific title. Therefore, the aim of this study is to take a different approach and to present another way of looking at the issue in order to solve the problem. It is important to make sense of the various arguments in order to understand what the Bible says about this question, and to examine scripture to illustrate what the church traditionally teaches and what it does not mention.

This chapter includes an examination of the major relevant scriptures to see what they say and what they do not say about women in leadership, taking into consideration the lack of an agreed upon method of biblical interpretation. It is a fact that “cultural modes, religious traditions, personal biases, contemporary worldviews and other influences all contribute to the shaping of the method of interpretation that one applies to the Bible.”¹ It is noteworthy that the church has its personal biases which are undoubtedly affected by cultural modes and religious traditions. These biases are demonstrated in the

¹ Gilbert G. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 15.

debates that continue between egalitarians and complementarians concerning ministry and leadership. A cohesive survey of the Bible concerning the issue in question is presented in this chapter as well as theological and moral teachings of our Christian faith.

Evangelical Debate on the Leadership Role for Women

Complementarians usually exclude women from church leadership.

“Complementarians claim that ordained ministers exercise roles that are solely the prerogative of men, cradling this argument in a specific understanding of the church (ecclesiology).”² Grenz claims that the reason that people of God cannot set women apart for ministry is because the church is set in a hierarchal manner. However, does Christ intend the church to be a hierarchy when we fill different leadership offices? This leads to another question: Did Jesus intend His church to be patriarchal?

Thus, it is an unfortunate truth that women everywhere and specifically in the Arab context often receive messages from church leaders that continue to reinforce what the culture has already dictated to them. They are given a constant message that they are second-class and inferior. But what do egalitarians believe, and do they have the right views regarding women?

According to Messay, “the egalitarians argue female equality before God, and therefore the right of women to serve in churches in capacities equal to those of men, but they still hold to Biblical authority.”³ The egalitarian view is that there are no gender-

² Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 173.

³ Lesly F. Massey, *Women in the Church: Moving Toward Equality* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2002), 141.

based restrictions in the church. The theological foundations of this viewpoint are interpretations of the teachings and example of Jesus Christ and other New Testament principles. But Sumner contends that, “egalitarians tend to overemphasize the equality of men and women and underemphasize their distinction,”⁴ and that “hardly an egalitarian will openly admit the differences between men and women.”⁵ She further explains their view of equality as an affirmation of all terms of equality between men and women except the equality of identity or sameness. Thus, this also would create a problem.

Yet to go further and clarify the concept of equal and distinct, the egalitarians mean that men and women are equal as persons but distinct in regard to sexuality. “It means, moreover, that roles should not be defined by gender unless the activities of the role are sexual such as in husband and wife. When the nature of the role is nonsexual as with pastor or preacher, then the roles should be defined by giftedness.”⁶ The argument of the complementarian is that if scripture says that God’s will is for men to serve as spiritual leaders and not women, then no other reason is needed, but the egalitarian would see this as saying that women are second-class in the church. They want women to be given the same opportunities as men. It is worth noting that Grudem and Piper, in their book *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, emphasized equality of personhood and status before God. Sumner questions whether this implies that women are not equal before men. Grudem and Piper “believe that manhood and womanhood

⁴ Sarah Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church: Building Consensus on Christian Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 270, Kindle.

⁵ Ibid., 272.

⁶ Ibid., 273.

mesh better in ministry when men take primary responsibility for leadership and teaching in the church.”⁷ Thus, men and women are equal in their essential being but are different in role and function.

God’s Feminine Characteristics

Is God male? If God is not male, why do the biblical writers portray God using male images? We call God, the Father, and we use male orientation in using male personal pronouns. Furthermore, the biblical authors repeatedly use male images and concepts to describe God. Consequently, does God’s fatherhood not mean that he is a male? Furthermore, Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, God the Son, is male. It may seem that He is biased toward one gender over the other, but “most theologians agree that we ought to avoid understanding Father as designating God as male deity.”⁸ “Barton correctly pinpoints: the Christian doctrine of God as ‘Father’ is an analogical way of describing the providence of God and our sense of God’s care for the whole creation. It is nothing to do with God’s gender, for God is beyond gender.”⁹

Likewise, the Bible communicates God’s feminine images. God is described as nurturing and is expressed through “feminine relational metaphors that focus on the mother-offspring relationship.”¹⁰ For example: “God cares for Israel as an eagle stirs up its nest, and hovers over its young; as it spreads its wings, takes them up,…” (Deut.

⁷ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 53.

⁸ Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 147.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 148.

32:11), and in another place, “in the shadow of your wings.” (Ps 17:8; 36:7; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4). This Old Testament image adds poignancy to Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem: “How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing.”¹¹

“God is not merely beyond male and female. Rather, God’s relationship to creation takes on both male and female dimensions. As a consequence, a true perception of the divine¹² nature requires the contribution of both man and woman.”

Women and Moses’ Law

Because the Law of Moses reflects a male-centered social environment, many view its statements regarding women as morally offensive. Old Testament laws sometimes mentioned women specifically, but they were normally written as if only men were involved. Both in custom and in law, men had advantages over women.

The Lord Jesus’ redemptive work ought to cover the dark side of the Old Testament. Bilezikian explains, “As the primal male became the ruler of the household after the fall, other breakdowns were inevitable within the ‘one flesh’ relationship. The fact that the Old Testament word for husband (*baal*) was also used for ‘master,’ ‘owner,’ and ‘lord.’”¹³ He explains how “the pattern of male rulership that issued from the fall became legislated as a patriarchal system within which the primal male of a household was its absolute master.”¹⁴ Therefore, according to Bilezikian, the one-flesh relationship

¹¹ Ibid., 149.

¹² Ibid., 150.

¹³ Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 47.

¹⁴ Gilbert G. Bilezikian, *Community 101* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 30.

created by God, once replaced by hierarchy, meant that women were disposable objects as in polygamy where males acquired more than one wife. Also, women faced the double standard in adultery; the “one flesh” union of the creation ideally is predicated on the principle of an exclusive relationship of sexual intimacy between spouses. “As a result of this one-sided definition of adultery that allowed males permissive practices, restitution became a persistent affliction in the history of old covenant people.”¹⁵ Furthermore, inequality was evident in trial by ordeal when a woman was suspected of adultery by her jealous husband, whereas a wife who suspected her husband of misconduct was helpless. For men who divorced their wives, divorce legislation “gave them the power to dispose of wives at will, without concern for their desires and without retribution for their own injustice.”¹⁶ Both in custom and in law, men had advantages over women, but the law was “designed to expose and retrain sinful behavior.”¹⁷ The law demonstrated “our need for redemption, but also functioned as a guardian” until the redemption was more completely realized. The law is but a stage of a process.¹⁸ As Pierce and Groothuis note in their book, *Discovering Biblical Equality*, “this process begins with God’s good creation which, marred by humanity’s sin and regulated by the mosaic law, is a structure that is transcended in the gospel”¹⁹. According to Pierce and Groothuis, Jesus noted that the laws of Moses did not prescribe an ideal society, but those laws were often

¹⁵ Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 49.

¹⁶ Ibid., 51.

¹⁷ Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill, *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 97.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

concessions to an imperfect society (Matt. 19:8). Paul also makes it clear “that the law “was added because of transgressions,” guarding those under its care, while serving as their “disciplinary” until “the fullness of time” when a Redeemer would appear.”²⁰ Bilezikian remarks that the Old Testament regulations limited “the evil impact of polygamy, patriarchy, and adultery.”²¹ Therefore, the law functioned as a “guardian and disciplinary,”²² but the law did not imply approval of the custom itself. Hence, the law, as a stage, should be “understood as part of the redemptive process that led to something better.”²³ God tolerated the patriarchy of that age, but also showed his disapproval through the woman who did rise to a leadership position despite the suppression of that culture. Thus, in that patriarchal period the law improved the status of women from the judgment of sin; the gospel went beyond that, and then Paul emphasized the new era. In the redemption and the new creation, there is no Jew over Gentile, free over slave, or male over female (Gal. 3:28).

In the Beginning — Women in Creation

In order to fully understand maleness and femaleness, it is necessary to study the creation account in Genesis 1 through 3 and to examine the nature of male-female relations in God’s original design of creation, and what happened to those relations as a consequence of the Fall.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 46.

²² Pierce and Merrill, 97.

²³ Ibid.

Genesis 1:26-28 describes God's creation of the man and the woman. "They are both subsumed under the general rubric '*adam*', which describes the species as 'humanity.' God created '*adam* in his image; in the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them. The nature of revelation, Hebrew language and vocabulary, the semantic range of '*adam*', and the common linguistic development of words all argue against the presumption that God's naming race 'man' whispers male headship."²⁴ The use of man here is plural, so the "created '*adam* is to enjoy the relationships that come from plurality."²⁵ This indicates that the verbs to rule (*kabash*) and to dominate (*radah*) suggest the taking of the land and its stewardship. Such stewardship is given to humanity as "male and female" in God's command for "them" to "rule over" creation. So God created '*adam*, male and female, as persons who are equal heirs. He gave both of them the authority over earth and its creatures (Gen. 1:26-27). This is a point that egalitarians would bring to our attention. Complementarians do not ignore this, but it is the second creation account that they cite as the definitive picture of God's intent for male and female. They offer four main arguments to support the claim that Genesis 2 teaches subordination: "woman was created after man, woman was created from man, woman was named by man, woman was created for man."²⁶ From such arguments they conclude that women should not lead. However, egalitarians say that this narrative does not explicitly indicate a hierarchy of male over female. In fact, this account might be seen as

²⁴ Ibid., 81.

²⁵ Ibid., 80.

²⁶ Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 161.

woman being more important. “Applying this axiom to the second yields the conclusion that being created second places the woman above, not below, the man.”²⁷

But the discussion gets deeper on the complementarian position of hierarchy which originates at the account where Eve is called a helper in Genesis 2: 18 “Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him.” Belizikian will argue that “in the past, uninformed teachers of the Bible seized on the word *helper* to draw inferences of authority/subjected distinctions between men and women.”²⁸ The word *helper* brought some misconception. The complementarian will argue that this word as “help meet” or “helpmate”, that reduces a woman to a role of a helping a man, indicating a subservient status. “Fortunately, the study of the use of the word *helper* in the Old Testament has dispelled such misconceptions.”²⁹

The word *helper*, “*Ezer*”, the Hebrew term, was actually used in reference to God being Israel’s help and rescuer among His people. Thus, this is not a term of subjugation. Rather a helper might sometimes be even stronger than the person who receives the help. Hannah in her article offers an important highlight on this issue too, she goes on to study the paired words “*Ezer Kenegdo*” which means, “a compatible partner”, that actually “indicates comparable operating forces; equality. Hence, “the accurate translation of this Hebrew makes more of a case of equality than it does for male authority.”³⁰

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 22

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Hannah Thompson, “The Quick Start guide to Equality in Genesis,” September 11, 2015, accessed February 22, 2016, <http://juniaproject.com/quick-start-guide-to-equality-genesis/>

Women Leaders in Ancient Israel

Although ancient Israel was a patriarchal culture, God still placed women in important roles. God chose Deborah as a prophetess and a judge, and “hers was a public role of national leadership.”³¹ God gave this woman both religious and civil authority over men; the narrative in Judges 4 testifies to her crucial leadership role. “Deborah’s leadership in the time of national crisis was authenticated by the essential criterion of a ‘spirit of prophesy.’ Like Moses, her skills as a leader also included sound judgment, elocution skills and poetic sensibility.”³²

Another example which Grey gives is Huldah, the prophetess who gave authoritative words to Hilkiyah, the priest, and to other men (2 Kings 22:14-20), who had spiritual authority. “Huldah was sought by five of the national leaders (including the High Priest) for guidance in the process of instituting the contents of the law.”³³ Later, God gave Esther civil authority over Jews in the Persian Empire. “She was brought to the position by the unseen hand of God “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14).³⁴ These examples show that, even in a patriarchal society, God permitted certain women to have significant civil and/or spiritual authority.

³¹ Shane Clifton and Jacqueline Grey, *Raising Women Leaders: Perspectives on Liberating Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Context* (Chester Hill, NSW: Australasian Pentecostal Studies, 2009), 76.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 78.

³⁴ Ibid., 81.

Women in the Ministry and Teaching of Jesus

Jesus treated women with more respect than was common in that culture; women had important roles in his ministry, traveling with him and providing for him. “Jesus’ ministry revolutionized the lives women.”³⁵ According to Grudem,

Jesus honored women and treated them as he treated men. He talked openly with women (John 4: 1-27); he taught women (Luke 10: 38-42); he assumed that women as well as men could reason and discuss theological truths (Luke 10: 38-42; John 4:7-26; 11:21-27); he had women among the band of the disciples who traveled with him (Luke 8:1-3); he accepted monetary support and ministry from them (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 15:8-10; 18:1-8). Jesus challenged the culture that treated women as second-class citizens.³⁶

Jesus taught Mary. “When Jesus praised Mary and corrected Martha (Luke 10:38-42), he overturned the expectations that a patriarchal culture placed on women.”³⁷ Jesus taught women in contrast to many rabbis. Jesus rejected this system that had cut women from this activity. Rabbis would consider women not worthy of learning and sitting at their feet.

Jesus’ manner towards the “sinful woman” who anointed his feet. “While the Pharisees criticized Him for allowing this unnamed sinner to touch Him, Jesus commended her actions and ministered mercifully to her.”³⁸ Lee continues to argue that

³⁵ Loren Cunningham and David Joel Hamilton with Janice Rogers, *Why not Women?* (Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 2000), 1692, Kindle.

³⁶ Wayne A. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth: An Analysis of 118 Disputed Questions* (Leicester, UK: Apollos, 2005), 161.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ J. Lee Grady, *10 Lies the Church Tells Women* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2000), 12.

Jesus' acceptance of her reveals that He came to remove this painful stigma and to remove forever the guilt and shame that were the portion of all women.³⁹

Jesus' teaching on marriage and divorce. Hamilton argues that Jesus held men and women to the same standards in His teaching. He notes that His teaching about marriage and divorce was shocking, even to his disciples. The Pharisees hoped to trap Him by confronting him on the controversial subject of divorce, but Jesus directed their eyes back to Genesis 1:27: "At the beginning of creation, God made them male and female....For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife." He even goes further to say, "What God has joined together, let no man separate." More than condemning divorce, he was "commanding us not to separate people according to human value systems."⁴⁰

The woman who was caught in adultery. The law stipulated in the case of adultery "that the man and the woman should be put to death."⁴¹ Jesus showed them that "their actions were governed more by the double standards of their culture than the Word of God."⁴²

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Cunningham, *Why not Women?*, 1728.

⁴¹ Ibid., 1705.

⁴² Ibid.

Women in the Early Church

From the beginning, women fulfilled a vital, honorable role in the Christian church.⁴³ They shared together with men all activities of the congregation and spiritual gifts. Jesus' female followers were among those gathered in the upper room (Acts 1:14). "Women's participation in the Pentecost event has radical and far-reaching implications. Not only did women receive Christ's commission as credible witnesses to the resurrection, but at Pentecost they also received the Spirit's power to carry out this central community responsibility."⁴⁴

Women as teachers. "Priscilla is the classic example of a woman teacher in early church circles as celebrated missionary, pastor, coworker of Paul."⁴⁵ It is under the instruction of both Priscilla and her husband Aquila, that Apollos becomes an able pastor; one to whom Paul later delegates a critical situation in the church. In Acts 18:26, she and her husband explained to him "the way of God more accurately."⁴⁶ Lee highlights that 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.⁴⁷ Priscilla's role as a teacher emerges in this account.

Women as prophets. There were women who prophesied in the early church. It is mentioned in Acts 21:9 that Philip had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

⁴³ Acts 1:12–14; 9:36–42; 16:13–15; 17:1–4, 10–12; 18:1–2, 18, 24–28; Rom. 16:1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 1:5; 4:19.

⁴⁴ Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 79.

⁴⁵ Belizikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 154.

⁴⁶ Acts 18:26.

⁴⁷ Grady, *10 Lies the Church Tells Women*, 39.

According to Grenz, their involvement in prophesying clearly moved women such as Philip's daughters into the realm of authoritative utterance.⁴⁸

Women as apostles. In Romans 16, Paul sends personal greetings to twenty-four people, friends and coworkers, of which ten are women (including Phoebe, Prisca, Junia, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis). They are specifically commended as women who “worked hard in the Lord.”⁴⁹ Based on Paul's greeting (Rom. 16:1), it becomes apparent that Paul recognized that certain women were gifted with a leadership calling. Paul recognized that God had called these women and commissioned them to ministry. One particularly referred to as an apostle was Junia. Yet, the first argument and question raised by those who oppose this position would be Junia's identity. Though the argument still stands, many scholars such as Grenz, Perriman, Bilezikkian, and others support and favor the feminine Junia. There are a few details that support the feminine name; one example is how the name is used in that era of history. “In the second century, Origen assumed that Paul's friend was a woman,” and “the fourth century church father, John Chrysostom, who was no supporter of women bishops, expressed high regard for Junia.”⁵⁰ According to Grudem, although this argument carries little weight against the clear teaching of exclusive male leadership and male apostleship in the New Testament,

⁴⁸ Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 82.

⁴⁹ Rom. 16:12.

⁵⁰ Efran Agosto, *Servant Leadership* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005), 95.

Hyatt, in his article *Can Women Be Apostles* says, “Her example clearly demonstrates that women exercised apostolic leadership in the New Testament church.”⁵¹

Women as deacons and elders. Having looked briefly at a few women who exercised authoritative roles such as prophets, teachers and apostles, two other important women who were mentioned as Paul’s co-workers were *Eddie and Syntyche* (Phil 4:2-3). “Early church bishop and theologian, John Chrysostom (c.349-407), believed that Eudia and Syntyche were leading women in the Philippian church.”⁵² What else identifies these two as leaders? According to Agosto, this is indicated by “two commendation criteria”. First, their role can be understood by considering Paul’s meaning in “they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel” (Phil 4:3).⁵³ According to W. Derek Thomas, the term *contended* (*synethlesan*) provides an important clue. “This word meant ‘to contend,’ as the athlete strained every muscle to achieve victory in the games,”⁵⁴ and thus the verb implied a more active role. Second, Agosto goes further to demonstrate that these two were his co-workers: “they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers.”⁵⁵ “The simplest reading of the grammar suggests that Paul refers both to Clement and Eudia and Syntyche as co-workers.”⁵⁶

⁵¹ E. Hyatt, “Can Women Be Apostles,” accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.charismamag.com/spirit/church-ministry/20285-can-women-be-apostles> (this article is derived from Eddie Hyatt’s latest book, *Pursuing Power: How the Historic Quest for Apostolic Authority and Control Has Divided and Damaged the Church*).

⁵² Marg Mowczko, “Euodia and Syntyche: Women Church Leaders at Philippi,” August 4, 2011, accessed December 29, 2017, <http://margmowczko.com/euodia-and-syntyche-church-leaders-at-philippi/>.

⁵³ Agosto, *Servant Leadership*, 146.

⁵⁴ Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 85.

⁵⁵ Phil. 4:2.

⁵⁶ Agosto, *Servant Leadership*, 146.

Thus, Eudia and Syntyche played a significant role as women leaders in the community of Philippi. Paul, who recognized that their unity would impact the community, requested it “must be exemplified in the first instance by its leaders.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, Agosto even suggests “that Eudia and Syntyche may be among the “bishops and deacons” that Paul mentions at the outset of the letter (1:1).”⁵⁸

Phoebe the *prostatis*. According to Perriman, the description of Phoebe as the *prostatis* has provoked considerable debate. This word relates to “(1) one who leads, governs, presides; (2) guardian, patron, protector; (3) helper, carer.”⁵⁹ Therefore, in his book, Perriman argues that Phoebe constitutes rather strong proof that women served in some sort of official capacity in the Pauline church.

Paul also mentions Phoebe as a deacon, and it seems as though she had a house church. The reference to *church* (Col 4: 15), then, implies that certain women held positions of leadership or authority, as in the house of the Nympha church. It is interesting how Perriman debates that Paul mentions nothing to indicate that the contribution of these women was in any way different or inferior to that of a man. His conclusions in consideration of the presence of women among Paul’s co-workers are:

The first is that these women worked alongside male missionaries and church workers on terms of equality, since the same terminology is used to describe their activity. ... The second conclusion is that when Paul urged the Corinthians to submit themselves to the household of Stephanas and to ‘every co-worker and

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 147.

⁵⁹ Andrew Perriman, *Speaking of Women: Interpreting Paul* (Leicester, UK: Apollo, 1998), 67.

laborer' (1 Cor. 16:15-16), he naturally included female co-workers in the ranks of these church leaders.⁶⁰

Having surveyed the manifold ways women functioned in the ancient faith communities, beginning with Israel in the Old Testament to the period of Jesus' ministry and the early church, it is evident that their role changed dramatically, especially from ancient Israel to the New Testament. Would that indicate that women's status had changed?

Despite signs of hope, further problems still exist and a deeper study follows. 1 Timothy 2:12 includes Paul's apparent injunction against women in authoritative teaching offices; in 1 Corinthians 14: 34, Paul instructs concerning the demeanor of women in church worship; in Galatians 3:28, Paul speaks of male and female unity in Christ. Is this the same Paul who greeted the ten women and honored the women who were co-workers? If so, is he schizophrenic or perhaps double minded? Likely, whether one's approach is complementarian or egalitarian, one's hermeneutic is affected by the interpreter's own presuppositions of the text. Grenz argues that complementarians understand texts such as 1 Timothy 2:11-14 as giving a universal application to Paul's principle of church order, whereas egalitarians claim Galatians 3:28 deserves hermeneutic priority. The egalitarian view, then, will also be studied.⁶¹

Women in the Writings of Paul

1 Timothy 2:8-15 is a difficult passage where all the problems seem to appear even if one has previously been able to understand God's mind through the Old

⁶⁰ Perriman, *Speaking of Women: Interpreting Paul*, 62.

⁶¹ Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 106-107.

Testament and the New Testament.⁶² It is very important to note, according to Stott, Grey, Baumert, Kraus, and others, that the conclusions drawn from this text depend largely on hermeneutic principles.

First, the principle of harmony: when we “approach these verses about the place of women in church, we shall not isolate them from scripture’s fundamental assertion of the equal value and dignity of men and women by creation and redemption.”⁶³ Second, we also seek to apply the principle of history. That is, “God always spoke his word in particular historical and cultural settings, especially of the ancient Near East (the Old Testament), Palestinian Judaism (the Gospels), and the Graeco-Roman world (the rest of the New Testament). No word of God was spoken in a cultural vacuum; every word was spoken in a cultural context.”⁶⁴

Yet, according to the Kroegers in their book *I Suffer Not a Woman*, several other important methods of interpretation in addition to principles of exegesis (historical and cultural context) are needed such as language (is there more than one meaning for any

⁶² ⁸ Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. ⁹ I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, ¹⁰ but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. ¹¹ A woman^[a] should learn in quietness and full submission. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; ^[b] she must be quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. ¹⁵ But women^[c] will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

⁶³ John R. Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 74.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

words employed in the passage?) and grammar and context (is there an unexpected construction which might give another interpretation?).⁶⁵

An investigation of the egalitarian approach to the scriptures of 1 Timothy may clarify teachings that are rarely heard. According to Joseph Tkach,⁶⁶ this approach has more merit for these reasons:

In 1 Cor. 11:5 Paul allowed women to pray and prophesy. Prophecy, by its very nature, seems to involve authority for it means to speak words inspired by God. This indicates that the prohibition in 1 Tim. 2:12 should not be taken as a universal or permanent rule. The inconsistent attempts by complementarians to draw lines between what women can and cannot do suggest that the task is impossible. Paul was inspired to write this prohibition as his own policy, not as a command. It is not surprising that Paul is describing a policy that was of temporary validity. It was written to help Timothy combat some heresies that were causing problems in Ephesus. Its directives include cultural matters such as the posture of prayer and the way in which women might adorn themselves. Paul's advice concerning widows, despite being issued with commands, is not applicable to the church today. Although the letter is about church administration, it was written for a specific situation, and we should not assume in advance that its instructions are timeless truths.

⁶⁵ Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer not a Woman* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House), 36-38.

⁶⁶ Joseph Tkach, *Women in Church Leadership: Conclusion*, Grace Communion International, 2006, accessed October 10, 2017. <https://www.gci.org/church/ministry/women11>.

Heresies, the worship of Artemis and Isis, and the Gnostic belief that “a female could produce a living being without aid of the male”⁶⁷ were prevalent, so Paul was opposing Gnostic doctrine that depicted Eve as the source of spiritual awakening and claimed motherhood (feminine) as the ultimate reality. What Paul was trying to do was “prohibiting women from claiming the power of origin; it fits with the refutation which follows.”⁶⁸ 1 Timothy 2:13-14 considers an orthodox refutation of Gnostic-like mythology. Gnostic stories envisioned Eve pre-existing Adam and responsible for infusing him with life. This corresponds to the first point. The next statement “and Eve, being completely deceived...” (v.14), concerns the Gnostic notion of Eve as spiritual instructor with superior knowledge that was solidly entrenched, and Paul categorically refutes it.⁶⁹

The last verse “she shall be saved through the childbearing...” (v. 15) presents a new set of perplexities; there is obviously a theological problem. Alternatively, it either refers to the birth of Christ or a message that focuses on the women in the congregation in repudiating the false teachers, and the apostle showing a “strong affirmation of the essential validity of their often thankless ministry.”⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Kroegers, *I Suffer Not a Woman*, 110.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 113.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 117-125.

⁷⁰ Kroegers, *I Suffer Not a Woman*, 177.

Other Major Texts Concerning Women in Ministry

It is evident that a number of women in the Old Testament are mentioned as leaders and prophetesses,⁷¹ and that women played significant roles around Jesus.⁷² The roles these women held in the scriptures mentioned is in dispute as well as specific Bible passages. The question that could be continually argued here is whether or not these women were considered deacons and co-workers. In his book, Perriman examines these passages. He argues that the fact Paul does refer to women as co-workers is significant. Perriman debates that Paul mentions nothing to suggest that the contribution of these women was in any way different or inferior to that of a man. He states two particular conclusions drawn from the fact that women were present among Paul's co-workers: "The first is that these women worked alongside male missionaries and church workers on terms of equality, since the same terminology is used to describe their activity. The second conclusion is that when Paul urged the Corinthians to submit themselves to the household of Stephanas and to every co-worker and laborer (1 Cor. 16:15-16), he naturally included female co-workers in the ranks of these church leaders."⁷³ For example, when Paul mentions Phoebe he refers to her as a deacon and then to the fact that she was serving in a house church. Does the reference to church (Col 4:15) imply that certain women held positions of leadership or authority as in the house of the Nympha

⁷¹ Including Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4-5), Esther (Esther 4:15-17), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14) and Athaliah (2 Chronicles 22:10-12).

⁷² We would find evidence (Mathew 27: 55-56, Mark 15: 40-41, Luke 8: 1-3; John 20:14-18). This role continued into the early church as well, where number of women who held important roles in the early church (Acts 1:12-14, 1824-26, 21:7-9, Romans 16:1-16).

⁷³ Perriman, *Speaking of Women: Interpreting Paul*, 62.

church? Another issue to discuss here, a very important and necessary topic to address, is authority.

He does name women as prophets, co-workers, and deacons. What kind of authority did the prophetic ministry have in the early church? The fact that Paul calls these women co-workers illustrates that these women must have worked alongside male missionaries and church workers on terms of equality since the same terminology is used. Furthermore, that Paul raises the matter of Euodia and Syntyche publicly also indicates that they occupied important positions in ministry in Philippi. When Paul urged the Corinthians to submit to the household of Stephanas and to every co-worker and laborer, he naturally included women who had this rank of church leadership as in the house of Nympha (Col 4:15).

In some places Paul actually mentions Priscilla's name before her husband's (Acts 18:18, 26, Rom 16:3; 2 Tim 4:19). This may allude to her involvement in the ministry. The status of co-worker seems to be implied when Mary and Persis are said to have labored. Tryphaena and Tryphosa are also referred to as workers in the Lord, as are Eudia and Syntyche (Phil. 4: 2-3).

Moreover, we also read about Phoebe. She was not described as a co-worker, but rather referred to as sister, *diakonos*, servant, or minister. It does suggest that she had a publicly recognized character. The reference to Phoebe, therefore, constitutes evidence that women served in some sort of official capacity as deacons in the Pauline church.⁷⁴ Sharing a similar opinion, we also find that Norbert Baumert raises another good argument worth mentioning here. This is from 1 Timothy 3:11 where Paul inserts some

⁷⁴ Ibid., 62-65.

of the moral and personal qualities expected of male deacons, and also of women. It is commonly taught that he is referring to wives here, but the Greek word *gynaikas* can be translated as either wives or women. The absence of a definite article (the women/wives) or a possessive pronoun (their women/wives) weighs against the view that these were the deacons' wives, but rather are female deacons.⁷⁵ He takes this point further emphasizing here, the women, because it is a necessary precondition for a certain kind of service. "Something similar occurs with the 'supervisors and deacons.' These women have a special function within the community whereas the general instruction for the women has already been given in 1 Timothy 2:9-10."⁷⁶ Although some may disagree with this interpretation, it is an explanation of this text that is not usually taught in churches and Christian circles.

Moreover, one of the most critical scriptures that has always been used to restrict believing women is 1 Timothy 2:11-12. Others have carefully examined both scriptural and historical contexts, but author Zen questioned the traditional use of 1 Timothy 2:12 to silence women. He argues that if the "silence" used in this scripture rests on very questionable assumptions, then women in the body of Christ have been placed under an unfounded bondage based on serious misinterpretation. He demonstrates in his book *What's with Paul and Women?* That there is another interpretation? Looking at the passage, "let the women learn in quietness in all submission," Jon argues that both the words "silence" and "all submission" are taken to mean that women are not to speak in

⁷⁵ Norbert Baumert, *Women and Man in Paul: Overcoming a Misunderstanding* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 244-246.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 246.

church meetings and to be passive receivers, not active participants. However, he suggests a corrective interpretation. The word used is *hesuchia* which means quiet. We are all to be quiet (2 Thess. 3:12).⁷⁷

Quietness is asked of all believers, and he argues that Paul means that women need to learn in quietness, not to be silenced. “The fact that *hesuchia* does not mean “silence” illustrates the careless and wholly inappropriate use of Scripture by those who with arrogance and dogmatism cite 1 Timothy 2:12 as if it obviously puts an end to any further debate.”⁷⁸

Headship and Submission

Discussion of male headship is generally in reference to men having authority over women, but does this mean that no leadership roles are permitted for women? Is this what 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 suggests? Indeed, this text contains numerous words that scholars continue to debate in commentaries. Paul uses the word “head” (*kephalē*) both literally and metaphorically in this passage. According to Johnson in his book *How I Changed my Mind about Women in Leadership*, “the Greek word that Paul chose, *kephale*, suggests that it carries general meaning as to the part of the body attached to the neck. The Greek word might also refer to “headwaters” or the “source of a river.” Also, it sometimes refers to the soldier...the frontline soldier who is in the line of fire.”⁷⁹ Yet the debate whether the metaphor means “source,” as suggested by egalitarians, or

⁷⁷ Jon Zens, *What’s with Paul and Women: Unlocking the Cultural Background to 1 Timothy 2* (Omaha, NE: Ekklesia Press, 2010), 43-45.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Alan F. Johnson, *How I Changed my Mind about Women in Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 263, Kindle.

“authority,” as suggested by complementarians, is still burning. Therefore, it is important to continue to work through this confusion of conflicting interpretations.

Despite the conflicting interpretations, one conclusion that can be drawn from this text is that women may exercise public speaking (prophecy) and praying ministries in church just as men. Paul’s issue, here, is women’s behavior in public ministry. What does head covering reveal about women’s role in this passage?

Dress in an Honorable Way

Wood suggests in his article, “What Paul Really Says About Women in Ministry” that in this passage Paul uses the terminology of honor and shame⁸⁰ regarding the respectful way for men to perform the ministries of prayer and prophecy. “Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head,” 1 Corinthians 11: 14 and he also includes the respectful way for women to do the same. Accordingly, the honorable way for women is to cover their heads, but Paul does not say that they should ask their husbands for permission or ask for their male pastor's prior approval to speak. Thus, the issue in Corinthians is to dress in ways that demonstrate respect.

Authority and Headship (kephale)

1 Corinthians 11:3, “But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” The explanation of *kephale* as it appears in this verse is taking a front row in the evangelical

⁸⁰ George P. Wood, “Scripture Itself Provides the Best Argument for an Egalitarian Interpretation,” Influence Magazine, January 31, 2017, accessed October 17, 2017, <https://influencemagazine.com/practice/what-paul-really-says-about-women-in-ministry--part-1>.

circle's. "The argument seems to stall over whether *kephale* refers to 'source' or 'authority'. Paul might have chosen *kephale* precisely because it carried multiple meanings."⁸¹ Because Paul purposefully used the term "body" in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, he precisely used *kephale* in the same chapter, as it serves more than a single purpose. What did Paul mean by head? Again, the two main views, complementarian and egalitarian, will be discussed.

Not only do complementarians use the word head as "authority," but they argue that this text proves that women are subordinate. Piper and Grudem, for example, try to prove that the evidence for "source" is very weak by comparing it with other passages such as Ephesians 5:23. Paul says, "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior." Accordingly, "the meaning 'source' here makes Paul's statement hard to comprehend since it is difficult to see how husbands are the source of their wives."⁸² Further support for the meaning of "head" to be "authority" is found in Ephesians 5:22-24: "wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything." According to Piper and Grudem, Paul calls on women to submit to their husbands, which, as they argue, supports the notion that head indicates authority. Yet according to Bohnnie, "nowhere in any literature does *kephale* mean boss, ruler, or commander of one individual, much less

⁸¹ Mark Husbands and Timothy Larsen, eds., *Women, Ministry and the Gospel: Exploring New Paradigms* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 94.

⁸² Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, 127.

a man over a woman.”⁸³ She explains that there is a specific Greek word, *archē*, with that meaning. Why did Paul not use this specific word? Grudem emphasizes in his book *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth* that Paul commands women to wear a head covering as a sign of submission to their husbands. He implies here that Paul reaffirms in the church a hierarchical social order he supposedly found in creation.⁸⁴ This response begs the question, why Paul needed to refer to creation in this text. Egalitarians see a valid premise: “the real premise of the argument, however, is not that man is head of the woman but that woman is the glory of man.”⁸⁵ Egalitarians explain that more clarification and exposition are found in the next verses, 1 Corinthians 11:8-9, as Paul refers to creation: “For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.” The suggestion here, evidently, is to emphasize the glory; the creation of woman from the man’s side, as “helper according or corresponding to him” as in Genesis 2:22, indicates that the meaning of “woman was created for man” is no more than that she brings glory to the man. Thus, according to Perriman, this passage does not address man’s authority over woman. Paul’s reference to head covering here is a matter of honor and dishonor, not disobedience. “So the woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered ‘dishonors her head,’ but nothing suggests that the real fault is in subordination. So the question of authority is irrelevant to a discussion.”⁸⁶ Therefore, the meaning implied in the verses cited is that “man brings

⁸³ Johnson, *How I Changed my Mind about Women in Leadership*, 262.

⁸⁴ Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth*, 110.

⁸⁵ Perriman, *Speaking of Women: Interpreting Paul*, 36.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

honor and glory to Christ with his head uncovered; woman brings honor and glory to man with her head covered.”⁸⁷

To conclude, according to Pierce and Groothuis in their book, *Discovering Biblical Equality*, “The answer lies in the Genesis narrative: she came from man (in the sense she was taken from his side), and was created for his sake; this is what makes her the man’s ‘glory.’”⁸⁸ Thus, if she behaves in a way that turns this glory to shame by not covering her head, as relative to the culture, this makes more sense. The use of this word in this metaphor, then, does not specifically express a subordinating relationship.

Yet, why was Paul concerned with head covering and what cultural issues was he addressing? There are several potential cultural phenomena that could explain Paul’s concern with head coverings. For example:

Roman priests covering their heads with the togas while officiating at pagan services; shoulder-length hair on many Greek men, suggesting homosexuality; overly short hair on Greek women, suggesting lesbianism; lack of a veil or shawl on some Jewish or Greek women, suggesting a wife was not “attached” but “available”; and more.⁸⁹

Paul, accordingly, was concerned that Christian men and women at worship not appear as being religiously unfaithful to God or sexually unfaithful to their spouses.

The Priesthood of Women

The theological argument proposed by opponents of women in leadership draws from a specific understanding of the nature of the ministerial office. Therefore, the focus

⁸⁷ Chris Krycho, “Headcovering as Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16,” May 10, 2013, accessed May 14, 2017, http://2012-2013.chriskrycho.com/theology/head-coverings-an-exegesis-of-1-corinthians-11_2-16/.

⁸⁸ Pierce, *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, 152.

⁸⁹ Linda L. Belleville, Craig L. Blomberg, Craig S. Keener, and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 157.

in this section is on another topic, the nature of the priesthood of believers and how both complementarians and egalitarians view who are to serve as priests, and to explore if it is Christ's intent that his people consecrate persons for specific tasks in the church.

Indent Women and men together share the *Imago Dei*, the image of God; this is a Christian social reality. Thus, it can be concluded that both men and women are to serve in all aspects of church life. According to Grenz in his book, *Women in the Church*, the people of God live in a community of both men and women. Since God created Adam and Eve, despite the Fall, his goal has permeated the narrative of redemptive history; he delivered Israel out of slavery in order to restore a community and people that he himself would dwell amongst. As we have become a new creation, *Imago Dei*, refers to God's ultimate goal for human history, to establish a new community. At present humanity is divided by ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender, but the community God intends to establish is the church, bringing glory to him through a reconciled people who reflect the character of their Creator and Redeemer.⁹⁰ According to Grenz, because of this, we have become Christ's community and can no longer relate to one another on the basis of the old social distinctions. "Nearly all theologians - including contemporary complementarians - agree that this principle applies to structures that appeal to ethnic distinctions or economic standing."⁹¹ Yet complementarians do not agree that hierarchical relationships are comparable to economic status or race, for they consider submission as rooted in creation and before the fall. Complementarians see that "God

⁹⁰ Grenz, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry*, 174-175.

⁹¹ Ibid., 176.

calls men to provide leadership or headship, and he entrusts women with the role of assisting men.”⁹² They argue that the Old Testament exemplifies a divinely-instituted order for God’s people and thus, if only males functioned as priests, this sets the order for the church today. “They oppose the full participation of women in church leadership because they understand the ordained office as fundamentally priestly in nature.”⁹³

But it is the egalitarian view that people of God often fail to act according to the vision of new creation and that Christians have used the Bible to justify hierarchical structure. “Nineteenth-century American Christians, for example, marshaled support from the Bible to maintain slavery in society and segregation in the church.”⁹⁴ In an article, “Anticipating God’s New Community: Theological Foundations for Women in Ministry” Grenz writes, “egalitarians, however, reply that the New Testament principle of the priesthood of all believers suggests that the successor of the Levitical priesthood is the Church as a whole rather than the ordained office. Because of Christ’s work, believers together comprise ‘a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ’ (1 Pet 2:5, 9).”⁹⁵ Egalitarians believe that the New Testament experienced a radical change and that it is now the priesthood of all believers, the church, the fellowship and the community of believer priests. According to White, the author of

⁹² Ibid., 180.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 178.

⁹⁵ Stanley J. Grenz, “Anticipating God’s New Community: Theological Foundations for Women in Ministry,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, December, 1995, accessed October 25, 2017, <http://www.galaxie.com/article/jets38-4-08>.

*Women in Ministry*⁹⁶, demands the partnership of men and women in all expressions of ordained ministry, and that the model of Old Testament priesthood should not hinder women from serving in any ministry.

She believes, as well, that the New Testament concept of believers eliminates the distinction in roles between men and women and that spiritual gifts determine who is qualified for a certain ministry. The Bible calls God's people a royal priesthood and a holy nation. "The new believers represent their Lord Jesus Christ and function as priests by delivering the gospel message to all the world."⁹⁷

Thus Grenz states, "The universal priesthood of all believers indicates that the Spirit may base the choice on certain considerations. But the gender is not an overriding factor that either qualifies or disqualifies a believer-priest for selection to the ordained office."⁹⁸ But Grudem says, "Not all believers are qualified to be elders or pastors or teachers."⁹⁹ Grudem argues that the egalitarian asks to use one truth of scripture (the priesthood of all believers) to override or deny other passages of scripture (1 Timothy 2:12; 3:2 and Titus 1:6 along with other passages that establish a pattern of male leadership in the church). Egalitarians do not override those scriptures; on the contrary, they tend to find the hermeneutics that try to explain the consistency of Paul's writing and his actions regarding women having roles as deaconesses, ministers and co-

⁹⁶ Gerard P. Damsteegt, "The Priesthood of All Believers," Andrews University Faculty Publications, January 2000, accessed October 25, 2017, https://www.andrews.edu/~damsteeg/priesthood_of_believers.pdf.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Grudem, *Is this Evangelical Feminism*, 404.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

workers—a point to be discussed further. Their attempts are faithful to the consistency of, and not contradictory to, the Word of God.

Ordination

“Woman has, according to the scriptures, perfect liberty to speak and testify or preach the Gospel whenever the Holy Spirit qualifies her and sends her to do so.”

A.B. Simpson

Since the Holy Spirit has been poured out on all believers, both men and women (Acts 2:17-18),¹⁰⁰ and since the Holy Spirit gives gifts to both men and women (1 Corinthians 12:7,11; 1 Peter 4:10),¹⁰¹ we assume that there should be no restriction on the ministries available to both men and women. “In actual practice, the early church was generally able to live up to this ideal of total participation of its constituency in ministry.”¹⁰² Grenz argues that “the sovereignty of the Spirit in bestowing *charismata* on God’s people clearly shows that God welcomes the ministry of both men and women in all aspects of church life, including the ordained office.”¹⁰³ “The Old Testament predicted an outpouring of the Spirit on both your sons and your daughters.” (Joel 2:28). “The New

¹⁰⁰ In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

¹⁰¹ ⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. (1 Corinth 12 :7, 11) & ¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10).

¹⁰² Belizakian, *Community 101*, 80.

¹⁰³ Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 192.

Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit calls and empowers both men and women with various spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12; Rom 12:3-8; Eph 4:7-13).”¹⁰⁴

Although we are in agreement concerning the ministry of both men and women, yet we question whether God has appointed distinct offices in the church. Did God instruct the ordination of elders and pastors to be carried out by the church (Rom 10:14-15; Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23), and if he did, why are women still excluded?

Some Christians assume that the legitimate rite of ordination finds its foundation in the Old and New Testaments. With few exceptions, Christians consider “ordination a legitimate rite of setting selected members apart for the purpose of pastoral ministry and oversight in the Christian Church.”¹⁰⁵ Darius Jankiewicz, in his article “Is Ordination Required for Ministry,” argues that a corresponding rite is not found in the Scriptures, nor do we find in the New Testament that such a rite is practiced when elected members are asked to execute the office of elder or other. He goes on to question from where we get our understanding of ordination and why “laying on of hands” presently seems to be exclusively associated with ordination.

It seems that little scripture and unambiguously clear theology supports the practice of today’s ordination or pastoral ministry. “The modern term ‘ordination’ comes from the Latin *ordo* (order, class, rank) and its derivative ‘ordination’ appears to refer in ancient Rome to installment or induction, appointment or accession to rank.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, “Women’s Ordination and the Call to Biblical Fidelity,” Maranatha Media, 1995, accessed December 29, 2017, http://www.anym.org/pdf/searching_the_scriptures_womens_ordination_spipim.pdf, 19.

¹⁰⁵ Darius Jankiewicz, “The Problem of Ordination,” accessed May 23, 2017, <https://www.adventistarchives.org/the-problem-of-ordination.pdf>, 2.

¹⁰⁶ Jankiewicz, “The Problem of Ordination,” 5.

Janckiewicz goes on to explain that it was Tertullian, in the second century, who introduced this vocabulary with a few other words such as *ecclesia* that meant simply “assemble” and then became a technical designation for Christian community. As in the Roman Empire, ordination for him implied a movement from a lower to a higher position and from having no sacral responsibilities within the religious community to acquire responsibilities for their performance. It represented status and ranking that did not appear to exist!¹⁰⁷

It was in the *post-apostolic* period when Christianity found itself under pressure as Jesus had not returned and the first generational leaders had all died that this practice appeared. Christianity was facing internal controversies such as heretical teachings and splits. In addition to the external pressure, persecution was initiated by the Roman authorities. “Responding to these external and internal threats, the early Christians looked to their leaders for guidance and protection. According to historical sources, it is apparent that the system of elder, which seemed to spring out of the Jerusalem Church, spread rapidly throughout the Christian world.”¹⁰⁸ It obviously has some references to clear incidences in the Bible such as Acts 14:23: “Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.”

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰⁸ Janckiewicz, “The Problem of Ordination,” 9.

What is Ordination?

At best, ordination is considered an act by which “the Church recognizes, confirms and commissions,”¹⁰⁹ but Clark adds that it is also a public “acknowledgement and authorization.”¹¹⁰ At worst, pejoratively mentioning this, “it is a sacramental ritual that is thought to confer some spiritual grace on the candidate and set him apart for a ministry to which laypeople are not supposed to qualify.”¹¹¹

Scholars today question and challenge the practice of ordination. The practice has some biblical support, but “we agree that in certain aspects our current ordination practices go beyond what may have been envisioned in the biblical era.”¹¹² Yet it has become heavy with traditional additions and accretions that vary from one denomination to another.

A connection between the laying on of hands and ordination is also commonly assumed. “Although there are several reports of laying on of hands in the New Testament record, none can be understood as having much to do with ordination as it is currently practiced.”¹¹³ Jesus laid his hands on the sick and children, but he is never reported to have done this for anyone he commissioned to ministry. In the early church we encounter several occasions where the apostles laid on hands, but ironically not in the same sense. Though the apostles laid hands on the seven to appoint them to “wait on tables” (Acts 6:

¹⁰⁹ N. Clark, “The Meaning and Practice of Ordination,” *The Baptist Quarterly*, September 5, 2016, 203.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Bilezikian, *Community 101*, 156.

¹¹² Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 193.

¹¹³ Bilezikian, *Community 101*, 156.

2-6), it was oppositely, not to those who ministered the Word, but rather the tables.

“Later, the Antioch congregation used the same act to set apart Barnabas and Paul for missionary service (Acts 13:1-3),”¹¹⁴ but Bilezikian argues that those mentioned in this incidence had already been recognized by the church as ‘prophets and teachers.’

Furthermore, “the apostles also laid hands on new converts as a sign of their reception of the Holy Spirit.”¹¹⁵ Such instances have nothing to do with ordination.

Grenz and others relate it to Jesus’ appointment of the twelve persons from among his disciples to play a special role in his mission, but others assume that the biblical model from which we have learned or adapted this is Timothy. “His experience suggests that two elements - a divine call and confirmation by a local fellowship - work together in setting someone in pastoral ministry.”¹¹⁶ In this case (1 Tim 1:18) and the case of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3), the subsequent public act was confirming the call by the laying on of hands by the local congregation (1 Tim 4:14). “Taken together, the texts imply that New Testament ordination was related to the gift of the empowering Holy Spirit (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6-7), and it was marked by a public commissioning (Acts 13:3; see also Num 27: 18-23).”¹¹⁷ According to Linda Belleville, though, “this is a far cry from how churches use the term ‘ordain’ today.”¹¹⁸ As Sumner explains in her book,

¹¹⁴ Grenz, *Women in The Church*, 195.

¹¹⁵ Bilezikian, *Community 101*, 156.

¹¹⁶ Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 195.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 196.

¹¹⁸ Linda L. Belleville, Craig L. Blomberg, Craig S. Keener, and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 109.

Men and Women in the Church, ordination is more a product of church tradition than of biblical pattern.¹¹⁹

Yet other scholars such as Grudem make it clear that there are examples that show the appointing of elders. Paul and Barnabas, for example, established elders in all the churches they planted. “Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust” (Acts 14:23). “It wasn’t any secret who the elders were in each church because James could write to all the churches throughout the Roman Empire, ‘Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church’ (James 5:14).”¹²⁰ A public ceremony or a process by which elders were acknowledged and established in their office and which we refer to as “ordain” and “ordination” is evident. The next question, then, is whether any passages in the Bible indicate that only men should be ordained and women should not.

Ordination and Gender

For centuries churches have excluded women from ordination. “Yet when confronted with legitimate questions about current ordination practices, many groups fall back on custom and say: We’ve always done it this way. We’ve never ordained women.”¹²¹ Therefore, today an adequate hermeneutic that discerns the heart and mind of tradition and the biblical teaching on which it rests is called for. Tradition alone is not a reliable guide, and we ought not to ignore or diminish the pressure of our culture on our

¹¹⁹ Sarah Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church: Building Consensus on Christian Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 318, Kindle.

¹²⁰ Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 367.

¹²¹ Gretchen Gaebeliein Hull, *Equal to Serve: Women and Men Working Together Revealing the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 214.

exegesis, an issue to be further investigated. As discussed previously, if the Bible does not state clearly that ordination is a qualification for the pastorate, then why do we? “How tragic that women’s ordination has become a major point of division among Christians, when no one today can say for sure exactly what ordination meant in the New Testament times.”¹²²

Today it is our desire to call for ordination of both genders based on their calling. Bilezikian, for example, advocates, “Every Christian who discovers his or her spiritual gift and is affirmed in it by one’s local congregation is, by that very fact, ordained by God to do ministry.”¹²³ Thus, Bilezikian explains that any limitations or prevention of “any believer in good standing within the community from using his or her spiritual gift because of restrictions that relate to ‘ordination’ is to allow church traditions to take precedence over biblical imperatives.”¹²⁴ If Christians believe in the priesthood of all believers and the commission of all believers, should it come as any surprise that women feel called to any of these areas of service? “As with men, women too can heed God’s call to a particular ‘ambassadorial post.’”¹²⁵

Ordination and Culture

Culture, in some places of the world, has denied equal rights to women in various aspects of life. The fact that culture moderates some of the church practices cannot be

¹²² Ibid., 216.

¹²³ Bilezikian, *Community 101*, 159.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Gretchen Gaebelein Hull, *Equal to Serve: Women and Men Working Together Revealing the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 216.

ignored, so it is undeniable that culture presents more obstacles for some women to be recognized. In their paper “Cultural Considerations and Women’s Ordination,” Sanau and Bauer demonstrate “that God has chosen to work through human culture, that people in various cultures interpret biblical principles in different ways, and that a culture’s concept of what is acceptable or unacceptable changes over time.”¹²⁶ Some of the examples given were in Western churches that do not attach any cultural value to a woman’s menstrual cycle and the issue of cleanliness or purity, nor do they practice gender separation as in some of the Middle Eastern cultures.

Yet Middle Eastern women in this twenty first century are witness to cultural changes everywhere, even in some cultures that were up to now exclusive to women. The role of women has changed through the centuries from traditional roles, to economic, business, educational, vocational and political roles, a subject to be addressed further. Thus, “as the church looks to the future, therefore, it will have to prepare itself to minister, not just to women with a traditional outlook, but also to those with expanding viewpoints.”¹²⁷ It is time to be more alert to the new generation of women who, undoubtedly carry the majority attitude of the contemporary culture. as more young ladies accept new roles in vocational and educational fields, as administrators and leaders, as head managers and instructors. How can they be expected to understand or accept a church that tells them that they cannot serve simply because of their gender?

¹²⁶ Bruce L. Bauer and Boubakar Sanou, “Cultural Considerations and Women’s Ordination,” Andrews University Seminary Studies, 2015, accessed May 25, 2017, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3355&context=auss>, 7.

¹²⁷ Marlys Taege, *And God Gave Women Talents!* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), 135.

Could the church learn anything from the models of Jesus and Paul about how to interact with contemporary culture? Jesus allows Joanna and Susanna to support him with their own means on several occasions. Furthermore, Jesus speaks to a Samaritan woman who becomes an evangelist, and he appears to Mary Magdalene, a woman whose testimony in her culture would likely not have been trusted. On yet another occasion, he allows Mary, sister of Martha, to sit at his feet and learn, something which no Jewish rabbi would have done at that time. “Our Lord liberated men and women from their bondage to the social orders that violate God’s intention for human life-in-community. On behalf of women Jesus acted as the model human standing against the patriarchal system, bringing women into the new order where sex distinctions no longer determined rank and worth.”¹²⁸ Yet complementarians argue against this, referring to Christ’s choice of twelve men to be the original apostles and claiming that he gave them the prerogatives of leadership. Some consider Christ’s choice as an act of ordination, and thus an example of choosing twelve ordained men.

However, as mentioned previously, Eudia and Syntyche both ministered in Phillipi and referring to them Paul said, “they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel” (Phil 4:3). Paul mentions several other female coworkers in his lengthy greeting (Romans 16:1-16), opposing all cultural restrictions. “Romans 16 provides remarkable evidence of the leadership role of women in the churches of this period. The chapter begins with (vv.1f), Phoebe who is said to be a *diakonos* of the church at Cenchreae and a

¹²⁸ Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 209.

benefactor (prostatist). Whether these are technical terms denoting office or not, they indicate that she exercised leadership roles.”¹²⁹

Some argue that the issue is not about women ministering as the examples illustrate, but it is about women’s ordination. This is the issue in question. How should the church act within socio-cultural restrictions due to cultural traditions? It is noteworthy that all of these untraditional interactions took place in a cultural setting similar to that of the traditional society of the Old Testament. In such patriarchal societies, it was assumed that authority flowed down from God to man, to his wife and then to the children. This is still the case in some places in the world such as in Palestine and throughout the Middle East.

To finalize the argument, as Peter confirmed, “if God gave them [Gentiles] the same spirit He gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?” (Acts 11: 15-17). The criteria for women’s ordination should be based on the same as for men; both are called by the same Holy Spirit into the same gospel ministry. Hence Ellen White wrote in her article “The Perils and Privileges of the Last Days,” “Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed. . . . They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands.”¹³⁰ She added that there are women who should labor in the Gospel ministry. Culture should no longer restrict women from receiving ordination.

¹²⁹ Sarah Cunningham, *We Belong Together* (New York: Friendship Press, 1992), 45.

¹³⁰ Ellen White, “The Perils and Privileges of the Last Days,” *The Review and Herald*, November 22, 1982, accessed October 30, 2017. <https://text.egwwritings.org/publication.php?pubtype=Periodical&bookCode=RH&lang=en&collection=2§ion=all&QUERY=loud%2Bcry&resultId=12&year=1892&month=November&day=22¶graphReferences=1>.

Ordination and Church Authority

The first problem in ordination according to Cunningham is “the self-contradiction and incoherence of theologies of priesthood and ministry that twist humility of Christ into a religion of power.”¹³¹ The church invites women into the priesthood and ministry, but when they pursue these callings with their passion and energy they are not allowed to participate, except in subservient tasks and low level assignments. Women are given responsibilities without authority. First, ordination ought to be considered as a recognition of someone devoted to serving others and not about achieving power and authority thus stratifying its relationships into hierarchy. “The deceptive point of access of hierarchy into Christian community is through leadership roles misconstrued as positions of power.”¹³² Among evangelicals, discussions of female ordination often focuses on authority. Complementarians argue that “only men can rightly exercise the authority integral to this ministry.”¹³³ However, if ordination had the meaning of an act of public recognition and ceremony to bless someone called to ministry, ordination might be acceptable on certain grounds, such as a public confirmation of a role already embodied.

For those who argue that it is unnatural for women to be in positions of leadership, how is it that Phoebe, who was a *diakonos*, had pastoral gifts; Priscilla had the gift of teaching; Euodia and Syntyche had pastoral gifts. Though others may argue:

Since the Bible indicates that women in ministry may engage in some forms of teaching, including teaching other women (Titus 2:3-5) and even men (Acts 18:26; cf. Col 3:16), the real issue is not whether women may speak or teach (e.g.,

¹³¹ Cunningham, *We Belong Together*, 80.

¹³² Bilezikian. *Community 101*, 160.

¹³³ Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 210.

preaching, public evangelism, teaching Sabbath school, etc.). The issue is, may women legitimately carry out the kind of teaching in the church which places them in a position of authority over men.¹³⁴

Hence, even complementarians agree that women can be part of every ministry, but not ordained, though ordination as we understand it today, has no clear evidence in the Bible.

Yet despite all these arguments, the church is God's appointed agency of authority. The church's role on earth is to carry out its commission. When addressing issues where no biblical guidance exists, general principles should be applied. "The Gospel Commission serves as the base for inclusiveness of males and females in delegated official positions: ordained minister, ordained elder, ordained deacon and deaconess. Christ says, 'go ye' (Matt 28: 18-20); this is a mandate which should also be applied to ordination of female Gospel ministers."¹³⁵ The Gospel's Commission is a mandate to all Christians, regardless of their gender to make disciples, through witnessing, preaching, teaching and baptizing.

Women and the Authoritative Offices

In the discussion of the ordination of women in liturgical traditions such as the Catholic and Orthodox churches, administering the sacraments by the clergy is central. In these liturgical traditions, the role of the ordained focuses on both the authority of the church and the administration of the sacraments like the Lord's supper, baptism, and

¹³⁴ Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, "Women's Ordination and the Call to Biblical Fidelity," Pilgrims Rest, accessed on May 30, 2017, <http://www.sdadefend.com/Standards/SeachScr/SSindex.htm>.

¹³⁵ Leabaneng P. Simankane, "Development and Empowerment of Women for Ministry in the Seventh-Advent Church," Andrews University Digital Commons, accessed October 30, 2017, <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1120&context=dmin>, 55.

marriage. However, among evangelicals the focus is mainly on authority, as discussed above, especially leadership authority and teaching authority. “Complementarians argue that the authoritative aspects of the ordained office is an impediment for the ordination of women.”¹³⁶ Furthermore, they appeal to the representative role of the ordained leader. According to complementarians, in the pastoral leadership role, “pastors act as representatives of the Lord. Women, however, simply cannot represent his leadership in church.”¹³⁷ Yet to be established is to consider what the primary task of leaders is, what leadership in the church means and who is a leader.

Redefining Leadership

“The religious leader, according to the Bible, responds to a call to action. He or she does so in a particular, personal style or approach to that action; flexibility is key. And the biblical leader undertakes his or her approach contextually, that is, always with the specific needs of concrete faith communities in mind.”¹³⁸ According to Agosto in his book, *Servant Leadership: Jesus and Paul*, it means that our faith communities and leaders are to speak against the misuse of power. As Jesus and Paul demonstrated, leaders are to function in a climate of crisis and diversity, of Jews and others, slave and free, male and female; thus, leaders are to learn how to handle conflict and diversity. Also, a leader’s primary goal is to train and develop new potential leaders. Finally, Jesus’ new

¹³⁶ Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 210.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 211.

¹³⁸ Agosto, *Servant Leadership*, 9.

style of leadership is “the paradox of power through weakness.”¹³⁹ In comparison to traditional leaders, how are today’s church leaders to function?

Greenleaf writes in his book *Servant Leadership*, “the great leader is seen as servant first,” and thus he suggests that it begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. “Leadership was bestowed upon a person who was by nature a servant.”¹⁴⁰ The servant leader strives “to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served.”¹⁴¹ “Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead... the difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant – the first to make sure that others’ highest priority needs are being served.”¹⁴² Yet a Christian will have Jesus’ words in Matthew 20: 25-27 as his or her principle: “Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave.’” Thus, according to Greenleaf, while traditional leadership focuses on power and using power, servant leadership focuses on the wellbeing of those he or she serves, shares power and develops his or her followers. Greenleaf’s definition does not require one to hold a formal position of authority.

In the Palestinian Evangelical context, a woman gains trust, respect and oral persuasion, which are all considered as informal authority as Heifetz illustrates in his

¹³⁹ Agosto, *Servant Leadership*, 10.

¹⁴⁰ Robert K. Greenleaf, Larry C. Spears, Stephen R. Covey, and Peter M. Senge, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 2002), 21.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 28.

¹⁴² Ibid.

book, *Leadership without Easy Answers*. Thus, many women leaders teach, preach, serve, train, and empower the community of Christ. They are called by God and are already servants first, and leaders with no formal, official authority. This is, as Heifetz describes, the benefit of leading without authority, but the issue here is that these women are already considered to be servants and leaders. They were able, in a male dominant culture, to learn “strategies for leading without authority.”¹⁴³

Relating this to ordination, as mentioned previously, ordination is the act by which “the Church recognizes, confirms and commissions,” and is considered a public “acknowledgement and authorization.”¹⁴⁴ Accordingly, these women are serving people and are already functioning in their leadership role, so what is keeping them from ordination? Ordination, in the end, is official public recognition, confirmation, acknowledgement and authorization. Therefore, if scholars still argue the essence of ordination, why is female ordination one of the most problematic and argued issues of the church? Some leaders would ask why women need ordination if they are already fulfilling these roles. Why are they not satisfied with the privileges from which they already benefit?

Conclusion

One might ask why ordination is so important to men. Rev. B. T. Roberts argues this, and points to the need for women to officiate, in reference to the last command of Christ, who required everyone to make disciples and also to administer the sacrament of

¹⁴³ Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, UK: Belknap Press, 2003), 184.

¹⁴⁴ Clark, “The Meaning and Practice of Ordination,” 203.

baptism. “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matt. 28:19, 20) Thus, teaching and baptizing are closely connected; rites are administered by ordained persons including communal rites, the rite of baptism, and the rite of performing weddings. “The same persons who are commanded to make disciples are commanded to baptize them. Till they have done this, their work is not complete... they who catch the fish may string the fish.”¹⁴⁵ Therefore, in the same sense, women need authorization to administer sacraments. If not we are separating what God has joined together. Women should be allowed to baptize if they are allowed to preach. It is noteworthy to state that in some churches women administer communal sacraments. “Justice, then, demands that all barriers placed by men in the way of the elevation of women to any office in the gift of the church be removed.”¹⁴⁶

In many places and cultures, as Grenz writes in *Women in the Church*, women form a more effective representation of servant leadership and faithful, hard work than men. At the same time, the pastors and the ordained persons who encourage women to pursue all their ministries, deny them the ordained office as an opportunity of service. The solution to this problem faced by women in the Palestinian Arab context, as well as other contexts need to be found.

¹⁴⁵ Rev. B. T. Roberts, A.M., “Ordaining Women,” Free Methodist Church, U.S. A., Light and Life Press, 1992, accessed December 29, 2017, http://fmcusa.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/45/files/downloads/2012/05/Ordaining_Women-1.pdf, 78.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 81.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to present and examine available literature in order to encourage and empower Palestinian Christian women to take leadership roles in the Palestinian evangelical church and to research some models with support from theological literature. However, there is a paucity of literature authored by Palestinian Christians or written in a Palestinian context; one book was written by my colleague at Bethlehem Bible College. Thus, the lack of resources presented a challenge in tackling my field of study. Typically, a wealth of material exists within the western church, but the Palestinian church lags behind, as is common in the Arab world. Yet this fact alone speaks to the lack of attention and interest given to this topic by the Middle Eastern church, especially the Palestinian evangelical church. Since this research focuses on the Palestinian church, I used what was available given the lack of resources in Arabic. Among the eight books in Arabic located, most were written by either Lebanese or Egyptian authors within our wider Middle Eastern region, and due to the many similarities in our Arab context and culture, the literature included was relevant. Although written in a different context, the biblical content was worth examining. Furthermore, there was support among Arab theologians for the arguments presented: the empowerment of women in leadership in Arab churches and opportunities for women to serve alongside men in the work of the Kingdom. The literature reviewed from Arabic sources include summaries rather than quotes as it has been translated from Arabic to English. The goal of this literature review is to inspire more local Palestinian theologians to take an interest in and to write about this topic. The following is a general review of books containing material pertinent to this research.

Dr. Yohanna Katanacho, a local Palestinian theologian, is the author of *Release Me: The Role of Women in Christianity*. Half of this book concerns the role of women in the church, while the remainder is a translation of selections of Piper and Grudem's book, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. In the first half of the book, Katanacho gives an overview of women in the Old and New Testaments. He explains how some women in the Old Testament such as Deborah, Abigail and Esther rose into leadership positions in their nation, and that they faced different challenges and had to make hard decisions, yet proved to be capable of leading and provided wise counsel to the people. Katanacho also successfully describes Christ's relationship with women, his approach to them and all he did to empower them despite the common teachings of other rabbis of that time. Yet, Katanacho's view of women is complementarian; he states clearly that he does not allow women to become pastor or priest,¹ but encourages women's involvement in ministry. He urges that the church not question women's participation in ministry, but rather to question the roles they can fill within the church that are biblical. However, he encourages women to pursue political and official government positions.²

The Place of Woman in the Bible and *Women in Christianity* are two books authored by Egyptian author, Dr. Samuel Zaki. He began his book, *The Place of Woman in the Bible* (2001), by reviewing and highlighting several of the conflicting views regarding women stemming from either Islamic culture or contemporary biblical cultural beliefs. He describes and illustrates how women can either seek to liberate themselves from cultural norms and adopt new views and movements or maintain all they have

¹ Yohanna Katanacho, *Release Me: The Role of Women in Christianity*, translated from Arabic (Jerusalem, Israel: Christian Mission Alliance Church, 2002), 39.

² Ibid., 21.

inherited from their Arab cultural norms and ancestral heritage. These cultural norms deny a woman's rights of humanity and ministry, her leadership role and her civil role. Therefore, Zaki encourages his readers not to be biased, but rather to be objective as they read his book. His egalitarian viewpoint is evident as he tries to resolve the problematic scripture that complementarians employ to prove how women ought to keep silent in church. Referring to 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, "Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says," Zaki claims that Paul was dealing specifically here with pre-informed issues; the church wrote a letter to him about their existing problems, requesting his teaching and wisdom. The phrase in 1 Corinthians 7:1 "now for the matters you wrote about" proves that Paul was dealing with specific pre-informed dilemmas such as certain cultural heresies, behaviors and concepts that were common in Corinthian traditions and had leaked into the church. He also tried to solve the argument over 1 Timothy 2:11-15 "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet." He debates that these scriptures were written in a certain historical and cultural context in Ephesus; thus, his directive to women to learn in silence deals with the current situation at that time. He makes his argument over the Greek word that was used in this text, *authentēin*, meaning that she is not supposed to assume authority, a word that was always related to pagan worship with the intention of suicide and murder. According to Zaki, both pagan and heretical tradition included rites in which a woman might be responsible for the murder of a man (symbolically), and this might have entered the church through women who had come

from pagan backgrounds. Thus, he tries to challenge the use of the word, *authentain*, as used in this context.

In his second book, *Woman in Christianity* (2012), a whole chapter on ordaining women into elder, deacon, and pastoral offices is included. He begins by explaining that all the flawed arguments concerning ordination begins with a misunderstanding of what ordination is; therefore, if we redefined it, the reader would be free to decide whether or not to be in favor of it. Zaki emphasizes that we are humans and there is no harm in disagreeing. He explains that ordination is a public dedication and commitment of a person to a specific active ministry role with official recognition, and it should not be understood as the continuation of the Apostolic Caliphate. Rather, ordination today is the appointment of elders, deacons and pastors, not priests. The actual priesthood is for every Christian (not ordained), male or female as in 1 Peter 2:9 “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” Therefore, it is not imparted through a person but is the original rite given to every believer in Christ; it must be understood that ordination is not a goal and high objective, but rather a means of ministry. Thus, it is the manner in which ministry is organized in order to facilitate its performance and responsibilities within the limits of legitimate work with no desire to receive power, authority, or promotion. It is an organized way to reach the divine goal of working for the Kingdom.

He also gives a theological foundation for women in ordained offices, and even includes some of the reasons why the evangelical church should ordain women. He argues that women are needed to represent women, who comprise fifty percent of our

congregations and have unique needs, issues, and problems. Only women are aware of female psychology and are therefore able to address female related issues. Zaki argues that these anointed women must be given official recognition in order to authorize and delegate them to enter people's lives and homes for the purpose of ministry.

He also attempts to counter those who oppose women's ordination due to cultural traditions and norms by declaring that the role of the church is to enlighten and educate the culture within which it exists. Should it not be the church that precedes? In the culture of today women serve as government ministers, judges, marriage officials, and mayors. While society is advancing, the church lags far behind and marginalizes women, hindering them from having major roles in the church.

Finally, Zaki includes an historical review of women's ordination and leadership roles in the world and in the Egyptian evangelical church; the review brings awareness to the back and forth attempts to ordain women in Egypt. Although they ordained women elders in 1971, the action brought such theological and constitutional confusion that the discussion was postponed. When the council of the First Evangelical Church in Asyut (Egypt) ordained a woman elder in 2002, the issue resurfaced in the Egyptian Evangelical Synod, and in 2006 they agreed to ordain women elders. He emphasizes that the synod believed they were right regarding this issue for thirty-three years, but eventually they changed their policies and finally gave their full agreement and approval to something that had been denied for so many years.³

Woman in the Church and The Society was written by Samuel Habib, an Egyptian author who reflects on women and men and their equality. In forming both man

³ Samuel Zaki, *Women in Christianity* (Cairo Egypt: Al Thakafeh, 2012), 134-135.

and woman in the image of God: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them,” in Genesis 1:27, he explains that this fact automatically separates men and women from the rest of creation; humans were created as unique and special. Man is not superior; both man and woman are equally gifted with this honor.

In Genesis, Adam was created first and then God said: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” (Genesis 2:18) Habib explains that it was not good because Adam was lonely, but rather that leaving Adam alone was not good, and that she (a helper) would have the same responsibility as Adam. God assigns both male and female human beings a certain kind of dignity, value and responsibility, the responsibility to fulfill their God given purpose on earth.

According to Habib, God blessed both of them and said: “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (Genesis 1:28) Thus, the instructions were given equally to the male and female, and both were given the command to reproduce and rule.⁴

He argues further that in creating the woman as his suitable helper, the Hebrew word used comes from *ezer*, a word that does not presume lesser authority and describes someone working as an equal, receiving mutual responsibility. The partnership, being taken from his bone, emphasizes the unity of both to glorify God’s image and pursue His divine purposes.

⁴ Samuel Habib, *Women in the Church and the Society* (Cairo, Egypt: Dar Il Thakafeh, 1994), 112.

He then proceeds to take the reader on a journey in order to present an historical account of women in ancient times: Egyptian, Greek and Roman cultures, the laws of the Old Testament, Judaism, and the time of Jesus. Ancient cultures degraded women; women in pagan societies during biblical times were often treated with little more dignity than animals. Some of the best known Greek philosophers—considered the brightest minds of their era—taught that women were inferior creatures by nature. Even in the Roman Empire (perhaps the very pinnacle of pre-Christian civilization) women were usually regarded as mere chattel—personal possessions of their husbands or fathers, with hardly any better standing than household slaves. That was vastly different from the Hebrew (and biblical) concepts of marriage as a joint inheritance, and parenthood as a partnership where both father and mother were to be revered and obeyed by the children (Leviticus 19:3).

Pagan religion tended to encourage the devaluation of women. Of course, Greek and Roman mythology had its goddesses such as Diana and Aphrodite, but goddess worship did not in any way raise the status of women in society; rather, the opposite was true. Most temples devoted to goddesses were served by sacred prostitutes, priestesses who sold themselves for money, supposing they were performing a religious sacrament. Both the mythology and the practice of pagan religion have usually been overtly demeaning to women.

Contrasting the status of women in both ancient and contemporary times with the Bible, it is evident that from cover to cover the Bible exalts women. In fact, it often seems to go out of the way to pay respect to them, to highlight their roles in society and

family, to acknowledge the importance of their influence, and to exalt the virtues of women who were particularly godly examples.

In his book, *Is Woman a Problem or a Solution* (2014), Ekram Lemi' examines the question and title with an historical review of how God used women to help his people in the Old Testament. Previous authors, Katanacho, Habib and Zaki speak of this as well, but Lemi' emphasizes God's feminine metaphors and uses many examples from the Bible. He shows that there are as many female metaphors as there are male metaphors. Another point he mentions is from Luke's accounts of the parables and miracles of Jesus; Luke's gospel, according to Lemi', was significantly influenced by Jesus' treatment of women. He proves from the texts that every time Luke writes of a miracle involving a male person, Jesus then heals a female person. Also, he claims that the parables prove that there are female metaphors and illustrations as well as male. Finally, Lemi' takes controversial scriptures and explains them from an egalitarian point of view, taking into consideration the cultural and historical context.

He points out that it is time to face all the awkward theological teachings that have hindered women who are called to the pastoral or official ministries based on the assumption that since Jesus did not choose women to be among the twelve disciples, they are unfit to serve communion, baptize, and administer other sacraments as ordained ministers. After his thorough study of problematic scriptures such as 1 Timothy 2:11-14 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, his survey of women's roles through the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, and his investigation of the undermining thoughts and perceptions that have entered Christianity, he found a decline in theology that started in the fifth century and continued through the sixth century. Lemi' questions how we could deny the

fact that our foundational pillar was based on the church's witness, a privilege that was given to Mary Magdalene. He explains that she was an apostle to the apostles carrying this very significant sacrament. He added an imaginary scenario in which Peter tells Mary Magdalene: "sorry, you are a woman, and you are not part of the twelve disciples, so we cannot accept your message."

Lemi' ends his book debating our Muslim context which has always held men superior to women, even alluding to a verse in the Quran that speaks of this. He challenges that Christians have adopted Islamic views and uses the Bible to prove it. Yet we know that the Bible should change the world and impact it with Christ's and Paul's theology and teachings: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). The church in the first century succeeded in achieving equality for Gentile believers. Therefore, following the example of the first council that took place in Jerusalem in Acts 15, we can also achieve gender equality.

Another example Lemi' used was the slavery system that continued for nineteen centuries until the church was able to effectively live out what it preached. As abolition changed the way scripture was interpreted concerning slavery, it can do the same concerning women. He waits now to witness gender reformation, the third part of Galatians 3:28 "no male and female." Lemi' wonders whether women's ordination is a more complicated issue than the first two mentioned in this scripture (no Jew or Gentile and no slave or free). Ultimately, Lemi' hopes to see an acceptable resolution to the issue of gender equality and that it will not be harder to accomplish than the first two.

Finally, *Should We Ordain Women?*⁵ is a collection of short articles written by several leaders of the Egyptian Presbyterian Synod and edited by Samuel Habib, who was the chairman of the synod at that time (1997). The first article was written by Pastor Ibrahim Abdalla, who encourages the ordination of women as deacons. Basing his opinion on consideration of the historical background, he views the biblical context of 1 Corinthians 14 as a special case.

Pastor Elias Makar was asked to publish a small portion of his book, *My Faith*, as an article that considers the priesthood of all believers as part of the discussion of the ordination of women as elders in churches and ministries. Makar argues that there is no superiority in the Christian community; all are called his royal priests no matter who one is and regardless of one's gender or ethnicity. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:9-10). Makar questions any doctrine or theological hermeneutic that encourages intermediaries of any kind in the church, but rather encourages everyone's role in the priesthood. He mentions five areas of priestly privilege: approaching the throne of our Lord; preaching and teaching the Word; baptizing; communion and forgiving sins; and the ministry of intercession between God and the world. Although his section was very general with no mention of women (presumably because his book was not concerned with this specific issue) his contribution

⁵ Habib, *Should We Ordain Women?* (Cairo, Egypt: Al Thakafeh, 1997).

did focus on the priesthood of all believers and the sharing of the responsibilities of ministry by all, regardless of their gender.

The third article, written by Pastor Emile Zaki, studies the effect of cultures on the different views of women in leadership positions. He explains that some Jewish traditions and teachings assumed that angels fell because they were exposed to the beauty of women's hair, whereas Arabs believe that women cover their hair as a sign of their subjection to men. In the same way, the ancient world looked down on women as subordinate. He emphasizes that women suffer under social pressure, but that God treats them justly. As an example, he mentions the Old Testament story in Numbers 27 where the daughters of Zelophehad stood before Moses and the leaders to ask for their rights in the acquisition of their father's land and were granted what was fair to them. "Our father died in the wilderness. He was not among Korah's followers, who banded together against the LORD, but he died for his own sin and left no sons. Why should our father's name disappear from his clan because he had no son? Give us property among our father's relatives." When Moses brought their case to the Lord, God answered: "What Zelophehad's daughters are saying is right. You must certainly give them property as an inheritance among their father's relatives and give their father's inheritance to them. Say to the Israelites, 'If a man dies and leaves no son, give his inheritance to his daughter' " (Numbers 27: 7-8). Thus, Zaki gives evidence of God's desire to bring justice to women. Primarily, his article questions the actual reasons behind rejecting women in general and women's call to official ministry. One example is power control; throughout history one can witness the control of men who exert their influence and power in society. Another reason is cultural and educational opportunities available to boys, but not to girls. In such

a culture there were no formal schools, but boys would learn from adults, mainly rabbis. Furthermore, Zaki mentions land possession, as land was usually owned by men. Some rare historical exceptions include women such as Nefertiti and Cleopatra, who possessed power and lands. In addition, the practice of idol worship is a factor to consider as priestesses practiced adultery as part of pagan worship in such places as Corinth and Ephesus. Zaki mentions historical facts that have affected women in history, but also advises that we reexamine and evaluate these reasons in our current time.

The most powerful article in this book was written by Pastor Labib Mishriki. He begins his argument by dealing with the whole issue of ordination before tackling the ordination of women to official ministry. He states that only when people realize how little is written about ordination in the New Testament will the issue be clarified and they will see how simple the whole argument is. He proves that the word “ordination” was not used in the Bible. He gives the example that the choice of Mathias to take the place of Judas was by lot; there was nothing official and special about it. Then, as Paul said to Timothy: “Do not neglect your gift, which was given to you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you” (1 Timothy 4:14). This shows that Timothy was given a “gift” needed for the ministry, and that it was given through “prophecy” and with “elders laying hands on him.” He explains that Timothy was released to ministry only because of the spiritual gift and nothing else. Mishriki does not neglect the laying on of hands, but this step needs “not to be hasty.” His whole article is a defense of the ordination of women as elders.

In summary, the whole book is a collection of articles that either agree or disagree with ordination of women as elders. Other authors include Bashai Sae’d Bashai, who

proves from both old and new testament scriptures that only males were figures of authority. Here he proves that Syntychi and Apfodia's ministry was troublesome. He also emphasizes that when heresies and cults appeared they were the streams that included women in roles of authority. Another writer, Sa'd Kidesse, refuses any kind of ordination of women in any official ministries. Using Acts 6 as a reference, he argues that the apostles chose seven men to help in food distribution and questions why women were not chosen for this purpose. Furthermore, he claims that the revelation of scripture has been so clear through the centuries that if Paul had intended for women to be ordained, he would have made it clear. On the contrary, Sa'd believes that Paul made it very clear that women should keep silent and should not teach or have authority over men. These are examples of authors who disagreed strongly with the ordination of women; their arguments were typical of complementarians who believe that men and women were created in God's image, equal before God as persons but distinct in their womanhood and manhood. Thus, they also have distinct roles ordained by God, and the headship of man in marriage was established before the fall, notions foundational to complementarian arguments.

This literature review of research conducted in the Palestinian context and the Arab world proves how limited it is compared to the extensive literature available within the western church. According to Thomas Schreiner, quoted in Joseph Tkach's article "Women in Church Leadership", "the role of women in the church is probably the most emotionally charged issue in American evangelicalism today."⁶ However, this is not yet

⁶ Joseph Tkach, "Women in Church Leadership," Grace Communion International, 2006, accessed December 30, 2017, <https://www.gci.org/church/ministry/women1>.

an issue in the Palestinian evangelical church; none of the literature reviewed dealt with the Palestinian church. This raises the question, therefore, where is the voice of the women of Palestine. Are there no women called to official ministries? Are there no local male advocates? It seems as if Palestinian evangelical women believe the myth of the complementarians. In America and in other western churches it is the subject of debate in various churches; Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Evangelical Protestant, and one that evokes bitter accusations and fear of change. One of the reasons for this great change in the West is the evangelical revival in the first half of the nineteenth century. “Many estimate that two-thirds of the converts during this ‘Second Great Awakening’ were women under the age of thirty.”⁷ Clouse, in *Women in Ministry* (1989), assumes that this invasion of women into the church paved the way for women preachers. This opportunity was evident in the English-speaking world, especially in America, but not in the Arab world. One reason for the lack of women in church leadership, I assume, is that the Middle Eastern culture is a patriarchal culture; there is less opportunity for women to surface in the hierarchal system that controls it. Even in one of the major books that presented a fresh look at the contextualizing of gender equality throughout the world, the contributors write about Asia (India and China), Asian America (Korean America), Africa (Zimbabwe), African America, Indigenous America, Latin America, Western Europe, Australia, and North America, but nothing was written about the Middle East or even Arabs living in America. The writers investigated how biblical equality was transforming the cultures mentioned above, but although the president of Christian

⁷ Bonnidell Clouse and Robert G. Clouse, eds., *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, contributor, Robert Culver (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1989), 15.

Biblical Equality is Lebanese American, Mimi Haddad, I wonder why the Middle East was not included in the project?

CHAPTER FOUR: LEADERSHIP, RELATIONSHIPS, AND GENDER

Men and Women Model Redemptive Gender Leadership

When you meet a human being, the first distinction you make is “male or female?” and you are accustomed to make the distinction with unhesitating certainty.¹

-Sigmund Freud (1965, p.141)

In some places of the world women are climbing the ladder of leadership within their congregations “despite the fact that it is the topic most directly related to prohibition drawn from the Bible.”² However, in other parts of the world whether or not women are permitted to lead is still in question. As discussed in chapter one, Christian women in Palestine are witnessing an increasing presence in corporate and political leadership roles, yet the church is lagging behind. It is time for the church to be proactive in leading society by example. The church needs strong convictions, both theological and psychological.

As discussed in chapter two, although issues remain that are either unanswered or in disagreement, “nowhere in the Bible does it indicate that only men receive the leadership gift; leadership is gender-neutral.”³ The Bible seems unclear on leadership restrictions for women, but those who do restrict women use specific verses out of context to prove their point. In his paper, “Stained Glass Makes the Ceiling Visible”

¹ Peter Guy Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 7th Edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2016), 398.

² Jimi Adams, “Stained Glass Makes the Ceiling Visible,” *Gender & Society* 21, no. 1 (2007): 80-105, accessed April 12, 2017, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0891243206293773>.

³ Tony Morgan, “Churches Need to Close the Women in Leadership Gap,” TonyMorganLive.com. May 13, 2016, accessed April 17, 2017, <https://tonymorganlive.com/2016/05/05/women-church-leadership/>.

Adams explains that those who contend that church leadership should not be open to women focus on passages discussed previously: 1 Timothy 2:11-12,⁴ 1 Corinthians 14:34-35,⁵ and Titus 1:6.⁶ Interestingly, the majority of these passages do not address the issue of leadership, but rather the inclusion or exclusion of women from speaking roles.

Thus, with no clear evidence in the Bible that forbids women from leading, it is time for the Palestinian church to utilize all available resources and include the unique gifts of women as they differ from those of men. The Bible may seem to be unclear on the matter of women leading, but actually there is a long history of God using women to lead. One example is Deborah whose story is found in Judges 4. As one of the first leaders of Israel, a warrior leading men into battle, she and Barak co-led the war against Sisera and his army.

This chapter further investigates evidence related to the issue of gender and leadership and discusses the gender gap in leadership and prominent explanations, both biblical and psychological. In the conclusion, an approach is suggested to promote women in church leadership and to utilize the uniqueness of the assumed differences in a community of mixed gender leaders through the Holy Spirit and in love.

⁴ ¹¹ A woman^[a] should learn in quietness and full submission. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man;^[b] she must be quiet.

⁵ ³⁴ Women^[a] should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. ³⁵ If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.^[b]

⁶ ⁶ An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe^[a] and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

Gender and Leadership Roles

As more women have started to assume leadership positions, the topic of gender leadership has become an issue that interests researchers in psychology and sociology; one aspect that they have investigated is the relationship between gender and leadership styles. Research may prove differences in leadership styles between men and women, but whether or not women's leadership styles are less effective is an important question. Another point in question is whether the assessment that how women lead is less effective is fact based or driven from socialization.

It was acknowledged by Carter that gender roles are central to the gender centered theory of leadership which focuses on individual differences. This approach claims that female and male personal characteristics relate to leadership. This is a quote taken from such an approach:

Eagly, Wood, and Diekmann, (2000) identify gendered attributes as agentic and communal. Agentic traits such as aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, daring, self-confident and competitive have been closely associated with men in leadership. Communal traits such as affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturant, and gentle have been identified with women leadership.⁷

Therefore, research is needed to investigate evidence of gender differences and to determine if such traits are stereotypes or facts. Also in question is whether traits and leadership styles observed in men are stronger than those of women and that consequently, men are more effective as leaders than women. If the answer is negative,

⁷ Judith Corbett Carter, "Gender Differences and Leadership Styles in a Non Secular Setting," *Open Journal of Leadership* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1-4, accessed April 1, 2017, doi:10.4236/ojl.2012.11001. https://file.scirp.org/pdf/OJL20120100002_13945539.pdf.

then one must ask why women are still underrepresented in influential Christian leadership roles. This leads to a discussion of the leadership labyrinth.

Evidence of Leadership Labyrinth

We still think of a powerful man as a born leader and a powerful woman as an anomaly.

-Margaret Atwood (Hengen & Thomson, 2007)⁸

According to Northouse in *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, a secular book, “the gender gap in leadership is a global phenomenon whereby women are disproportionately concentrated in lower-level and lower-authority leadership positions compared to men.”⁹ Such a global phenomenon, speaks to the methods of biblical interpretation regarding the matter of women in positions of authority and women in general in the church.

Northouse mentions three of the various types of explanations concerning women’s underrepresentation in high-level leadership positions. The first highlights differences in women’s and men’s investments in human capital. The second considers gender differences between women and men. The final type focuses on prejudice and discrimination against female leaders.¹⁰

⁸ Peter Guy Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, Seventh Edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2016), 398.

⁹ Ibid., 399.

¹⁰ Ibid., 399-400.

Human Capital

Northouse suggests that “one prominent set of explanations for the labyrinth is that women have less human capital investment in education, training, and work experience than men.”¹¹ There is little support for the notion that women receive less education than men. In fact, research reveals that “women are obtaining undergraduate degrees at a far higher rate than men, and women are earning professional and doctoral degrees at a rate greater than or nearly to that of men,”¹² and yet they are still greatly underrepresented in top leadership positions. Northouse explains further that when women are promoted to leadership positions, “they are more likely than men to be placed on a ‘glass cliff,’ appointed to precarious leadership situations associated with greater risk and criticism.”¹³ Finally, they receive less training and opportunities for development.

Gender Differences in Leadership Styles and Effectiveness

Another attempt to understand the gender gap is to examine leadership styles. It is argued that women’s leadership styles are different and less effective. Carter, in her article “Gender Difference and Leadership Styles in Non-secular Setting,” found similar results that support Northouse’s findings in the secular setting. That is, “empirical research supports small differences in leadership style and effectiveness between men and women... additionally women exceed men in the use of democratic or participatory

¹¹ Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 399.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 401.

styles.”¹⁴ Women were found to exhibit more transformational leadership qualities than men, whereas men were found to be more transactional in their manner of leadership.

Thus, men and women do exhibit some differences, but the findings reveal no evidence that women are less effective than men. “However, overall the differences favor women as much as they do men.”¹⁵ The danger is becoming so aware of gender difference that all that men and women have in common is overlooked and differences are misused. The positive result of gender difference awareness is that “each gender provides a different perspective that will enhance the ministry of church greatly.”¹⁶ Research has found that the transactional leader is more inclined to use “authority and responsibility as his power, as well the style has a formal approach. Prize and penalties are the two primary tools employed by the leader to inspire his subordinates.”¹⁷ The transformational leader uses his or her (her my addition) “power and enthusiasm to motivate his followers to work for the benefit of the organization.”¹⁸ In addition, the evidence demonstrates that “transformational leadership qualities such as charisma and

¹⁴ Ibid., 404.

¹⁵ Crystal L. Hoyt, “Women, Men, and Leadership: Exploring the Gender Gap at the Top,” *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 4, no. 7 (2010): 484, accessed October, 30, 2017, <https://www.scribd.com/document/329952849/Women-Men-and-Leadership-Exploring-the-Gender-Gap-at-the-Top-pdf>.

¹⁶ Karen S Johnson, “Men and Women Serving Together on Teams,” accessed April 17, 2017, <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/11849725/men-and-women-serving-together-on-teams-karen-s-johnson-1->.

¹⁷ S. Surbhi, “Difference Between Transactional and Transformational Leadership,” Key Differences, July 21, 2015, accessed April 1, 2017, <http://keydifferences.com/difference-between-transactional-and-transformational-leadership.html#ixzz4cjSNT21T>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

intellectual stimulation are consistent with the values of religious life.”¹⁹ While men operated in a more assertive way, women “operated more democratically, collaboratively, to accomplish goals and objectives.”²⁰ Furthermore, “in terms of church leaders and leadership style, Ulkeritis (1993) found that the church leaders were rated more consistently as transformational leaders than transactional leaders.”²¹ Thus, women leadership behaviors according to Northhouse, Carter, and others were associated with existing notions of effective leadership in contemporary society.

Finally, if “studies show that men and women approach leadership differently,”²² these “differences between male and female leadership abilities can lead to complementary leadership styles.”²³ A dual gender team can enhance the effectiveness of the church. However, women face discrimination and prejudice and that leads to the third reason for the underrepresentation of women leaders.

Prejudice

Gender biases and “gender stereotypes both describe stereotypic beliefs about the attributes of women and men, and prescribe how men and women ought to be.”²⁴ These cognitive shortcuts influence the way we analyze information regarding certain groups of

¹⁹ Judith Corbett Carter, “Gender Differences and Leadership Styles in a Non Secular Setting,” *Open Journal of Leadership* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1-4, accessed April 1, 2017, doi:10.4236/ojl.2012.11001. https://file.scirp.org/pdf/OJL20120100002_13945539.pdf.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Pam Farrel, *Woman of Influence: Ten Traits of Those Who Want to Make a Difference* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006), 33.

²³ Ibid., 35.

²⁴ Northhouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 404.

people. For instance, “men are stereotyped with agentic characteristic such as confidence, assertiveness, independence, rationality and decisiveness, whereas women are stereotyped with communal characteristics such as concern for others, sensitivity, warmth, helpfulness, and nurturance.”²⁵ In leadership roles, gender stereotypes are particularly damaging for women because, as Eagly and Karau suggest, “the agentic qualities thought necessary in the leadership role are incompatible with the predominantly communal qualities stereotypically associated with women, thus resulting in prejudice against female leaders.”²⁶ Women are stigmatized in leadership contexts because such characteristics are thought to indicate low status and power. “Thus, women are more likely than men to encounter negative expectations and reactions, making it more difficult for them to reach positions of respect, influence, and leadership.”²⁷

Gender and Psychological Differences and Societal Influence

Halpern (professor of psychology and a researcher) writes in her book, *Sex Differences in Cognitive Abilities*, that people usually offer “explanations that are generated automatically, relying on one’s prevailing beliefs about the world”.²⁸ Furthermore, she explains that if someone generally believes that social forces are powerful, then he or she without hesitation interprets the finding that teachers are female and most bus drivers are male due to one’s societal factors. “Because people strive to

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 405.

²⁷ Crystal L. Hoyt, “Women, Men, and Leadership: Exploring the Gender Gap at the Top.”

²⁸ Diane F. Halpern, *Sex Differences in Cognitive Abilities*, 3rd ed. (New York: Psychology Press, 2012), 25.

maintain consistency in their beliefs, it is easy to understand why so few people ever change their preferred explanations, even when new sorts of data are being accumulated at a rapid rate, as in the area of sex differences.”²⁹ It is of interest to consider what psychology contributes in support of this notion and to examine any evidence in science and psychology for gender differences in cognitive abilities.

“More recent research has suggested that there is evidence to support the notion that women’s cognitive abilities fluctuate in a cyclical fashion.”³⁰ Research also suggests, “there are some differences between men and women in their ability to sense and perceive certain stimuli and in their attentional ability.”³¹ Halpern continues to challenge our presuppositions and our own fear that such results will be used to discriminate against women. She explains that, “it is a fallacious (erroneous) belief that the biological bases of cognition will reveal that women have less ability than men. Society decides which skills and abilities it values.”³² Thus, if female skills and abilities are undervalued, it is because of the society we have shaped and not the biology that has shaped us.

Finally, Halpern emphasizes that although people may be disturbed by biological theories that have been used to explain cognitive sex differences, we need to understand that they are not sexist. The data does not prove who is more intelligent or superior because biology operates in an environmental context that either permits or prohibits the development and expression of cognition. “The impact of sex role stereotypes comes

²⁹ Ibid., 25.

³⁰ Ibid., 173.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 172.

from pervasive lifelong influences to conform to a pattern behavior that is prescribed by sex. Sex differences in cognitive abilities mirror stereotypes about abilities, making it very difficult to determine the extent to which abilities, differences, and stereotype differences influence each other.”³³

Having considered the perspectives of science and psychology on gender difference, the next section examines the perspective of theology. An important question is whether gender stereotypes affect scholars’ interpretations of complex biblical passages and theology and create current cultural dysfunctions.

The perspective and history of biblical theology regarding gender begins with the story of creation when God created a team. “He created a mixed gender team, one man and one woman...the team was good.”³⁴ The teaching from the second chapter of Genesis “provides a rationale for essential oneness of male and female. They also show that God’s creation ideal, man and woman, were expected to enjoy a relationship of mutuality in equality.”³⁵ Since the fall, however, the relationship between men and women has been based on roles of hierarchy rather than mutuality. “Patriarchy has shaped a model of identity formation between men and women based on roles and authority rather than their common humanity and creation design.”³⁶

³³ Ibid., 240.

³⁴ Jackie Roese, *Lime Green: Reshaping Our View of Women in the Church* (Dallas, TX: HIS Publishing Group, 2015), 93.

³⁵ Gilbert G. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 28.

³⁶ Vicki A. Shieb, “Identity Formation in Mixed-gender Leadership Community: Forming Leadership Relationships around a Common Identity and a Shared Biblical Narrative,” (2013). Doctor of Ministry. Paper 58. <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/58>, 7.

According to Scheib's paper "Identity Formation in Mixed-Gender Leadership Community," the change in the dynamic between men and women leaders and their relationship in the community of the church would model a redemptive way of both genders realizing their intended calling. Thus, according to Brennan, author of *Sacred Union, Sacred Passion*, "instead of reinforcing outdated stereotypes of masculinity and femininity accompanied by over-romanticized views of marriage, the Christian community ought to reconsider the practice of spiritual friendship where men and women are co-creators, co-equal, and co-commissioned to advance God's beauty, goodness, peace, and justice in this world."³⁷ According to Bilezikian, man by himself cannot reflect the interpersonal plurality of God and reflect his image, and this is why the aloneness of man was "not good." "So from the one, God draws another, formed from the same human stock, differentiated according to gender but bonded in oneness... The plurality in oneness of the community in heaven becomes reflected in the plurality in oneness on earth."³⁸

Hence, one way to approach gender is to draw upon the triune God and ask "how the nature of God ought to inform relations between men and women as well as their construction of 'femininity' and 'masculinity.'"³⁹

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 167.

³⁹ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 169.

Gender - Divine or Human?

The Trinitarian communion between the divine Three, the union between them in love and vital interpretation, can serve as a source of inspiration, as a utopian goal that generates models of successively diminishing differences.

-Stanley Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God*

It is essential to explore “the nature of God, in particular the relations between the persons of the Trinity, and then look into what such Trinitarian explorations may mean for the construction of gender and for the relations between gendered persons.”⁴⁰

The first topic to address is the language of gender about God and what it says about the triune God. “Most theologians would agree that God is beyond sexual distinctions. We use masculine or feminine metaphors for God not because God is male and/or female, but because God is ‘personal.’”⁴¹ Yet as we approach God the metaphors diminish. Volf describes a position ‘Church Dogmatics’ taken by Karl Barth, who argues “that we should not proceed ‘by analogy from below’ and construct God in the image of the human being; we should process ‘by analogy from above’ and learn who human beings ought to be by considering who God is.”⁴² In other words, usually maleness is projected onto God to legitimize certain supposedly specific male distinctiveness, behavior and activities. It is interesting because the same notion was suggested by Halpern regarding how data ought to be interpreted to legitimize supposed distinctiveness

⁴⁰ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 169.

⁴¹ Ibid., 170.

⁴² Ibid., 171.

in psychology. Volf recommends that “all employment of God language for construction of gender identity is illegitimate and ought to be resisted.”⁴³

The second issue is that of the Trinity, the ontology of persons-in-communion; in the triune God the three persons of God are in relation, equal and of an absolute uniqueness. “Father, Son, Holy Spirit, all eternally bonded together in the original community of oneness, in the embrace of the interpersonal dynamics that the Bible describes best when it summarily affirms that ‘God is Love.’”⁴⁴ In this essence, Zizioulas promotes love to ontological status. No one generated the other so he is convinced that “full personal identity, whether in the case of the human person or the three Trinitarian persons, is not ultimately connected to qualities associated with ‘essence’ or ‘nature’ but emerges through a relationship that is so ontologically constitutive of personhood that it reflects the idea that relating is not appended to being but is being itself.”⁴⁵

While some theologians try to defend the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father in role, not in essence, and to argue that women are equal, but not in role, other theologians refute this. As they explain, “the way we view the transcendence of God influences the way we view sexuality and deity and therefore how we view male to female...we all come to the text with assumptions and presuppositions.”⁴⁶ Consequently, a false interpretation is imposed onto the text. The same disagreement is present among

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 167.

⁴⁵ Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology*, 141.

⁴⁶ Derek Morpew, *Different but Equal: Going Beyond the Complementarian/Egalitarian Debate* (Bergvliet, South Africa: Derek Morpew Publishing, 2011), 107.

theologians in their understanding of how the trinity informs gender and gender roles. According to Shieb, there are theologians that consider the subordination of women ontological, as part of her female being.⁴⁷ LaCugna argues a different position: “The communion of God in Christ, according to the doctrine of the Trinity, does not permit any kind of subordination, inequality or hierarchy.”⁴⁸

In summary, the purpose of this section was to highlight the effect of theological views on gender inequality. The Bible presents two pictures. In a context of patriarchal culture, women leaders appear in both the Old and New Testaments: Miriam, who led with Moses; Deborah, who led with Barak; women who supported Jesus; Mary, who was encouraged to learn; Mary Magdalene, who announced Jesus’ resurrection; Paul’s women partners such as Priscilla, Andronicus and Junia and co-workers such as Euodia and Syntyche. It is clear from the examples of these stories and the reflection and rigorous study of able scholars that we may have an interpretation problem. Women are important for balanced leadership in the church.

Women and Men Are to Serve Together

It is evident that men and women are different, but they were both created in the image of God. Men and women fulfill the purpose of God by providing their own unique perspectives to enhance the work of the Kingdom and offer wholeness and competence to the church. “Together they can merge their characteristics that epitomize God’s image.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Shieb, “Identity Formation,” 58.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 59.

⁴⁹ Karen S Johnson, “Men and Women Serving Together on Teams,” accessed April 17, 2017, <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/11849725/men-and-women-serving-together-on-teams-karen-s-johnson-1->.

Women and men differ in their mental abilities, in the way they socialize and communicate, and also in leadership style. One of the weaknesses of the Palestinian evangelical church is its inability to recognize the importance of diversity. The church could become more effective if it would utilize all its resources.

Since the Palestinian church exists in the Middle East and is influenced by a worldview where hierarchy is part of the culture, ministries and roles in churches are segregated. Consequently, confusion, misunderstanding, and a lack of clarity affects the manner in which men and women relate to one another in ministry and leadership.

In order to bridge the gender gap and the social stereotypes that exist within the Palestinian church, a place of cooperation and some kind of partnership is needed. The church would benefit from the diversity of both men and women serving together. Therefore, a discussion as to how men and women could serve together on teams within the church is essential for the benefit of the church and for the development of a new inclusive culture where women's leadership skills would be invited, cultivated, utilized and appreciated.

The Example of Jesus Including Women in a Male Dominant Culture

Jesus demonstrated healthy relationships with the women who served alongside him, and the modern church could learn from his example of inclusiveness. Women were always present with Jesus, who continually challenged the traditions, religious law and attitudes regarding women in the male dominant culture of the time.⁵⁰ He affirmed them

⁵⁰ This is a further expansion on previous argument that was made in chapter two, *Biblical Theological Foundation*, in subsection *Women in the Ministry and Teaching of Jesus*.

as he honored and encouraged their faith, gave them dignity and value, and spoke to them in a positive manner. Moreover, he liberated them to be an integral part of his ministry as he “allowed women to travel with Him as companions.”⁵¹ “He laid a sure foundation during the three years of His ministry on the earth for their release as valued witnesses, teachers, and leaders in the emerging Christian church.”⁵²

Jesus included women as disciples, thinkers, and evangelists. “With Him went the Twelve, as well as certain women...Mary...Juanna...Susanna; and many others...who provided for them out of their resources” (Mark 15:40-41). In the story of Mary and Martha, Martha took the typical woman’s role (Luke 10:39-40), whereas Mary took a non-female role when she sat to listen and learn. “Jesus’ response was refusal to force all women into the stereotype.”⁵³ Furthermore, the first evangelist, as recorded in the New Testament, was the Samaritan woman with whom Jesus had a theological discussion at the well. Not only was she a woman, but a Samaritan. How Jesus related to her is significant; he engaged her in a conversation about worship and revealed to her that he was the Messiah. “This confession of Jesus’ true calling (John 4:26) is not found anywhere else yet in his public ministry.”⁵⁴ The Samaritan woman, who also had a bad reputation, led many in her town to Christ and became one of the first women evangelists.

⁵¹ Danielle Strickland, *Liberating Truth: How Jesus Empowers Women* (Oxford, UK: Monarch Books, 2011), 103.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 105.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 107.

Culturally, Jesus contrasted norms, “upturned the traditional expectations and totally offended the gender-biased laws of that time.”⁵⁵ Although the culture dismissed the testimony of women, God chose women as the first witnesses of the Resurrection. According to Agosto, “a few of these texts provide some evidence for the leadership opportunities that might have been afforded women in the Jesus movement. Women play prominent roles in some of the healing stories in the gospels in which leadership roles may lie behind the text.”⁵⁶ Agosto explains that Jesus taught them a lesson in inclusion and about who should be allowed to lead in his kingdom. Morpew also suggests that the way in which Jesus related to women was revolutionary, considering the background of Judaism. Reading the gospels, Jesus’ influence on the writings is evident. Lemi’,⁵⁷ Habib⁵⁸ and Morpew agree that “it is apparent that Luke’s Gospel has a special emphasis on the place of women.”⁵⁹ Finally, “Christ viewed women as women, not sex objects,” and according to Sumner, “it would be less controversial for men to partner with women in church leadership if it weren’t for the church’s sexual sin.”⁶⁰ This is an issue for further discussion.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 103.

⁵⁶ Agosto, *Servant Leadership*, 37.

⁵⁷ Lemi', *Woman Is the Problem or the Solution*, (translated from Arabic) (Egypt: Al Thakafeh, 2014), 20-40.

⁵⁸ Habib, *Women in the Church and the Society*, (translated from Arabic) (Cairo, Egypt: Al Thakafeh, 1994), 53-61.

⁵⁹ Morpew, *Different but Equal*, 38.

⁶⁰ Sarah Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church: Building Consensus on Christian Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 298, Kindle.

Conclusion

Men and women must learn how to lead together in spite of their differences. Becker's principles on mixed gender teams in the faith workplace are presented in her book *Becoming Colleagues*. The following is a summary: Reflecting on experiences and time well spent leads to staff meetings that allow men and women to relate better. In order for mixed gender teams to work, the people involved must believe in them; most often it is men who do not believe that women can be leaders and equal partners.⁶¹ Concerning communication, "women are naturally more communicative than men. This is an excellent quality in leadership."⁶² Therefore, when women are on leadership teams they communicate better the vision, strategy, and outcome. Women may do this indirectly, being more relational, and as they use both sides of the brain, they tend to see beyond the facts. "Because her right side of the brain tends to be more creative, intuitive, sensing, feeling side, women tend to be more attune to their senses."⁶³ Thus, women are also generally more expressive. Moreover, when men and women talk to each other, they learn how they interact, for example, who speaks more and who interrupts too often. In this way, they would learn how to keep talking and resolve disagreements and misunderstandings. According to Sumner in her article, "The Mixed Gender Team," "women talk spontaneously and might simply cut off a man mid-sentence. Women,

⁶¹ Carol E. Becker, *Becoming Colleagues: Women and Men Serving Together in Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 8.

⁶² Marria Khaleel, "Strength in Diversity: Working with an All-Male Team," accessed August 9, 2017, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/578736318419c2bff4a3ead3/t/57c19c10c534a5ae55d1c297/1472306193537/StregnthInDiversity.pdf>.

⁶³ Ibid.

therefore, may be less sensitive to how offensive interrupting can be.”⁶⁴ Men need respect; women show disrespect by interrupting. On the other hand, men disrespect women by being too blunt.

Healthy fellowship between men and women is important, and fear of sexual impropriety is a major concern. Social customs amongst Palestinians restrict men and women from being alone together in situations such as riding in a car, meeting in a restaurant, or simply socializing. Although boundaries are healthy, such restrictions can also hinder the development of professional relationships. Thus, well defined boundaries are necessary for team work. In an article, “Healthy Boundaries and Billy Graham Rule,” Monica Brands states that “women find themselves in situations where they are made to feel shame and stigma simply being a woman, as sexual connotations are added to situations that should have been neutral.”⁶⁵ Though the intentions are good, the results are embarrassing and painful, to both women and men, denying the image of Christ that they each bear. In order to alleviate situations for both genders, mutual respect and honor provide healthy boundaries. Brands also quotes Willard: “Alienation from them (women) makes room for harmful lusts.”⁶⁶ Due to confusion in the matter of men and women working together and cultural biases, women can be disadvantaged if they are not allowed equal opportunities in networking.

⁶⁴ Sarah Sumner, “The Mixed Gender Team,” Christianity Today, accessed August 10, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2006/winter/4.89.html>.

⁶⁵ Monica Brand, “Healthy Boundaries and Billy Graham Rule,” accessed August 10, 2017, <https://network.crcna.org/safe-church/healthy-boundaries-and-billy-graham-rule>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Envisioning effective dual gender teams in missions begins when teams begin planning for it and utilize the gifts of each man and woman to their full extent. Missions are also field training opportunities where women can develop their giftedness and learn how to partner with men. Men in such contexts could coach and also learn to trust women's leadership styles and differences. It is a way for both of them to fulfill God's calling.

CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this chapter, the research methodology and the method of data collection and analysis that was used for this research paper is described. Ethics and project planning and IRB approval were obtained prior to the commencement of this study.

Methodology

A questionnaire was developed to assess the status of women leaders in the church. The questionnaire, distributed via Google forms, was sent to 37 pastors representing half of the existing evangelical churches in the Holy Land (under both Palestinian and Israeli authorities). The goal of the questionnaire was to collect data concerning the research question of this study: what formal and non-formal policies and strategies does the Palestinian Church have to enhance women's participation in leadership positions? All of the respondents were male pastors ranging in age as follows: 37.5% from 36 to 49; 46.9% above 50; 12.5% from 30 to 35; and only 3.1% from 20 to 29.

Nine of the pastors had a doctoral degree, fifteen had a master's degree, seven had a bachelor's degree, and one had a diploma. They represented a wide range of evangelical denominations: Nazarene, Methodist, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Baptist, Church of God, and Evangelical Lutheran. Membership in these churches ranged from 30 to 150 people.

The study examined theological views of the Palestinian pastors surveyed, their church polices, and the actual implementation of their views in the churches they lead.

Table 1:

Men and women were created equal in the image of God:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	0	1	2	31	34
Percentage	0	0	2.9%	5.9%	91.2%	100%

In Table 1, the majority of the respondents affirm that both men and women were created in the image of God. With the affirmation of 97.1% (91.2% strongly agree, 5.9% agree and 2.9% not sure), this response would indicate a positive perception towards women in leadership roles.

Table 2:

God's original intention is for men and women to have equal dominion over His creation:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	1	1	10	25	37
Percentage	0	2.7%	2.7%	27%	67.6%	100%

In Table 2, a higher percentage (94.6%) of respondents affirm that God's original intention is for men and women to have equal dominion over His creation: 67.6% strongly agree and 27% agree. Out of 37, 25 agree strongly, 10 agree, one disagrees and one is not sure. This is a good indication that a high percentage recognize the effect of redemption in the restoration of both men and women's dominion, and men and women as companions to fulfill God's first intention.

Table 3:

Husband and wife are equal partners, companions and church members:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	1	0	0	4	32	37
Percentage	2.7%	0	0	10.8%	86.5%	100%

In Table 3, (97.3%) of the respondents recognize that men and women are equal partners and church members. This response signifies that matters relating to the submission of women may not hinder women's involvement in ministry leadership roles.

Table 4:

Rulership of a husband over his wife is a practice introduced as part of God's curse after the fall of humanity into sin:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	5	6	3	13	9	36
Percentage	13.9%	16.7%	8.3%	36.1%	25%	100%

In Table 4, 30.6% (11 out of 36) do not agree that the practice of rulership of the husband was introduced as part of God's curse after the fall of mankind into sin. This response also shows that a very low percentage are in favor regarding matters of rulership of husbands over wives: 8.3% (3 out of 37) are not sure and 22 (61.1%) agree that the practice was introduced after the fall of mankind into sin. What can be drawn from this response? It seems that some pastors believe that rulership of husbands over wives was a command of God rather than a consequence of the fall. Furthermore, the concern here, as in other complementarian settings, is the possibility of harsh and oppressive rule. Egalitarians, on the other hand, would consider such harshness and oppressiveness as part of the fall that God intended to restore in Christ. Those pastors might not be aware of how severe the situation is becoming for women in both their homes and churches. As a consequence, it is not surprising to continuously encounter ineffective women in our churches. Such women attend church but are not pursuing God's calling for their lives, because they are taught that the Bible says so.

Table 5:

The plan of redemption restores all humanity from the curse of sin including women:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	0	0	4	33	37
Percentage	0	0	0	10.8%	89.2%	100%

In Table 5 there was 100% agreement (88.9% strongly agree and 11.1% agree) in response to the statement. This shows that both egalitarians and complementarians recognize and admit that redemption restores all humanity, including women, from the curse of sin. Furthermore, these high results indicate there are possibilities for the empowerment of women in ministry. However, the theoretical research presented in previous chapters could mean that despite the positive arguments regarding women in ministry, some exclusive roles are reserved for men. Proceeding further in the analytic process, this specific argument will arise in tables 11, 31 and 32 .

Table 6:

Women should not be viewed as serving perpetual punishment for committing sin first:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	1	0	11	24	36
Percentage	0	2.8%	0	30.6%	66.7%	100%

*¹

*²

Table 6 reveals that 97.1% of the respondents agree that women should not be viewed as serving perpetual punishment for committing sin first. Only one participant (2.8%) says that women should be viewed as serving perpetual punishment for

¹ One pastor did not respond.

² Acknowledging both Adam and Eve were present in the Fall.

committing sin first. This is very promising looking forward to table 22 where the statement questions if 1 Timothy 2:15, “a woman shall be saved through childbearing” means that women are not saved from sin in the same way as men, through Jesus Christ who died for all humanity, and 36.1 of the respondents disagreed. Such variables challenge and question the real meaning that lies behind Paul’s teaching in Timothy 2:13, “for Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.” Scholars do not doubt Paul’s theology, but since the meaning is not clear, a strong case could be presented here. The meaning behind those words needs the explanation and background of the exceptionality and the specific occasion of the previous verse spoken by Paul, “I suffer not a woman to teach or assume authority.”

Table 7:

All members of the Church are equal through baptism by water and Holy Spirit:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	1	1	1	5	28	36
Percentage	2.8%	2.8%	2.8%	13.9%	77.8%	100%

Table 7 shows that 91.7% (33 of 37 respondents) agree that all members of the church are equal through baptism by water and the Holy Spirit. While one was not sure and two (5.6%) disagreed, the high percentage of agreement on this specific statement is essential also to the fact that the Holy Spirit uses and chooses regardless of gender. “All

these are the work of the one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines” (1 Cor. 12:11). The gifts are distributed with no regard to gender, and the Spirit gives those gifts for the salvation of others and the building of the Kingdom.

Table 8:

The New Testament teaches the priesthood of all believers including women:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	1	2	16	18	37
Percentage	0	2.7%	5.4%	43.2%	48.6%	100%

Table 8 reveals that 34 of 37 respondents (91.6%) agree that the New Testament teaches the priesthood of all believers, including women. Only two of them (5.4%) were not sure and one (2.7 %) disagreed with the statement.

Table 9:

Christ’s Gospel Commission is a command to both men and women:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	0	0	9	28	37
Percentage	0	0	0	24.3%	75.7%	100%

In Table 9, all of the 37 respondents (100%) agree that Christ's Gospel Commission is a command to both men and women. Such an acknowledgement should support the empowerment of women in ministry, but this cannot be concluded yet as there is insufficient information to support women in leadership roles. In previous chapters it was emphasized that the research question is not women in ministry, but rather women in church leadership and receiving official recognition or ordination. This response is proof.

Table 10:

There is no superior ministry for men and inferior ministry for women:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	1	0	0	19	26	36
Percentage	2.7%	0	0	27%	70.3%	100%

*³

Regarding Table 10, 35 (97.3%) respondents affirm that there is no superior ministry for men and inferior ministry for women. Only one participant (2.7%) did not agree. It is promising to receive such a response from pastors since for years the church has adapted to the phenomenon that women are called to the ministry of the family or to children's ministry in the church, whereas men are called to the ministry of the church and society. Having such a high percentage of agreement with this statement indicates the

³ One pastor did not respond.

need to verify it by delegating some of the roles in the church traditionally filled by men to women who are called and qualified.

Table 11:

There are certain ministries that are exclusively for men:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	5	1	4	18	5	33
Percentage	13.5%	2.7%	10.8%	48.6%	24.3%	100%

*⁴

Table 11 reveals that 23 (72.9%) pastors agree that there are ministries that are exclusively for men, while only 6 (16.2%) respondents disagree and 4 (10.8%) are not sure. Therefore, it can be concluded from the responses to this statement that 27 out of 37 (65.3) Palestinian Arab pastors in evangelical churches in the Holy Land exclude women from certain ministries.

⁴ Three pastors did not respond.

Table 12:

A call to be a gospel minister is inclusive of both men and women:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	1	0	8	28	37
Percentage	0	2.7%	0	21.6%	75.7%	100%

Most respondents, 36 (97.3%) pastors according to Table 12, agree with the statement and thus recognize that women are included in the Gospel Commission. Only one pastor (2.7%) does not agree. While 36 of the 37 pastors surveyed agree that the call to be a gospel minister includes both men and women, 27 of those 37 pastors, according to the previous table, believe that there are ministries exclusively for men. As noted in Table 9, this is further evidence that the problem is not women in ministry, but rather women in leadership roles.

Table 13:

Women as well as men are called to be pastors of God's flock:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	1	7	6	14	9	37
Percentage	2.7%	18.9%	16.2%	35.1%	27%	100%

According to Table 13, 24 (62.1%) respondents agree that women as well as men are called to be pastors of God's flock. Again, contrary to previous statements, one would

expect that this specific ministry would be considered as exclusively for men. However, the results here reveal that 62.1% of the pastors agree that pastoral ministry is not exclusively for men, but it would not necessarily mean that these 24 pastors agree that women could be ordained pastors. Rather, it would suggest that they accept women doing the ministry work of a pastor but not necessarily that women could be pastors. The next table provides further clarification.

Table 14:

Women are allowed to do different forms of ministry but without official ordination (as deacons, elders and pastors):

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	6	10	5	15	1	37
Percentage	16.2%	27%	13.5%	40.5%	2.7%	100%

In Table 14, 16 respondents (43.2%) agree that women are allowed to do different forms of ministry but without official ordination (as deacons, elders and pastors), while 13.5% are not sure and 43.2% do not agree with the statement. This moderate percentage of 43.2% indicates that 16 of 38 pastors are in favor of women leadership but with reservations concerning the official ordination. The question that follows, then, is why women are not active in these roles. It might indicate that churches have not encouraged it. The following statement should determine practical ways these pastors believe ordination of women as elders deacons or pastors ought to proceed.

Table 15:

Women are to be theologically trained for empowerment in ministry:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	1	0	0	14	22	37
Percentage	2.7%	0	0	37.8%	59.5%	100%

While Table 15 shows that 36 of the 37 respondents (97.2%) agree that women are to receive theological training, the results may not indicate that they would agree to women teaching and preaching in the church, as tested in Tables 20 and 21. It might only suggest the need for women to teach in women's ministries and other traditional female roles.

Table 16:

An appeal to join gospel ministry is to be extended explicitly stating that women are included:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	9	9	10	8	36
Percentage	0	25%	25%	27.8%	22.2%	100%

*⁵

⁵ One pastor did not respond

In Table 16, 18 (50%) responses agree with the statement to include women in gospel ministry, while 9 (25.7%) disagree and 9 (25.7%) are not sure. Pastors who are in favor need to inform their congregations by encouraging women to step into untraditional roles.

Table 17:

Jesus included women as His disciples:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	4	3	11	19	37
Percentage	0	10.8%	8.1%	29.7%	51.4%	100%

In Table 17, 30 out of 37 (81.1%) pastors surveyed agree with the statement that Jesus included women as His disciples, while 4 (10.8%) disagree and 3 (8.1%) are not sure. The high percentage of pastors who agree with the statement may indicate that they acknowledge the fact that Jesus had women followers as well as men, and that he broke Jewish and rabbinic traditions, norms and practices concerning women. This fact is essential and could aid pastors and leaders who are advocates for women break the traditions and norms of modern culture.

Table 18:

Paul included women in the gospel ministry:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	2	2	11	22	37
Percentage	0	5.4%	5.4%	29.7%	59.5%	100%

In Table 18, 33 of 37(89.2%) respondents agree with the statement that Paul included women in the gospel ministry. Two (5.4%) are not sure and two (5.4%) disagree. It is evident that most of the pastors are well informed regarding the association of women to Paul. Thus, it indicates that although Paul wrote some instructions about women remaining silent, it was not a general position against women in ministry, but a reference to a specific situation.

Table 19:

The Scriptures are the infallible authority available to men and women to command changes in the behavior of all including males:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	1	1	12	22	36
Percentage	0	2.8%	2.8%	33.3%	61.1%	100%

*6

⁶ One pastor did not respond

Most of the respondents are in agreement that scriptures may be used to command changes in the behavior of all, including males. Of the 37 pastors surveyed, 34 (94.4%) were in agreement, while one (2.8%) was not sure and one disagreed (2.8%). This question was taken further, as shown in Table 20, to test the view as to whether or not women could use scripture to command changes in the behavior of men. The discussion follows in the next table.

Table 20:

Apostle Paul's statement "women should not have authority over men" does not mean women should not use Scriptures as an authority to command changes in the lives of men:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	2	6	5	12	12	37
Percentage	5.4%	16.2%	13.5%	32.4%	32.4%	100%

Table 20 develops the previous statement and questions whether the statement of the apostle Paul "women should not have authority over men" means that women should not use scriptures as authority to command changes in men's lives. The finding shows a decrease in the percentage of pastors who had agreed with the previous statement: both men and women may use Scriptures to command changes in the behavior of other people, including men. Thus, 8 respondents (21.6%) disagree and 5 (13.5%) are not sure, but 24 (64.4%) agree. Sadly, this indicates that some pastors still do not value the scripture's

authority when used by a woman, and reveals an inherent negative attitude that affects women's involvement in ministry in various ways.

Table 21:

Apostle Paul's statement "women should keep silent in the church" means women should not

A. teach

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	11	16	6	1	3	37
Percentage	29.7%	43.2%	16.2%	2.7%	8.1%	100%

Table 21 A shows that 27 respondents (72.9%) do not agree that Paul's statement "women should keep silent in the church" means women should not teach in church. Four pastors (10.8%) agree that Paul's statement means women should not teach in church, and six (16.2%) are not sure. It seems that those who are not sure about this statement are struggling with the texts or are apathetic about the whole matter.

B. preach

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	6	8	10	7	6	37
Percentage	16.2%	21.6%	27%	18.9%	16.2%	100%

Part **B** of Table 21 reveals that 13 respondents (35.1%) do not agree that Paul's statement means women should not preach. However, 14 (37.8%) agree that Paul's statement means women should not preach. Thus, a higher percentage of pastors believe women should not preach. In addition, 10 of the respondents (27%) are not sure, so neither agree nor disagree.

C. lead worship

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	11	12	0	1	13	37
Percentage	29.7%	32.4%	0	2.7%	35.1%	100%

Then, part **C** shows that 23 respondents (62%) do not agree, but 14 (37.8) agree that women should not lead the praise and worship time in church services.

D. Lead in the church

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	8	14	4	4	6	36
Percentage	22.2%	38.9%	11.1%	11.1%	16.7%	100%

Finally, according to Table 21 **D**, 22 respondents (61.1%) disagree that Paul meant that women should not lead, while 10 (27.8%) agree with the statement.

Table 22:

Apostle Paul's statement "a woman shall be saved through childbearing" does not mean women are not saved from sin in the same way as men, through Jesus Christ who died for all humanity" (1 Tim 2:15):

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	5	8	0	6	17	36
Percentage	13.9%	22.2%	0	16.7%	47.2%	100%

*⁷

Table 22 questions if women are saved in a different way than men, and 23 respondents (63.9%) agree that salvation for both women and men is through Jesus Christ. However, 13 of 36 pastors who answered (36.1%) disagree, indicating their belief that Paul might mean that salvation for women depends on childbearing. A result like this among pastors is disturbing. Could Paul's theology concerning salvation differ for men and women? But he clearly states, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile" (Rom 3:31). A variance from this concept could mean that these pastors have a problem understanding the meaning of this scripture.

⁷ One did not respond

Table 23:

The practice of ordination has special cultural orientations in the Arab context:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	1	6	5	16	9	37
Percentage	2.7%	16.2%	13.5%	43.2%	24.3%	100%

This statement is particularly valuable for this study, and Table 23 shows that 25 of the 37 pastors surveyed (67.5%) agree that the practice of ordination has special cultural orientations in Arab culture. Five (13.5%) pastors are not sure and seven (18.9%) disagree. Those who disagree are saying, in other words, that ordination does not change according to culture; thus, it is universal.

Table 24:

No Bible text says that men are the only ones to be ordained:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	4	6	5	12	10	37
Percentage	10.8%	16.2%	13.5%	32.4%	27%	100%

In Table 24, 22 (59.4%) pastors affirm that there is no Bible text that says that only men are to be ordained, while five (13.5%) are not sure and 13 (27%) disagree.

Table 25:

No Bible text says women should not be ordained:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	1	6	3	17	10	37
Percentage	2.7%	16.2%	8.1%	45.9%	27%	100%

Table 25 reveals that 27 of the pastors surveyed (72.9%) agree that no biblical text says women should not be ordained. Three (8.1%) are not sure and seven (18.9%) disagree. Would these pastors refer to Paul's statements as presented in tables 20 and 21? Dialogue is needed here for further investigation.

Table 26:

Christ is the head of His body, the church:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	0	0	1	36	37
Percentage	0	0	0	2.7%	97.2	100%

Table 27:

Male and female church members constitute the body of Christ, the church:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	0	0	1	36	37
Percentage	0	0	0	2.7%	97.2%	100%

According to both tables represented here (Tables 26 and 27), all of the respondents affirm that Christ is the head of His body, the church, and that both male and female church members constitute the church.

Table 28:

Eldership in the church is equally available to all spiritually mature members regardless of their gender:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	3	8	1	6	19	37
Percentage	8.1%	21.6%	2.7%	16	51.4	100%

Table 28 and following illustrate the most difficult issues in this study: official ministries and the involvement of women in these roles. Out of 37 pastors, 25 (67.45%) agree that eldership in the church is equally available to all spiritually mature members regardless of their gender. One pastor is not sure and 11 (29.7%) disagree.

Table 29:

My church denomination has authorized ordination of women as local church elders:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	5	8	7	6	11	37
Percentage	13.5%	21.6%	18.9%	16.2%	29.7%	100%

As recorded in Table 29, 17 pastors (45.9%) affirmed that their church denomination authorized ordination of women as local church elders. It is expected that these would include Evangelical Lutheran and Methodist churches in the Holy Land. Seven pastors (18.9%) were not sure and 12 (35.1%) disagreed. Interestingly, of those who affirmed the statement, no women are ordained in their congregations. The question that arises here is whether any women were called to be elders or whether the churches were clearly informed that the ordination of women as elders was authorized. Furthermore, what change would this authorization make in the future of the church?

Table 30 :

My church policy states that membership and position in the church is available to all who qualify without regard to gender, race or nationality:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	2	1	3	14	17	37
Percentage	5.4%	2.7%	8.1%	37.8%	45.9%	100%

Thirty respondents (83.7%), as shown in Table 31, have policies that make membership and positions in the church available to all who qualify regardless of gender, race or nationality, but three (8.1%) are not sure and three (8.1%) disagree with the statement.

Table 31:

Spiritually mature women may be ordained as local church elders:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	2	9	5	9	12	37
Percentage	5.4%	24.3%	13.5%	24.3%	32.4%	100%

Table 31 reveals that 21 of the pastors surveyed (56.7%) agree that spiritually mature women may be ordained as local church elders, while five (13.5%) are not sure and 11 (29.7%) disagree. Evidently there is opposition to the ordination of women as elders in some churches.

Table 32:

Our church policy states that eldership is available only for men:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	6	9	6	9	6	36
Percentage	16.7%	25%	16.7%	25%	16.7%	100%

*⁸

In comparison with Table 30, Table 32 the same question is posed in another and more straightforward way, the responses were slightly different. Table 32 reveals that 15 pastors (41.7%) disagree and 15 pastors (41.7%) agree that their church policy states that

⁸ One did not respond

eldership is available only for men. Interestingly both numbers on opposite sides mirror each other. And the one who is not sure is about halfway between the two. While Table 30 reveals that 83.7% agree that positions in the church are available to both men and women this table explains more clearly, that the assumption drawn from this discrepancy is that some respondents in Table 30 may mean that the positions available to women are traditional women's ministries such as women's and children's ministries. Also in this table, six respondents (16.7%) are not sure and 15 (41.7%) disagree. The question that follows here is what these advocates of women are doing to bring change in their churches.

Table 33:

Discrimination of women in gospel ministry may cause fear for others to join:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	3	10	5	14	5	37
Percentage	8.1%	27%	13.5%	37.8%	13.5%	100%

Table 33 shows that 19 respondents (41.3%) affirmed that discrimination of women in gospel ministry may cause others to fear joining, especially educated and successful women. The world and cultures are changing concerning women. However, if the church lags behind it could result in having fewer women and others joining the church. Further survey findings show that five respondents (13.5%) were not sure and 13 (35.1%) disagreed that discrimination might discourage women from joining the church and ministry.

Table 34:

Women who have received a call to ministry may be assigned churches to pastor:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	6	6	6	9	10	37
Percentage	16.2%	16.2%	16.2%	24.3%	27%	100%

Table 34 shows that 19 of the pastors surveyed (31.4%) agree that women who have received a call to ministry may be assigned churches to pastor, while 12 (32.4%) disagree and six (16.2%) are not sure.

Table 35:

I equally accept the teachings of the Scriptures from both male and female:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	2	6	11	18	37
Percentage	0	5.4%	16.2%	29.7%	48.6%	100%

This table illustrates that 29 respondents (78.3%) affirm that they accept the teachings of the scriptures from both male and female, but six (16.2%) are not sure and only two (5.4%) disagree. The response to and high affirmation of this statement can be compared to the findings in Table 20 that clearly illustrate that the majority of pastors (72.9%) did not agree that Paul's statement "women should keep silent in the church"

means that women should not teach in church. Such responses are very promising for the promotion of change.

Table 36:

Lack of leadership support discourages women in the gospel ministry:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	4	3	20	10	37
Percentage	0	10.8%	8.1%	54.1%	27%	100%

According to Table 36, 19 pastors (81.1%) confirm the importance of leadership support by agreeing that the lack of leadership support discourages women in gospel ministry. Only three (8.1%) are not sure and four (10.8%) disagree. It is apparent that most of the pastors recognize their role in the advancement of women toward their calling or hindrance from it. Practical ways to use these affirming voices to help women find their positions in the church should be developed.

Table 37:

Fear of rejection causes the local church to suffer from lack of women eldership:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	6	1	21	9	37
Percentage	0	16.2%	2.7%	56.8%	24.3%	100%

Table 37 records that 30 respondents (81.1%) agree that fear of rejection from the society causes the local church to suffer from a lack of women eldership, while six (16.2%) disagree and only one (2.7%) is not sure. Teaching about how Jesus served a similar culture and challenged the norms is needed to affirm those who fear our society.

Table 38:

Several women in my church have served in various positions including pastors, evangelists, elders, and deacons:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	3	8	14	7	5	37
Percentage	8.1%	21.6%	37.8%	18.9%	13.5	100%

Although 30 respondents (83.7%) are shown in table 30 to have policies that allow membership and positions in the church to all who qualify regardless of gender, and in Table 31, 21 respondents (56.7%) are shown to agree that spiritually mature women may be ordained, Table 38 reveals that only 12 pastors (32.4%) affirm that several women in their churches have served in various positions including pastors, evangelists, elders, and deacons. Furthermore, 14 (37.8%) are not sure, and 11 (29.7%) disagree with the statement. Since they are pastors, such an answer brings into question what their answers mean. The low percentage of agreement that women have served in positions as stated above indicates that on the field few have been prepared to challenge the resistance against women and open these church positions for them.

Table 39:

I feel comfortable if a woman leads the praise and worship in a meeting:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	3	8	10	16	37
Percentage	0	8.1%	21.6%	27%	43.2%	100%

In Table 39, 26 respondents (70.2%) feel comfortable if a woman leads the praise and worship in a meeting. The finding that eight (21.6%) are not sure could indicate that they may not have had the experience of a woman leading worship and thus could neither agree nor disagree. Only three (8.1%) do not feel comfortable if a woman leads the praise and worship in a meeting.

Table 40:

I believe that women can lead a meeting in the church:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	0	4	3	16	14	37
Percentage	0	10.8%	8.1%	43.2%	37.8%	100%

Table 40 reveals that 30 of the pastors surveyed (81%) believe that women can lead a meeting in the church, while three (8.1%) are not sure and four (10.8%) disagree.

Table 41 :

I would feel comfortable if I entered a church and a woman was preaching the word of God:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	2	5	10	9	11	37
Percentage	5.4%	13.5%	27%	24.3%	29.7%	100%

According to Table 41, 20 respondents (54%) would feel comfortable in a church where a woman was preaching the word of God, while 10 (27%) were not sure and seven (18.9%) disagreed. It's obvious too that the facts that this table is providing which shows high acceptance of women preaching from the word of God is quite strange, because in reality it's not practiced, and it's not happening in churches across the country. Maybe, they want to see it happening in churches, but they don't know how to?, or some leaders are worried about the push backs in case of being portrayed as leaders who approve of women in senior leadership roles.

Table 42 ;

I accept women dressed as clergy:

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	8	8	8	5	8	37
Percentage	21.6%	21.6%	21.6%	13.5%	21.6%	100%

According to this final table, 13 respondents (35.1%) accept women dressed as clergy, while eight (21.6%) are not sure and 16 (43.2%) disagree with the statement. In this case, there is not much to say in terms of opinion. Apparently the leaders are not for a special dress code for women in ministry.

Conclusion

The majority of respondents as shown in the tables analysis had positive and promising attitudes regarding women ministry, women's theological training, women as deacons and elders, and regarding women in leadership roles. Whereas other statements, were geared to consider sufficient teachings to scriptures on women in leadership role.

So the outcome of this study hopefully will provide information and practical ways to improve the participation of women in the Palestinian Evangelical church. It is desired that these findings will trigger more thoughts towards change of attitudes of the subject of church inclusiveness of women in leadership.

For example, in the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, the denomination to which I belong, "there was freedom for women to pastor, teach, preach, evangelize, exercise authority, and perform all pastoral functions, but a church was not forced to accept a woman with those capacities."⁹ Yet, "there were women who served, not with the title of a pastor, but in the role of a pastor, and were in retrospect considered pastors, or called pastors retroactively."¹⁰ Thus, this chapter presents results that demonstrate the current position of women leaders in the Palestinian Evangelical Church. The results

⁹ Paul L. King, *Anointed Women: The Rich Heritage of Women in Ministry in the Christian and Missionary Alliance* (Tulsa, AZ: Word and Spirit Press, 2009), 96.

¹⁰ Ibid.

were unexpectedly promising considering that in the previous years such openness had not been seen. The next chapter will explore practical ways in which the desired change can be achieved through a more inclusive model of leadership. Thus it will discuss some of the suggestions other than hermeneutics and biblical interpretations of the scriptures, rather practical and deliberate ways to make some progress towards making leadership roles more women inclusive in the Palestinian Evangelical church.

CHAPTER SIX: SUGGESTIONS

“Many of us have lived isolated ministry lives, silently frustrated by the lack of opportunities for our gender, feeling misunderstood and undervalued by our church leaders.”¹

One conclusion that can be drawn from this thesis is that relatively little information is available concerning the experiences of Arab women serving as elders, deacons, preachers, and leaders in churches and parachurch ministries. Palestinian women, silent about these unique challenges, suffer quietly, assuming it is biblical and directly related to gender. Thus, research was conducted to study the position of Christian women in leadership roles in the Palestinian evangelical church, to expose the current situation, and to explain the effect of the traditional complementarian view still dominant in our churches, while attempting to cultivate better ways to accommodate women in leadership positions in evangelical churches. This requires a reexamination of the complementarian view in the local church.

The desired outcome was to relate synthesizing theology and experience (praxis) to enable women to lead in a cooperative Palestinian evangelical church community. Male ministry leaders must support women as leaders and proactively find ways to involve them in church leadership roles. While it is important for male leaders to take the initiative to involve women with leadership gifting, women need to prepare themselves for change; a new model is required.

This thesis has offered theological background, but also sought to provide practical ways to reach the desired change by exposing myths and presenting the more

¹ Jackie Roese, *Lime Green: Reshaping Our View of Women in the Church* (Dallas, TX: HIS Publishing Group), 2015, xiii.

inclusive egalitarian model of leadership. Change could also be achieved through discussion leading to consensus between the egalitarian and complementarian views on the issue and practical steps to implement that change. “Godly change involves analysis, setting goals, amassing resources, and using techniques to reach its goals in a Christ like manner.”² The church must be bold and willing to change. “Throughout history, the church has altered its perspective on significant theological and social issues.”³ The church has reformed its views in the past through scholarly enquiry, dialogue, and debate on matters of science, theology, ethnicity and church leadership and continues to renew and reform its positions, such as the research that followed Galileo’s claim that the earth goes around the sun, the theological reformation against racism and slavery that was led by the abolitionists. Although with difficulty, the Palestinian church could admit to its oppression in its position against women leadership and yield to the broader perspective on this issue.

Thus, to implement change training is essential for both men and women on the status of women from a theological perspective. Furthermore, the church could examine how to kindle the passion of women already playing significant leadership roles within its walls or its parachurch ministries. Educating and equipping women and having role models for women leaders in Palestinian and other Middle Eastern churches are also necessary elements for change. As recorded in chapter one, although unnoticed, women such as Siham, Nadeen and myself exist who are already overcoming hindrances that have prevented them from fulfilling God’s calling on their lives. By connecting and

² Aida Besancon Spencer, William David Spencer, and Mimi Haddad, *Global Voices on Biblical Equality: Women and Men Serving Together in the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 217.

³ Ibid., 1.

networking, women could bridge the gap with stories of other such women and thus share their experiences, struggles, successes, failures and lessons to learn. These women exist and are accomplishing much for the Kingdom, but silently. Sharing their stories would consequently reveal new role models. Annual conferences, seminars, and training sessions attended by both women and men advocates are important to impart ideas and exchange experiences that lead to change.

Teaching curricula including new hypotheses, as presented in this dissertation, in gatherings of women and men who advocate for women would serve to inspire, motivate, equip, create resources, and motivate churches and ministries to change. This study, then, could provide teaching material for women and men leaders and allow them to focus on the process rather than preparation. Education on this issue is vital and can be offered in various ways and settings such as preaching in church, Bible studies, talks on women's issues, conferences, seminars, and Bible schools, and seminaries. Women have too few opportunities in which to ask questions, raise concerns, express doubts, and share experiences. Accordingly, training sessions and courses offered to both men and women in academic institutions such as Bible colleges in Palestine and international training centers as required courses are important. "History has demonstrated that education is the gateway to awareness and change ... Seminary education also provides more opportunities to be involved in church leadership."⁴

Training women diligent in developing their gifting, education, consultation, and the development of research material (as in chapter five) should ultimately lead to the desired change. Thus, it is essential that "women's studies should be incorporated in

⁴ Ibid., 51.

seminary curricula. More articles and books on this issue should be written to educate the public.”⁵ Peaceful interaction and open dialogue with those who differ must be maintained, but it is time to become proactive in order to involve more women in church ministry and the Kingdom of God.

Why Education, Equipping and Training are Essential

As stated previously, Palestinian women have few role models who model the “new image of woman” as strong, a leader, self-confident, an independent woman who ministers. Although they do exist, they seem to keep a low profile. However, they should become more visible and demonstrate to the church that women can be competent, effective leaders.

Training and education with both men and women working together would present a major opportunity to develop a knowledge base for women leaders and focus on areas of weaknesses in need of improvement. As discussed in Chapter One, women are taught that they are inferior, and Arab women have conformed to conservative evangelical theology on gender. Therefore, since many believe that women should never teach, preach, or be ordained as ministers of the gospel, they need help to break free from this lie with which they have lived for centuries.

Training is a means to develop gifted and called women to a greater level of efficiency, and give competent women a more powerful platform to proceed to the official ministries into which they have been called. These women, fighting the good fight to fulfill their calling, are strong enough to be in the ministry field and should focus

⁵ Ibid.

on mentoring others and paving the way for those who will follow. Since there have been few role models blazing a new trail in Palestinian culture, new leadership role models are needed to effect desired change. Therefore, constructive steps are urgent for women to progress toward change. Such change, with the possibility of finding consensus between egalitarians and complementarians, depends on the cooperation of both men and women leaders to advance women into ministry roles.

In Chapter Five it was proved by a survey of pastors that over 50% agree to the ordination of women as elders, deacons and pastors, yet out of eighty Palestinian churches in Palestine and in Israel, only one ordained a woman. These results call for practical ways to help male pastors and evangelical churches implement change to reach the desired goals. For example, women can be enabled through scripture focused teaching, training and dialogue using a curriculum such as the one presented in this study. As a woman's confidence is built up, her ministry becomes more effective and fruitful.

Suggestions for the Palestinian Church

Understanding the Biblical Basis of Women in Ministry Empowers Her to Answer Her Calling:

Education enlightens women to a different interpretation and criticism of relevant biblical texts. "The word *criticism* is used here in a technical literary way... it simply indicates an investigative procedure, a digging into the background of the bible text so that the text can be better understood...and accurately interpreted."⁶ Jesus' teaching, example, and manner in which he treated women was radical as he challenged the

⁶ Gretchen Gaebelein Hull, *Equal to Serve: Women and Men Working Together Revealing the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 26.

cultural biases of sexism and marginalization of women prevalent in Israel at that time. Rather, he welcomed women, angering rabbis by not adhering to cultural rules and restrictions.

Break the Bondage and Abolish Lies Women Have Believed for Many Years

“Misinformation dominates. Lies prevail. Discouragement sets in.”⁷ Women need to hear and know that they are valuable, and therefore must hear, study, believe, and live out the truth of their true essence in Jesus. Feelings of inferiority even affect their ministries and productivity. For centuries the church has taught that women must be silenced and consequently, they have been sidelined and devalued.

Create a Role Model Based on Deborah’s Leadership

It is urgent for strong women leaders to rise up in this distorted culture. Reliable and trustworthy women, prophets and teachers of the Word must courageously stand up, take the lead and be a role model for others as Deborah, who knew how to work with Barak and lead her country in war. Have Arab women become authors like Deborah? “In a sense she became one of the ‘authors’ of Scripture with her teaching inscribed into Judges 5.”⁸ Thus, the Palestinian Christian woman should be encouraged to pursue her calling by utilizing role models. Although in the Arab region only a few role models can

⁷ Kristin Beasley, *Who Do You Think You Are?: Good News about your Identity* (N.p.: K. Beasley, 2010), 20.

⁸ Nijay Gupta, “Why Deborah Makes all the Difference in the Women in Ministry Debate,” Seattle Pacific University, December 12, 2011, accessed April 19, 2016, <http://blog.spu.edu/cbte/2011/12/12/why-deborah-makes-all-the-difference-in-the-women-in-ministry-debate/>.

be found, as noted in the first chapter. Finding more role models would inspire women in the Palestinian church and provide examples to encourage them.

Engage Male Leaders in this Change

Training should engage male leaders following the examples of Barak, who invited Deborah to join him; Jesus, who encouraged women to accompany him in ministry; Paul, who recruited women to be his co-workers; and Solomon, who praised the wisdom of women. Women need men to stand with them and partner with them in ministry. Male leaders who share the same theological beliefs are integral to teaching and training as are male authority figures who believe in women's callings and the ministries in which they are engaged. Prophetically and spiritually the co-operation of both genders in such training could break down barriers and be an example for the church to follow.

Moreover, male advocates should take the lead in their local churches, deliberately making women visible by affirming their gifts. Churches usually have opportunities for ministry and lay leadership, and if a woman has played a significant role or served behind the scenes, these men could ensure that she is thanked and affirmed from the pulpit. Women should also be called upon to pray or even lead communion, share testimonies, and read Scriptures facing the congregation.⁹

Build a Healthy Community of Both Men and Women

Training and conferences such as these would build a community where both men and women could freely submit to one another and learn from one another, creating a safe

⁹ This is significant because women in complementarian settings are not be allowed to do so. As referred previously, complementarians believe it is the men who are charged with authority to declare the scriptures.

environment in which to work together. Developing healthy relationships in ministry is essential in the Palestinian church. Despite being taught that segregation is safer, it is important to question if that is what God actually intended. “The negative results are all around... A woman who is excluded from meetings for reasons of ‘safety.’ A man who is sad that such rules reinforce the idea that he is a sexual predator or that all women are out to seduce men.”¹⁰ In order to close the gender gap and reform social stereotypes that exist in the Palestinian church, a place of cooperation and some kind of partnership is required. “Equal partnership does not erase sexual distinctions or characteristics,”¹¹ but equal partnership does say, “let us diverse individuals work together for the good of the one Body and so mirror the fellowship and cooperation of the Persons of the Godhead.”¹² As both fathers and mothers bring their traits of masculinity and femininity as individuals, “both men and women can fulfill roles of leaders, administrators, and teachers in the one Christian Body, and again they will do so in their individual ways.”¹³ Thus, both genders would cooperate using their own leadership styles, transactional or transformational as discussed in Chapter Four. This study on gender and leadership makes clear that change requires intervention on various levels, individual, interpersonal, organizational and societal.

Give Affirmation to Women

¹⁰ Rosie Ward, “Men and Women Working Together,” Church Pastoral Aid Society, 2009, accessed December 30, 2017, https://www.cpas.org.uk/download/1356/web_upload%252Fmen%2Band%2Bwomen%2Bworking%2Btogether2-1266313871.pdf.

¹¹ Hull, *Equal to Serve: Women and Men Working Together Revealing the Gospel*, 232.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 226.

Only when the church practices equality and opens its leadership doors to women can it function to its full potential, which means the entire body will become active. Women cannot be set free to obey God with their gifts and calling without the affirmation of their church. The Palestinian evangelical church, especially those in authority, should give opportunities for women to serve on the front lines. Male leaders are called on to diversify and include gifted, experienced, educated, and competent women leaders on the board or leadership teams alongside men.

Conservative churches may not easily change their perspective on this issue because “life is rarely as black and white as an ‘always’ or ‘never.’”¹⁴ As exposed through research, “the various issues involved in deciding for a complementarian or egalitarian viewpoint are rarely as simple as they first appear.”¹⁵ Therefore, a church might only need to be flexible. As Messay suggests, “in order to face the issue of the status of women constructively, conservative Christians must accept that both the church and New Testament theology must remain flexible.”¹⁶

Moreover, if male leaders believed in the leadership role of women in the church and advocated on their behalf, others in the community would recognize it and begin to believe in it as well. For example, Derek Morpew, author of *Different but Equal*, threaded his way through the maze of issues on women in ministry and leadership to nuanced conclusions that avoid either egalitarian or complementarian views. There is no

¹⁴ Linda L. Belleville, Craig L. Blomberg, Craig S. Keener, and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 323.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 343.

¹⁶ Lesly F. Massey, *Women in the Church: Moving Toward Equality* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2002), 181.

wrong in agreeing or disagreeing with either perspective, but Morphey has brought reasonable arguments to both. For example, he would agree with egalitarian praxis, “all ministries and roles are open to both men and women,”¹⁷ yet he would also agree with complementarians in that there was male leadership before the fall. However, he continues, “do not agree with complementarians on what they deduce from this.”¹⁸ Respected male church leaders filled with the Word and the Holy Spirit would make a big difference in addressing this issue.

Create and Offer a Platform for Others to Serve

One approach the church could take is to include women leaders who are gifted as preachers on the preaching schedule. It is very important to create opportunities for women to serve alongside those already in ministry as these platforms are training alleys for young, emerging women leaders. Women with experience serving the Kingdom with their gifting should find women developing as leaders and be willing to locate proper churches, schools, and other venues for them to ensure they are in the right community and receive adequate training in the field.

Facilitate the Calling of Women with Mentors

Although women mentors may be few in number, it is necessary for emerging women leaders’ development to be exposed to and influenced by exemplary women. These women can be found in various leadership positions and levels in local churches, missions, college chapels, seminaries and relief ministries.

¹⁷ Derek Morphey, *Different but Equal: Going Beyond the Complementarian/Egalitarian Debate* (Bergvliet, South Africa: Derek Morphey Publishing, 2011), 169.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 170.

As a mentor myself, I always try to foster close relationships with my mentees, continuing to promote a servant leadership ministry by modeling the way, listening, healing, and committing to the growth of the women to and with whom I minister, and accompanying them by being attentive to the Holy Spirit for words of affirmation. If women could realize who they really are and what is their true image, they would receive fresh confidence. I find this is always encouraging to women, especially in a society like ours where a woman's contribution is neither affirmed nor commended. In my own experience, in different circles throughout my ministry, if I had not been encouraged and affirmed by someone, I would have been discouraged long ago. That is why I am committed now to stand by women who have embarked on a similar path with me and other ministries.

As a mentor and a woman leader in a male dominant culture, I have learned “strategies for leading without authority,”¹⁹ and have gained informal authority (trust, respect, oral persuasion). As a spiritual leader I speak to people on different occasions and in various places, addressing their hopes, fears, weaknesses, and needs. I am called by God and thus, I am attentive to my ability to touch and inspire. This is, as Heifetz describes, the benefit of leading without authority. In such a context, my vision is to empower women to be who God calls them to be. I am personally attempting to engage potential women leaders and faithful godly men who believe in women, to address the adaptive problems we face as women in the Arab Palestinian context.

¹⁹ Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, UK: Belknap Press, 2003), 184.

While writing this dissertation, I joined a committee of women leaders in the Middle East and South Africa, with the cooperation of several male leaders who advocate for women, to train women through teaching and equipping. Such training and conferences could build a community where both men and women freely submit to one another and learn from one another, creating a safe environment in which to work together, as noted previously. Developing healthy relationships in ministry is essential, and actual steps can be taken to reach this goal. This dissertation has given me credibility and increased my confidence. I have gained much more expertise in this field, a field in which there are very few, if any, Palestinian evangelicals. Yet, my leadership must stem from a life of true spirituality that grows out of my intimate relationship with my Savior.

Conclusion

Finally, as an advocate myself for women's ordination, I have a sincere desire to find some reasonable solution to this problem of ordination faced by Palestinian Arab women. One of my long term goals is to trigger discussion of this question in church leadership settings.

Because of the ambiguity and uncertainties of the interpretation of some sensitive and problematic biblical passages, including those that allude to the issue of ordination as mentioned in Chapter Two, women can no longer be excluded from any type of ministry; therefore, it is time to reconsider the ordination of women. It is true that councils have certain policies, but perhaps each local church should determine the ministerial roles, titles, and functions in its own congregation and agree to reevaluate the restriction of women's participation in official ministry.

Yet, male leaders need to be engaged in this change and partner with women as Barak, who asked Deborah to join him; as Jesus, who encouraged women to accompany his ministry; as Paul, who permitted women to be his co-workers; and as Solomon, who praised the wisdom of women. Men who share the same theological beliefs must stand up for women and partner with them in ministry. Furthermore, it is essential for men in positions of authority to believe in the callings of women's and the ministries in which they are involved, and to invite them to minister alongside in leadership roles.

The ultimate goal is clear: the growth of the Palestinian church and its empowerment to expand God's Kingdom in our region. To this end, I desire to work alongside committed male leaders to make leadership roles more inclusive and to enable women to grow as leaders as they participate in Kingdom work. Already, dedicated, gifted, and anointed women have heeded God's call and are serving passionately and whole heartedly, but they continue to wait for the blessing and official recognition of the church. Mixed gender leadership, as proposed in this study, may be the key to release the full ministry potential of women.

Finally, in the future I hope to research further how women have impacted the evangelical church in the Holy Land throughout its short history. Stories of such women have been told, but little has been written seriously about them. Therefore, I intend to delve into this history and use the material to help the church realize the role of women, their importance, and the contribution they make in church planting and church growth. Research questions of interest include the following: how women bring a side of the Imago Dei that men do not; how a more complete Imago Dei would affect the church; how the Palestinian church of today is suffering due to this imbalance theologically,

socially, and in relevance; what children are being taught about these issues and what the benefit might be to the younger generation.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire for Church Pastors on Women Leadership in the Church

The intention of this questionnaire is to help Madleine Sara to assess the status of women in the Arab Evangelical Church in the Holy Land.

Kindly go through this questionnaire and show by a tick inside a box as your most desired response.

You do not need to write your name. Your response will be treated as confidential and shall be used only for the purposes of this study.

Age: ☐ 20-29; ☐ 30-35; ☐ 36-49; ☐ 50 and above

Education: ☐ Certificate; ☐ Diploma; ☐ BA Degree; ☐ MA Degree; ☐ Doctoral Degree; ☐

City:

Church & Denomination:

Average number of church membership:

Years in ministry:

Position in the church:

Please answer with number 1-5 as follows:

1 = Strongly Agree

2 = Agree

3 = Not Sure

4 = Disagree

5 = Strongly Disagree

1. Men and women were created equal in the image of God.
2. God's original intention is for men and women to have equal dominion over His creation.
3. Husband and wife are equal partners, companions and church members.
4. Rulership of husband over his wife is a practice introduced as part of God's curse after the fall of man into sin.
5. The plan of redemption restores all humanity from the curse of sin including women.
6. Women should not be viewed as serving perpetual punishment for committing sin first.
7. All members of the Church are equal through baptism by water and Holy Spirit.
8. The New Testament teaches the priesthood of all believers including women.
9. Christ's Gospel Commission is a command to both men and women.
10. There is no superior ministry for men and inferior ministry for women.
- 11 There are certain ministries that are exclusively for men.
12. A call to be a gospel minister is inclusive of both men and women.
13. Women as well as men are called to be pastors of God's flock.

14. Women are allowed to do different forms of ministry but without official ordination (as deacons, elders and pastors).

15. Women are to be theologically trained for empowerment in ministry.

16. An appeal to join gospel ministry is to be extended explicitly stating that women are included.

17. Jesus included women as His disciples.

18. Paul included women in the gospel ministry.

19. The Scriptures are the infallible authority available to men and women to command changes in the behavior of all including males.

20. Apostle Paul's statement "women should not have authority over men" does not mean women should not use Scriptures as an authority to command changes in the lives of men.

21. Apostle Paul's statement "women should keep silent in the church" does mean women should not:

- teach
- preach
- sing
- lead in the church

21. Apostle Paul's statement "a woman shall be saved through childbearing" does not mean women are not saved from sin in the same way as men through Jesus Christ who died for all humanity (1 Tim 2: 15).

22. The practice of ordination has special cultural orientations in the Arab context.

23. No Bible text says that men are the only ones to be ordained.

24. No Bible text says women should not be ordained.
25. Christ is the head of His body, the church.
26. Male and female church members constitute the body of Christ, the church.
27. Eldership in the church is equally available to all spiritually mature members regardless of their gender.
28. My church denomination has authorized ordination of women as local church elders.
29. My Church policy states that membership and position in the church is available to all who qualify without regard to gender, race or nationality.
30. Spiritually mature women may be ordained as local church elders.
31. Our church policy states that eldership is available only for men.
32. Discrimination of women in gospel ministry may cause fear for others to join.
33. Women who have received a call to ministry may be assigned churches to pastor.
34. I equally accept the teachings of the Scriptures from both male and female.
35. Lack of leadership support discourages women in the gospel ministry.
36. Fear of rejection causes local church to suffer from lack of women eldership.
37. Several women in my church have served in various positions including pastors, evangelists, elders, and deacons.
38. I feel comfortable if a woman leads the praise and worship in a meeting.
39. I believe that women can lead a meeting in the church.
40. I would feel comfortable if I entered a church and a woman was preaching the word of God.
41. I accept women dressed as clergy.

Note: Many of these questions were taken from:

<http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1120&context=dmin>

Development and Empowerment of Women for Ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Francistown, Botswana, by Leabaneng Providence Simankane

APPENDIX B

****NOTE:** Review carefully the full text of the Human Subjects Research Committee Policies and Procedures.

Date submitted: _____

Date received: _____

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY
Human Subjects Research Committee

PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS INITIAL REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

[Note: Dissertation, or other formal research proposal, need not be submitted with this form. However, relevant section(s) may need to be attached in some cases, in addition to filling out this form completely, but only when it is not possible to answer these questions adequately in this format. Do not submit a proposal in lieu of filling out this form.]

Title of Proposed Research: Towards Women Leader in the Palestinian Evangelical Church

Principal Researcher(s): Madleine Sara

Degree Program: Doctor of Ministry, Spiritual Leadership Formation

Rank/Academic Standing: Candidacy for D Min.

Other Responsible Parties (if a student, include faculty sponsor; list other involved parties and their role)

(Please include identifying information on page 6 also.)**

(1) Characteristics of Subjects (including age range, status, how obtained, etc)

I am going to send a simple questionnaire to pastors and leaders of local evangelical churches. Their age range is 40-70. Mainly Male leaders who lead Palestinian churches in the Holy Land.

(2) Describe Any Risks to the Subjects (physical, psychological, social, economic, or discomfort/ inconvenience):

I don't believe there will be any risks to the subjects. I am not asking them to write their names for the purpose. It will be certainly discreet and their names won't be published or mentioned in my research.

(3) Are the risks to subjects minimized (i) by using procedures which are consistent with sound research design and which do not unnecessarily expose subjects to risk, and (ii) whenever appropriate, by using procedures already being performed on the subjects for diagnostic or treatment purposes? Yes/No

Degree of risk:

No risk

(4) Briefly describe the objectives, methods and procedures used:

The objectives are simple, I want to proof that women usually have no chance to lead or pastor in the Palestinian Evangelical churches. I want to research and analyzes why it's not happening? I want to be able to analyze their answers, especially since most leaders will probably answer that they believe that God enables women for ministry. Yet they will probably object to any formal ministry she will be trying to have. So I want to analyze why is that? Is it theological point of view? or cultural? or sexism?

(5) Briefly describe any instruments used in the study (**attach a copy of each**).

I am using a questionnaire of 35 questions. Each question require an answer on how much the object agrees or disagrees with the question/statement.

(6) How does the research plan make adequate provision for monitoring the data collected so as to insure the safety, privacy and confidentiality of subjects?

- *There will be no mention of their names*
- *the Answers will be on automated form.*
- *I will pledge to them confidentiality*
- *The data is going to be used only for my paper.*

(7) Briefly describe the benefits that may be reasonably expected from the proposed study, both to the subject and to the advancement of scientific knowledge – are the risks to subjects reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits?

We will be able to analyze why the Palestinian Evangelical churches in the Holy Land are not open to the inclusion of women in official ministries. It will open the eyes of many people to this fact and for the need to change it.

(8) Where some or all of the subjects are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence (such as children, persons with acute or severe physical or mental illness, or persons who are economically or educationally disadvantaged), what appropriate additional safeguards are included in the study to protect the rights and welfare of these individuals?

No.

(9) Does the research place participants "at risk?" Yes/No If so, describe the procedures employed for obtaining **informed consent** (*in every case, attach copy of informed consent form; if none, explain*).

It will not at all.

COMMITTEE REVIEW

For Committee Use Only

	HSRC Member Signature	Recommend Approval	Conditiona l Approval	Not Recommend ed
Chair	_____			
Member	_____			
Member	_____			
Member	_____			
Member	_____			
Member	_____			
Member	_____			

Comments (continue on back if necessary, use asterisk to identify):

Title: Towards Women leaders in the Palestinian Evangelical Church

Principal Researcher(s): Madleine Sara

Date application completed: 13th June 2017

(The researcher needs to complete the above information on this page)

COMMITTEE FINDING:

For Committee Use Only

(1) The proposed research makes _____ guarding the health and dignity of the subjects and is therefore approved.

(2) Due to the assessment of risk being questionable or being subject to change, the research must be periodically reviewed by the **HSRC** on a _____ basis throughout the course of the research or until otherwise notified. This requires resubmission of this form, with updated information, for each periodic review.

(3) The proposed research evidences some unnecessary risk to participants and therefore must be revised to remedy the following specific area(s) on non-compliance:

(4) The proposed research contains serious and potentially damaging risks to subjects and is therefore not approved.

Chair or designated member
Received approval on the 19th of June 2017.

Date