

The role of women in ministry is an important topic in which well-intentioned, Bible-believing Christians often disagree.

Some Christians believe the bible teaches complementarianism – the belief that women are gifted and called to many ministry roles in the church but that certain roles, offices, or responsibilities should be reserved for men. While complementarians differ on where the line should be drawn, those commonly referred to as “soft complementarians” are in favor of women preaching and licensing women as pastors but opposed to women serving in the highest levels of leadership (e.g., denominational leader, lead pastor, elder, etc.). Complementarians highlight the importance of humble, servant leadership for both men and women.

Other Christians believe the Bible teaches Egalitarianism (also called Biblical Equality) – the belief that ministry roles should be determined by calling and gifting, allowing women to lead and serve in any ministry role or office. Those who believe in Biblical Equality also believe in the importance of humble, servant leadership for both men and women.

After spending significant time studying, discussing, and praying about what the Bible has to say on this issue, the Elders at Maple City Chapel share the following beliefs:

1. We believe that the Bible is the source of truth when it comes to the roles of women and men in the church and that Biblical truth is best discovered by studying scripture in its original context and examining the Bible’s teaching as a whole.
2. We believe that men and women are both created in the image of God and have inherent and equal value. As male and female, they reflect the image of God in a unique and complementary fashion. (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:18-25)
3. We believe that the desire to “rule over” another is a consequence of The Fall and is not God’s design for creation and not the kind of leadership modeled by Christ. (Genesis 3:16)
4. We believe that the leadership style modeled and taught by Jesus involves humility, service, selflessness, and sacrificial love and that all leaders, both men and women, should aspire to humble, servant leadership. (Matthew 20:20-28, Mark 10:35-45, John 13:1-17, Phillipians 2:1-8, Ephesians 5:1, 21)
5. We believe that at Pentecost the Holy Spirit filled women and men alike, that spiritual gifts are determined by God and not by gender, and that no gifts of the Spirit are given exclusively to men. (Acts 2:1-18, 1 Corinthians 12:11)
6. We believe that, throughout the big story of the Bible, God gifted and called both women and men to lead, evangelize, prophecy, teach, and use their spiritual gifts to further the kingdom of God. In the Old Testament, Deborah serves as the military, political, and spiritual leader of the nation of Israel. There is no authority higher than her in all the land (Judges 4:4-7). The prophetess Huldah teaches the Bible to the king and the priest of Israel, and she is in a position of authority over them as she speaks on behalf of God (2 Kings 22:14). In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit falls at Pentecost and fills women and men alike (Acts 1:14, 2:1-4). Peter, quoting the prophet Joel, argues that one evidence of the Spirit moving in a fresh way is greater involvement of women in ministry,

and we quickly see women involved in the early church in ways previously not allowed (Acts 2:16-18, Galatians 3:28, Matthew 28:10, Luke 8:1-3, Luke 10:38-42). In the early church, we see examples of women teaching men (e.g., Priscilla teaches the scripture to Apollo), and numerous women are identified as playing significant leadership roles in the life of the church. (Acts 18:26, Acts 21:8-9, Romans 16:1-15, Collosians 4:15)

7. There are a few scriptures that seem to limit the ministry options for women in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34-35, 1 Timothy 2:11-15). We believe that these scriptures must be interpreted in the context of the broader teaching of scripture and the specific cultural context in which they were written.
8. Some Elders at Maple City Chapel hold to a soft complementarian perspective and others hold to an egalitarian perspective, but we share the belief that, when taken as a whole, the Bible allows for women to serve as elders, to teach and preach, and to be licensed/ordained to serve as pastors.

Finally, we believe that the role of women in ministry is an important topic but is not a salvation issue. Well-meaning, Bible-believing Christians can and do disagree about what the Bible teaches on this issue. We believe that our understanding of scripture will be sharpened when we can discuss this issue with openness, sensitivity, humility, and grace.