

## **GBC EQUIP: BIBLICAL MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD SERIES QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

*This Equip series was taught via Zoom at Grace Baptist Church from 12 October to 30 November by the teaching team comprising Yanadi Tan Ivory, Nicholas Quek, Cheong Hee Kiat, Lam Lup Meng and Caleb Yap.*

*The teaching team has replicated all 53 of the questions asked during the Q&A segment of the sessions here, and included our written answers to them based on the teaching.*

*We have sought to retain the questions in their essential form but made editorial adjustments and removed references to personal names for easier reading.*

### **ON COMPLEMENTARIANISM**

1. What is the headship of men and submission of women taught supposed to look like?

It looks like men who exercise godly authority and sacrificial nurture and care for women as Christ loved the church (Eph 5:25), and women who exercise intelligent, willing, prayerful submission as Christ obeyed His Father (1 Cor 11:3). There is to be zero tolerance for abuse, disrespect or domination by men over women, which does not conform to the Bible's teaching.

2. Other than roles in the church, what are some of these "spheres" which are specific for men and women?

The church and the family are institutions ordained by God, and thus should live redemptively under the rule of His design. On the other hand, all "spheres" of human life are affected by the consequences of the Fall and we should not be surprised to see the world live in disagreement with God's design (Heb 2:8). Christians in those spheres should think about how to do all things for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31).

3. Women in leadership positions: is this forbidden in any case or context?

In terms of biblical leadership which is always stewarded authority under God, the Bible tells us that the office of elder is reserved for men according to biblical qualifications (1 Tim 3:2, 4), however, we see that there are female deacons serving in the New Testament (Rom 16:1). At the workplace or in other spheres of life, God may open doors for Christian women in positions of high office and influence as for Esther the Queen or Deborah the judge, which should be stewarded for God's glory without adopting the world's stance of antagonism towards the opposite gender.

4. Based on the leadership co-mandate that God gave to both the first man and woman in Genesis 1:26-28, how can we continue to reflect such a leadership co-mandate that was given before the Fall?

In the family, men and women should consider life and childbearing as a blessing from God and an opportunity to live out that mandate so the knowledge of God increases (Gen 1:28). In the church, men and women work together for the discipleship of believers according to God's good design, again so that the knowledge of God increases (Hab 2:14). The ability for men and women to work together is key to reflecting our good design for God's glory (Is 43:6-7)

5. What does complementarianism mean in modern context of the church – what can women say and not say?

The term complementarianism is by design, a positive affirmation of both genders who need one another in God's design. Thus we should resist reductionistic prescriptive formulas that do not honor what God has revealed. While complementarianism in the church will look different based on context, the office of elder is reserved for qualified men and we should uphold the headship principle by welcoming men and women to work together to display God's character in the church using the gifts He has given by His Spirit. It also means that through marriage husbands should be providing spiritual instruction and sacrificial care for their spouses, as wives model godly submission and character.

6. If the definition of headship is modelled after Christ and the church, isn't that only reflected in the union of marriage? (Eph 5, 1 Cor 11)

Headship is modelled not just narrowly in marriage, but through marriage to describe a more expansive and greater reality, namely Christ as head of the church, and the church, His submissive bride. Thus the union of marriage between a man and a woman is a picture of a deeper spiritual reality about Jesus and His redeemed people. 1 Cor 11:3 further suggests to us that the nature of headship actually first resides within God Himself, since the Father is the head of the Son.

## ON SPECIFIC SCRIPTURES

### GENESIS

7. If man and woman are equal and different in their roles, why did God create man before woman?

God created man before woman (1 Tim 2:13) because He had a purpose for man to execute, and distinct roles for men and women to adopt in that work. The man was to work the ground, the woman was to be his helper. Those distinct roles do not threaten or undermine their respective dignity or worth (Gal 3:28), neither does it allow us to be independent from one another (1 Cor 11:11).

8. I thought in Genesis, women were cursed with painful childbirth for taking the apple not as a glorious celebration of their female anatomy?

The Genesis narrative is both sophisticated and beautifully written to resist simplistic readings. Gen 1 describes God's blessing in tandem with the good command to "be fruitful and multiple and fill the earth..." (Gen 1:28) which took place before the Fall. The curse on childbearing did indeed add pain and difficulty to that design as in Gen 3:16, but God's command would not be revoked. The apostle Paul, commenting on this truth adds that "the woman...will be saved through childbearing" (1 Tim 2:14-15) suggesting that as Eve continued to live out her command to have children, she would one day bear the promised seed who would destroy the work of the Devil and redeem us from the Fall (Gen 3:15). Thus, there is indeed a glorious celebration of the female anatomy presented by Paul as it becomes the means that God brings forth His Savior.

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11

9. Why is the application of head coverings context specific (greek lawlessness) but the headship principle is universally applicable? I struggle to see how Paul is making that distinction in 1 Corinthians.

Head coverings are the culturally recognised sign of authority over a wife in the church in Corinth that Paul applies to women for proper praying and prophesying. They are not an

absolute sign, since he commands men not to have head coverings while they do so. As that sign does not mean anything outside of Corinthian culture, as does the nature of hair length, we do not read of Paul applying those commands outside of this text. On the other hand, Paul's arguments for the application in the headship principle from 1 Cor 11:3 are grounded in universal Christian arguments: the Trinitarian nature of the God (1 Cor 11:3), the order of Creation (1 Cor 11:8-9) and arguments from nature. Moreover, we see Paul stressing the same principle later in the letter with other applications (1 Cor 14:33-35) which he applies with apostolic authority (1 Cor 14:37-38). He reiterates the same arguments in 1 Tim 2:11-15 for the church to uphold.

10. Why is gender hair length cultural? What does Paul mean when he used the word "nature" in 1 Cor 11:14 - "Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering." (1 Cor 11:14-15)

Gender hair length is cultural as the value judgments Paul applies in his absurdist arguments about the length of hair are not universally shared beyond Greco-Roman culture, say to the modern day. Moreover Paul's command is not that long or short hair are good or bad. Rather he draws upon a shared natural understanding that men should not have long hair as women do for their glory. As he later explains in 1 Cor 15 about embodied existence: "the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another" (1 Cor 15:40). The inference in the argument from nature is that men are not to take up signs of womanhood, and vice versa.

11. It seems that in 1 Cor 11:13, the possessive pronoun "her husband" is not widely translated with such possessive pronoun in many other translations? Is there any reason why ESV translated it as such? Any significance if the possessive pronoun isn't there?

The translation question of 1 Cor 11 is difficult to assess as the Greek word for man and husband is the same, as is the word for woman and wife. The ESV translators have rendered it more specifically to help us see the headship principle applied clearly in the context of marriage where the pastoral issue was likely located. Most likely the reports were that in the church husbands and wives were praying and prophesying in inappropriate ways that undermined the order of headship in the church. The ESV translation presents the natural understanding and safeguards against more permissive and problematic translations – a wife's head is her husband instead of a woman's head is every man, which would run contrary to the design of headship.

12. What does it mean to be the glory of our head?

To be the glory of our head (1 Cor 11:7) draws upon the headship principle laid out in 1 Cor 11:3. This means firstly, to recognise the existence and legitimacy of our head and second to submit to our head willingly as per God's good design. Our cheerful, willing submission reflects our trust in God's design, and also our trust in our head. To do so is neither humiliating nor denigrating, and as Paul suggests in his choice of language, is both honorable and affirming.

13. What do you think of the perspective that 1 Cor 11 is in a private setting while 1 Cor 14 is in the local church setting (women praying/teaching in a private setting)?

While some do indeed hold to such a view, 1 Cor 11:10 suggests that Paul is applying the headship principle in the public gathering of the church witnessed by angels (Heb 12:22). Furthermore, 1 Cor 11:2, 16 both suggest that Paul's instruction is to be applied in the traditions of church order and thus unlikely to be in a private setting.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 14

14. Just wanted to check if I understand the teaching from 1 Corinthians 14 correctly - is the understanding that women should not be evaluating 'this is from God' 'this is not from God' in the corporate setting (is this EGM/AGM/pulpit?) because that involves authority in sifting and weighing the soundness of doctrine? But we can do this privately like in conversations? What about Bible studies if you think someone is teaching something false - you don't say anything but talk to an elder/CG leader?

Practically, 1 Corinthians 14 applied means that women should be welcome to participate in the public worship life of the church, but not join in the act of preaching Scripture in the gathered assembly. This applies to a care group or Bible class/study where both genders have been gathered. A private context would look like an informal gathering of friends where the topic of the Bible comes up, or family devotions. But we should avoid approaching the Bible's teaching on gender as a negative check list of identifying exceptional cases to the norm, since the norm is given for our good. The event that false teaching is identified should perhaps be taken as a separate issue. Regardless of our gender, we should check the Scriptures as the noble Bereans did (Acts 17:11), clarify it with the preacher in good faith (1 Cor 7:1a), and thus raise it with undershepherds and leaders charged with guarding our doctrine (Titus 1:9).

15. With respect to 1 Cor 14: it seems then, that there isn't really a unique role of the brothers in the church in the discernment of what is right according to scripture?

The role of leading the church through discerning teaching and refuting error is ultimately held by the elders. Thus an elder's qualification is that he must hold firm to the word, and able to give instruction in sound doctrine and able to rebuke those who contradict it (Titus 1:9). However, the men of the church should certainly aspire to this as a noble thing (1 Tim 3:1), and as godly husbands, provide spiritual instruction and leadership in their homes (1 Cor 14:35). Women too should be encouraged to teach God's word and godly living to other women so that the word of God may not be reviled (Titus 2:2-5).

16. With respect to the application of the 1 Cor 14 text: Is it a fair application for us to say that when our church meets for events such as QCM etc., if a sister disagrees with something (related to biblical interpretation/understanding), she should not bring it up publicly but rather ask her husband/the elders? And men should/are "allowed" to do that?

The question asks about the application of 1 Cor 14, which may look different in various contexts. However the text does not give special rights to men that women are denied. In a congregational meeting led by the elders, for anyone (men or women) to raise or challenge the leaders on a point of doctrine would surely not be appropriate or honourable (Heb 13:7, 1 Tim 5:7). Women are certainly encouraged to have discussions with their husbands, and if the need arises, for both men or women to privately consult the elders regardless of whether they are married or single.

## 1 TIMOTHY 2

17. Could you elaborate more on how Paul derived 1 Tim 2 from Gen 2? What was the logic?

In 1 Tim 2, Paul makes two points from Genesis 2-3: first, the order of Creation being man ahead of woman, and second, the tragic reversal of the good design in Eve's temptation. The logic is that God had ordained a good headship structure between men and women before the Fall that was subverted in the Fall.

18. Can you please repeat how "the woman will be saved through childbirth"?

1 Tim 2:15 tells us that while Eve's disobedience of God and the overturning of her role as helper to her husband Adam was the first human act of sin, redemption will come about through her perseverance and faith "through childbearing", which points to the promise that God made that redemption will come through the "seed of the Woman", who will be the long-awaited Messiah to come (Gen 3:15). He will save not just the whole world by defeating the works of the devil, but He will also save His mother Eve (1 Jn 3:8).

## TITUS 2

19. In response to the house husband question, how are we to think about Titus 2:5, that young woman are to love husband and kids... and to be "working at home"?

Titus 2 teaches that older women should be involved in discipling younger women in godly behaviors and living, which include the diligent and responsible adoption of godly responsibilities and roles. However, elsewhere we see in Scripture that the responsibility of nurture and care for the next generation to know the Lord is for both parents (Deut 11:19) and especially for fathers (Deut 6:6-7).

20. I am a young man. Can I aspire to be a Titus 2 Old man? What is wrong with thinking that I am an "Older man"?

Godly young men should aspire to mature into the godliness of older men as they age and grow even though individuals may feel differently about how they keep pace with their peers based on experiences and other factors that give us self-awareness. In Titus 2, Paul's teaching is directed at how Titus (himself a relatively younger man) should disciple older and younger men in godly character with slight differences based on their stations in life. As a church of different generations, younger men are blessed to pattern their growth on godly older men by getting to know them, and older men can also model godly character as they disciple those younger than them.

## JESUS THE MAN

21. The attributes of Jesus' masculinity appear to be general traits of godliness that all Christians should aspire towards - to what extent should gender really be shaping our godliness then?

It should not be surprising that growing into Christlikeness presents us with overlapping traits of godly character for men and women (Gal 3:28), many of which are embodied in the man Christ Jesus who is one Savior for all mankind (1 Tim 2:5) and our pattern for holiness. However, Scripture's descriptions of godly maturity for men and women have different stresses and accents (Titus 2:1-8). Many of these also conform with the roles that we play as husbands, wives, brothers and sisters.

In particular, men should also imitate Christ uniquely by loving their wives self-sacrificially, the way Christ loves His bride self-sacrificially. While women no doubt are called to love their husbands, and often done self-sacrificially in practice, God's word calls women to love their husbands distinctly in their submission to their husbands, the way the church submits to her Bridegroom (Eph 5:25-31). So, husbands, love your wives self-sacrificially. And, wives, submit to your husbands and enjoy being loved self-sacrificially by them.

## THE LGBTQ MOVEMENT AND GENDER FLUIDITY

22. how do we respond to children who from a young age reject their sex and/or have same sex attraction?

With mercy, never reacting to control or dominate (Col 3:21, Eph 6:4). If they are our children or the children of the church, ours must always be to speak to them of the ways of God in saving us (Deut 4:9-10) especially as they are exposed to the ideas of the world. This is discipleship both by teaching the Bible and by our example as we come and go, by the way, as we rise and lay down (Deut 11:19). We must show children happy, healthy examples through our lives, just as we speak of the hope within us (1 Pet 3:15). Above all, we must bring them to Jesus who welcomes children, even confused ones (Matt 19:14).

23. The LGBTQ community faces tremendous discrimination from within the church - what can the church do to create a safe space where they can voice their struggles and journey together with them?

On one hand, Christians are not free of bigotry and cruelty in our words to LGBTQ persons. We must repent of that (1 Jn 8-10). On one another hand, we should not be naive in thinking that the LGBTQ movement does not have a political purpose in organising for its rights and interests, many of which are deeply complex and significant for human society (Lk 16:8). Church members must learn to see beyond the LGBTQ "identity" of a person and show them neighbourly love and care as we would any other unbeliever, desiring their repentance and faith in Christ (Jud 22-24). If there are same-sex attracted brothers or sisters in our midst who desire to be faithful to Christ's teaching on same-sex relationships (1 Cor 6:9, 1 Tim 1:10), the church owes them love, acceptance and affection (Rom 13:8) as we walk together in holiness.

24. How do the biblical concepts apply to those in the LGBTQ community?

See above.

25. It was mentioned that the manifestation of God's intentions is shown even in our physical bodies: There's a range of masculinity and femininity in our bodies. Some women just naturally have higher levels of testosterone for example. So does it mean women should always seek a man who is more masculine than her?

The Scripture does not teach that there is a spectrum of gender, but that we were made male and female in the image of God and this is indeed reflected in our bodies both at the anatomical and hormonal level (Gen 1:27). Our distinct physiology is a manifestation of God's creation. From there, we have what is generally true: what is generally "male" and what is generally "female". Exceptions do exist especially after the Fall and they need to be handled individually with love and care, as God's unique creation. That said, the amount of testosterone/oestrogen in men and women at the hormonal level does not make us male or female, just as the "how" does not make up the "what". The concentrated traits of our "maleness" or "femaleness" are not the determining factor, but God, who makes us wonderfully what we are (Ps 139:14). Thus Christians should celebrate and delight in how God has made us in our bodies, not as mistakes, but as part of His good purposes, and live out of that design.

Women who feel more masculine should be loved and affirmed and cherished as women just as they are both by family and in the church (Col 3:12-14). As the Lord wills, she should seek a godly partner of the opposite sex that God has prepared for her (Jas 4:15). On the other hand, I think that I think there is a need, especially in our culture, to encourage men to man up. That does not mean that we should be macho as some parts in our culture want to suggest but to stand up and lead as the Bible commands men to.

26. Are there any reasons in the Bible that explain why what makes women distinct is something physical, and perhaps a once/twice in a lifetime occurrence for many women (i.e.

childbearing), but what makes men distinct is something more related to character, and an ongoing posture (i.e. headship/authority)?

Childbearing is only one of the many ways in which men and women are distinct, and it is a blessing that not every woman may receive. Furthermore, not every man may be given the duty to serve as an elder in the church or a husband to a wife. Thus in some ways the comparison may be overstated. A better comparison may be to compare headship to helpmateship, and mothering/childbearing to fathering as distinctives for men and women.

We could also challenge our culture: are physical traits less distinctive than character traits? We also need not assume that childbearing once or twice in a lifetime is the norm. In our immediate culture, perhaps these reflect concerns about the standard of living, financial constraints or other concerns. Perhaps we could also reconsider some of our cultural assumptions that views headship/authority too highly and childbearing too lowly.

We can trust God's profound wisdom in designing our physical characteristics and blessing them because we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Consequently we ought to see childbearing as honorable and as God allows, desirable. Besides, there are many things that men and women share in common as fellow human beings.

27. Is there any room for a nuanced understanding of gender and sexuality in light of the spectrum of identities people now embrace? How can we reconcile what is said in the scripture with accepting this spectrum of identities?

On one hand, we must be wary of false worldly ideas that stand against God's truth (2 Cor 10:3-6). We should be clear that to defiantly build one's identity on a sense of self or on sexual attraction is shaky ground for the soul and is offensive to God our Creator (Rom 1:22-25). On the other hand, Christians live with a better hope, which the world will be curious about (2 Pet 3:15). In this sense, we should be unusually accepting and loving towards those who struggle with same-sex attraction even though we know the lifestyle is incompatible with faithfulness to Christ. Above all, it is Christ who defines our identity not our heterosexuality or homosexuality.

## **THE #METOO MOVEMENT AND ABUSES OF THE BIBLE'S TEACHING OF GENDER**

28. What's wrong with the #MeToo movement? Isn't this a movement against sexual harassment and abuse? I had the impression that it was through this movement wealthy and well connected persons like Jeffrey Epstein was brought into justice.

The danger lies in the precision of identifying what the #MeToo movement means to different people.

On one hand it is the repudiation of sexual harassment and abuse by men against women. Our God loves justice and righteousness (Ps 33:5). Ours is a kingdom of those yearning for righteousness (Matt 5:6). On another hand the movement draws upon the very complex legacy of the feminist movement and cancel culture in the style of mob vigilante justice. This is far more complicated. Whether it is the act of truth-telling and pointing to a wicked problem, or whether the actions of the movement are built on anti-Biblical assumptions of justice and gender, one must ask, do Christians have to fall into the pro or anti camp? Furthermore, does the Bible have anything better to offer to the problem in the first place? The Bible explains the core of the problem – human beings in rebellion against God now enflamed by their own sinfulness (Rom 8:7). It offers a solution – righteousness not our own found through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – this good news changes and transforms us, and enables us to live according to God's good design with restored trust and healing between genders (Gal 3:28, Eph 2:14), complementing one another according to

God's good design. Thus we can and should agree with and disagree with the #MeToo movement at the same time.

Abuse of women by men is biblically condemned and can never be condoned (Prov. 12:18; Eph. 5:25-29; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7-8; 1 Pet. 3:7; 5:3).

29. Why is the #MeToo movement not aligned with God's design?

See above.

30. Is there any historical evidence that the first churches obey this headship principle in this distinctly Christian way that doesn't diminish women's worth, instead of the patriarchal manner that the world advocates? Because in the history of churches, it definitely did corrupt and became more patriarchal over time right? So can we be sure that these interpretations of the scripture we are discussing now are not modern interpretations, but are as it was in its original meaning?

It can be argued credibly that Jesus Christ and His followers launched the first "sexual revolution" by affirming and dignifying women like no other social movement before. Jesus defied purity and segregation rules for women by being touched by the woman with the issue of blood and accepting being scandalously wiped by a woman's hair with perfume. Paul's teaching on women praying and prophesying properly in the church was unheard of as women were not allowed to speak in pagan Greco-Roman worship. Sharon James in her book points out numerous historical facts that showed Christianity was good news for women indeed: early Christianity affirmed the dignity and worth of women in culturally radical ways by accepting and providing for orphans and widows. Roman Emperor Julian the Apostate was upset that the Christians relieved the poor wherever they went with love and compassion. Tertullian records that Christian giving to supply the needs of destitute boys and girls set it apart from the pagan temples. The early church promoted marital fidelity in a way that was radically different from the culture and prohibited arbitrary divorce, the marrying off of young girls, prostitution. Under Christian influence, Roman Emperor Valentinian repealed the *patria potestas* for husbands to hold rights over the life and death of their wives. Women secured property rights and received the rights of guardianship over their children.

31. Could you share some ways in which churches or Christians tend to abuse/misconstrue this concept of Biblical manhood and womanhood?

This list would be too long to name, but they would certainly include: caricaturing the Biblical concept as joyless or restrictive; applying a cultural concept without demonstrating the Biblical basis for it; justifying harshness, cruelty and physical abuse of women in the name of male headship; male chauvinism, misogyny and the neglect of women in the church and family; what culture now calls "toxic masculinity" where men are emotionally and relationally isolated; female leaders who exceed the Biblical mandate or exacerbate the gender wars; the idolatry of and failure to uphold the good of marriage, childbirth and singleness, etc.

## THE HEADSHIP PRINCIPLE

32. How do women pray and prophesy, according to the headship principle, today?

Praying and prophesying properly in 1 Cor 11 means that men and women participate in the gathered worship differently. The elders of the church are to be ultimately responsible for the authoritative teaching and evaluation of doctrine or revelation from God, and thus, in conformity to Scripture, they should do so appropriately refuting error (Titus 1:9). For the sisters to participate in praying and prophesying (or the teaching of Scripture) would mean



first doing so under the headship of their husbands and the authority of the elders, and secondly, as 1 Tim 2:11-12 tells us, teaching the Scripture to women or children only.

33. What is the definition of headship and how/where do the writers of the Bible use the "pattern of only male official leadership" to argue for male leadership in the church? It struck me as a problematic way of thinking - you wouldn't say in Singapore the pattern is for Chinese Prime Ministers therefore the PM should be Chinese. It's an interesting pattern and worth interrogating, but it doesn't necessarily mean it is supposed to be the norm. Likewise, is there real merit in emphasising that most of the Bible was written by men as a reason for men being spiritual leaders? It's like a colonial era European saying because an indigenous population did not document their natural heritage (e.g. flora and fauna) according to a written tradition, whereas when Europeans came to Southeast Asia they made many discoveries and published many papers, therefore Europeans are meant to take the lead in studying and publishing about the natural world. The Europeans probably will continue to take the lead but does it mean that they were designed to? I'm just questioning why these were the arguments/lines of logic raised because I'm not sure this is the way the Bible reasons (I'm ready to be proved wrong here) and such lines of arguments have been used historically to oppress minorities.

The word head in Greek "kephale" is typically understood to mean "authority" vested in leadership. In other words, as the Father is the head of the Son, so the Son is in full obedience to His Father (Jn 5:19, Phi 2:8). Egalitarian and feminist scholars have argued that the word means "source" or "origin" in order to blunt the idea that headship means authority, which is unsatisfactory.

We see the patterns of male leadership in the church laid out as follows: first, in the prayerful choice of Jesus selecting the men who would be His apostles (Lk 6:12-16); second, in the apostolic selection that a qualified man would replace Judas as a witness to Jesus' life and ministry as the Christ (Acts 1:21-22); third, in the NT qualifications of elders that limit the office to men (1 Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9).

The argument from tradition that justifies an existing or longstanding position about race and ethnicity is indeed problematic. However, the Biblical argument is not derived from tradition but rather from the revelation of God's will consistent across Holy Scripture. Our understanding of what God envisions is what is expressed from the Bible, and its consistency across the canon helps us know that God's purposes are both consistent from Creation and purposeful for our good.

34. Thanks for explaining more about how the world dilutes the differences in roles between men and women. However, are there areas in which the differences have been overemphasised? Eg certain conceptions of masculinity or femininity? How does the Bible's perspective align or challenge even conservative ideas of masculinity or femininity?

The answer is yes. The person of Christ, an actual living human male is our ultimate corrective. He was tempted in every way as we are, and was yet without sin (Heb 2:17-18). He challenges both conservative (emotionless, stoic, strong and violent) and liberal (weak, helpless, all-tolerant, deeply introspective, concerned with appearances) stereotypes of masculinity. We see His divine power tempered with restraint (Matt 26:53), His gentleness shown while He commands (Matt 11:28-29), His gentleness accompanying justice (Is 42:3), and His wrath embracing mercy (Matt 21:12-14). With women, the Bible does the same: it calls for submission and humility (1 Cor 14:34), while also depicting female heroes who are strong in character and spirit (e.g., Deborah, Esther).

35. Can you speak more to what "teaching authoritatively" (versus "facilitating", it seems, based on the sharing) entails? Particularly in a group Bible study / CG setting, where people are

discussing questions related to a specific Bible passage - does leading the discussion necessarily mean teaching authoritatively?

It can be a matter of splitting hairs when it comes to applying it in various contexts like small groups etc, but broadly to teach authoritatively is to declare the meaning of Scripture and call others to believe it God's revealed Word by faith as the scribe Ezra did when he read the text and 'gave its sense" (Ezra 7:10). To facilitate a Bible study is a more modern invention, using a pedagogy of enquiry to help others self-discover both the meaning of the text and how it relates to our varied contexts for application. The complementarian ideal for a small group would be to have a respected, qualified brother accountable to the elders for the teaching in small groups, helped by one or more sisters who can assist in the teaching and application of Biblical truth to women in the group.

## MARRIAGE

36. It sounds like the decision to marry is a lot more about a commitment to living out God's design than it is about compatibility. If this is true, how do 2 people approach thinking about getting married? Is too much emphasis being put on compatibility today?

Commitment is indeed the grounds of marital faithfulness to the covenant we make before God in the presence of many witnesses which we can cling to with God's help. Compatibility, though seemingly important at the onset of a relationship, may wax and wane over time as people change and the relationship grows. It may be overemphasised by the world as a way of providing the natural benefits of marriage. However, it is the Spirit of God growing a couple in godliness according to God's design that enables them to grow in love and commitment to one another. A couple thinking about getting married is best served by seeking out friendships and discipling from couples who are married in order to observe their example and learning from their experiences and struggles about how Christian marriage practically works, and seeking out godly counsel about how they should view issues of compatibility.

## HUSBANDS

37. If a man refuses to lead his family, is it better, for the sake of the children, as in the example of Deborah, for the wife to teach and lead them in God's word?

It is the clear duty of a Christian man to take responsibility before God for his duties in the family. It is the desire of this teaching not to discourage women from helping their children grow in godliness, but to rally men to step forward in courage and with their wives, raise their children in the ways of the Lord. If a man refuses to do so and chooses to imitate his father Adam rather than His Saviour Jesus, his wife's faithful ministry to their children will surely be used of God according to His grace. However, she can also seek the support and community of the church to assist in this duty or for the good of her husband, reaching out to the brothers and sisters in the church as well as the elders of the church as a family would.

38. Should love by a husband be a condition first before submission by wife? If a husband does not love (gives himself up for her) how should the wife still submit? What is a God-Honouring way for Christian wives to respond, if in the case, a Christian husband does not live up to the calling of a Christian husband?

Fascinatingly, 1 Peter 3 makes the stunning case that wives are to submit to their husbands even if they are unbelievers, and do good by not fearing anything that is frightening. Thus, as each spouse will be accountable for how they act before God, the teaching of Scripture on this front is not conditional. A wife entrusts herself to a trustworthy and faithful God in her obedience to Him, even if she finds her husband does not measure up. That said, a godly husband imitating Christ's love is a joy to submit to, and wives should pray earnestly and

regularly that their husbands grow into the maturity of Christ in their character and roles as husbands and trust God in their own obedience. That is perhaps the most God-honouring thing to do. Additionally, a wife can gently and respectfully raise the issue with her husband as she seeks his good and growth. She can also encourage him to not isolate himself but seek out godly men in the church for discipleship and growth since none of us will be able to live out God's Word without the help of community.

39. How are we to think about someone choosing to be a house-husband, if he has a God-given career woman wife?

The term "house-husband" or "career woman" do not appear in the Bible. It is a Christian duty to provide for our families (1 Tim 5:8). Scripture gives us examples of wives who are incredibly productive and effective at managing and investing (Prov 31:13-16). What is critically at stake for husbands and wives who are the "breadwinner", or even if they are a dual income household is that their relationship with one another as a Christian husband and wife are nurtured and sustained in love. If there are children, the godly duties of raising children must be placed above one's professional duties and ambitions by both husband and wife working together in complementarity. Furthermore, the relationship between husband and wife should reflect God's good design – with husbands providing spiritual leadership and nurture under God for his spouse (1 Cor 11:3).

## SINGLES

40. How do singles/barren people fulfil what God intended for creation if "filling the earth"=pro-creating?

The mandate from God in Gen 1:28 has at least two basic implications: first, multiplying physical offspring that life may fill the earth. Second, multiplying spiritual offspring that the true image of God and knowledge of Him will fill the earth (Hab 2:14). In Christ, we see the truest fulfilment of this mandate from the line of Adam and Eve – God the Son became flesh so we may know God, and experience eternal life (John 17:3). Christian singles and barren people live in the context of Christ's redeemed people the church as a new family of Christ transcending biological function and have family and children a hundredfold (Mk 10:29-30). Through Jesus our second Adam, the eunuch who is unable to bear "fruit" will not be called a dry tree (Is 56:3-5) and those who are voluntarily single (eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven) too (Matt 19:12). Singles and barren people can all fill the earth with the knowledge of God by getting involved in our Great Commission mandate to make disciples who know and image God in Christ.

41. If the headship principle says that every wife's headship is her husband (and her husband only, not every man), then technically a single woman's headship should be Christ, just as with every man. In that case, if we are supposed to see the headship relationships in parallel, how does SINGLE women speaking in church undermine male headships then?

1 Cor 11:3 can rightly be understood to locate the singles' submission under the headship of Christ. Thus regardless of whether one is married or not, male or female, we live under submission to our head, who rules over the church. Practically this means the submission of all singles men and women comes under the authority of the elders. Paul's also forbids women from assuming the role of authoritative preaching and speaking according to 1 Tim 2:11-12. Furthermore, we understand the Biblical qualifications for the office of elder to limit the role to qualified men (1 Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9).

42. To what extent should these roles be lived out while dating? If not at all (because dating is not marriage), what then should be the dynamic?

A godly dating couple would be wise to learn about God's good design for a marriage commitment and slowly develop the habits and behaviours in the relationship that fit the character descriptions within. This is done most naturally by spending time with and observing the lives, habits and character of other godly married couples in the church, or by seeking out pre-marital counselling early. However, as the question observes, since dating is not marriage, there is no binding covenant for a couple to cling to and observe, and hence, a couple should not rush into forcing themselves into the roles and character of a commitment that has not yet been made. If we are committed to godly character growth as men and women according to the descriptions Scripture lays out for us, a couple will grow into the roles God has designed for a husband and wife in time.

## **WOMEN IN MINISTRY**

### **43. How do you know that ones that Jesus and the apostles chose were not a result of an ancient form of "bromance"?**

The Bible tells us that before intentionally choosing the men to be His apostles, for "all night [Jesus] continued in prayer to God" (Lk 6:12). In His high priestly prayer Jesus prays for those who "will believe in me through their word" referring to the apostolic foundations He is laying through these who will be His witnesses (Jn 17:20). Thus, whatever is implied in the "bromance" of Jesus was both intentional and purposeful in His selection of twelve men to be pillars of the church (Gal 2:9). To replace Judas, although "the women and Mary the mother of Jesus" were present (Acts 1:14), the apostles sought God's will for "one of these men [who] must become with a witness to his resurrection" (Acts 1:22).

### **44. What's the difference between exhortation and teaching since we exhort with God's word?**

The differences between exhortation and teaching are very fine. To exhort is to speak forth and call for action and response, while to teach is to speak authoritatively or bring forth the message and meaning of an authoritative text for understanding or obedience. While one may try to say that 1 Tim 2 prohibits the latter and not the former, we understand the spirit of the text to mean that the sisters should not join in the public ministry of speaking God's word in the act of preaching.

### **45. Could you share again why women are not allowed to preach God's Word? I struggle to reconcile that with the understanding that women have equal worth. Thank you!**

As Christians we understand that our worth does not come from our competence, roles or even work that we do for the Lord. The notion that our worth should be attached to what we are able to do comes not from Scripture but from the world. 1 Cor 14:33-35 and 1 Tim 2:11-12 flesh out Paul's teaching that authoritative evaluation of doctrine should not be undertaken by the sisters in the church. However, we see from Titus 2:2-5 that women should be encouraged to actively participate in teaching and discipling other women. Furthermore, men and women in the church are both necessary and interdependent in body of Christ (1 Cor 11:11-12), and to image God's character (Gen 1:27).

### **46. This teaching is so outdated, jaded and old fashioned. If God doesn't want women to speak then why did he give us mouths?**

1 Cor 11:5 tells us that proper praying and prophesying for men and women is permitted in the congregation. On the other hand, 1 Cor 14:33-34 clearly indicates that with our mouths, silence is an option since the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets (v32). In 1 Tim 2:11-12 it is undeniable that Paul has forbidden something. Paul has provided

prohibitions for the sisters from joining in the act of authoritative evaluation of God's revelation.

47. If I have an issue with a male preacher I can't voice my opinions and I'm just supposed to keep quiet and ask my husband at home? And if a male preacher is chosen who isn't godly or lives in sin, I can't do anything about it?

Believers should imitate the noble Bereans who checked preaching against Scripture to see if it is so (Acts 17:11). If one has concerns about teaching, a wife can certainly speak to her husband, and then to the elders of the congregation who are responsible for refuting error (Titus 1:9). Elders should also reflect godly character as described in Scripture and must be held accountable to it by the congregation (1 Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9). Any accusation brought against an elder must be on the basis of more than one witness as such a matter is serious and not trivial (1 Tim 5:19).

48. If the Spirit is given to both men and women to prophesy why must women stay silent?

The Spirit is given to both sons and daughters as prophesied in Joel 2:28 and confirmed in Acts 2:18. However, the spirit of prophets is subject to prophets, and 1 Cor 14:33-34 and 1 Tim 2:11-12 provide clear instructions for the kinds of Spirit-filled work that our sisters are to refrain from.

49. Aren't women today more educated than women in the past? So why can't a more capable woman speak and preach?

The church should pray for and celebrate the gifting of women whom God has given as gifts to the church, especially when they submit to the headship principle. That is Paul's argument from 1 Cor 11:5 about proper praying and prophesying for women. In the church we should welcome their ministry especially to other women as per Titus 2:2-5 for the flourishing of the church. However, a competence-based approach to leadership and authority in the church is contrary to God's design (1 Cor 1:27-28). Instead the apostle Paul upholds the headship principle for the church to comply with (1 Cor 11:3), lays out biblical qualifications for the office of elders (1 Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9) and desires for men and women in the body to work together in complementary ways (1 Cor 11:11-12).

50. Can women lead in bible study groups that are also made up of men? and perhaps also in any other similar formats in general, other than the pulpit? in other words, are women just not permitted to preach at the pulpit? thanks. enjoyed the sessions thus far :)

Every church will have to make a decision for how to apply the Biblical principles specific to its context. This is a given (1 Cor 11:16), but we will need wisdom and grace to discern how. At GBC we hope to embody complementarianism by encouraging gifted sisters to partner the brothers together in teaching Bible studies, and also by leading Bible studies to women and children in conformity with 1 Tim 2:11-12. As we understand the office of elder in Scripture to be reserved for qualified men to lead the church by preaching from the pulpit in our gathered worship. However it will not be uncommon for sisters at GBC to be involved in the leading of singing, reading Scripture and sharing testimonies.

51. Some churches take an egalitarian perspective to today's passage. Should all churches agree on this? If not, how should followers approach this?

There will be many doctrinal points on which different churches will not agree and each will disciple its members accordingly. As followers of Christ Jesus we must always view those who disagree with us on Biblical manhood and womanhood with charity, and conduct ourselves

with humility when we disagree. Christians should read the Scriptures themselves, come to their own conclusions and convictions, including whether they can in good conscience confess the church's faith and comply with its order. As this issue becomes more and more pointed in the culture, Christians who agree with complementarianism should become clearer and more convicted on this issue from Scripture while conducting ourselves with grace towards others, and prepare for more heat on this subject.

52. What do we do with female seminary professors?

We should be careful about making blanket statements about how Biblical truth should be applied since each person's circumstances differ. We should encourage and come alongside sisters who sense a calling to ministry, and pray for them to pursue it with a Biblical understanding. Professors at seminaries support the local church by providing ministry training for both pastors as well as lay male and female leaders in the church – a range of persons who make up the seminary student body. Seminary students will surely benefit from having both men and women teaching on different aspects of ministry. Desiring to be faithful to the Biblical prescription in 1 Tim 2:12, some seminaries thus make a distinction between having only male instructors teach courses or programmes for pastoral training and the teaching of theology and Scripture from other courses and programmes which look towards other aspects of ministry and related studies e.g., counselling, music and worship, women's ministry etc. Others apply the principle more narrowly by restricting the faculty to men only since they do the work of training pastors. However, we should always be charitable to all and respect that not everyone will share our biblical convictions, while holding steadfastly to what we understand of Scripture.

## **DISCIPLING AND GROWTH AS MEN AND WOMEN**

53. In the context of a 1-1 disciple relationship, should the younger woman choose who they want to be discipled by? Or should an older woman decide who they want to disciple?

In seeking out an intentional discipling relationships, younger women should pray and are free to seek out women with complementary experiences and dispositions. While more subjective, the right "fit" for our season of life and situation is something to ask Him to provide. One way is to seek out the pastors, elders or church staff to ask if there is an older woman who would read the Bible with me. That said, we should also remember that God gracious places natural relationships around us for discipleship too – the gifts of mums, aunties, teachers, sisters and many other women who disciple us in informal ways that we do not always choose. We should recognise and appreciate all godly women that He has placed around us for Christian growth.