

# Roles of Men and Women in the Church

*So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.  
Genesis 1:27*

## Preamble

When God had finished creating the heavens and the earth and everything in it, Genesis 1:31 says, “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” Mankind is described as the central figure to God’s creation, created male and female in his own image. Our relationship with God and with each other was perfect and pure and full of God’s blessings, just as he intended (Gen 2:25). When we sinned, not only did we die spiritually in our relationship with God (Eph 2:1) but the curse of sin brought about brokenness in our relationships with one another (Gen 3:16). Never, in the history of the world, has human culture produced a value statement of men and women and a relationship between men and women that comes close to reproducing what God called “very good” in the beginning. We may try to claim advancements in the value statements of our culture but the state of brokenness in our families speaks otherwise. What a wretched state that we are in!

*Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!  
Romans 7:25a*

As with all things pertaining to life and godliness, the broken relationships and roles between men and women find redemption and restoration through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Everything we need for instruction has been given to us in his word (2 Peter 1:3, 19-21, 2 Tim 3:16). When we seek to submit to and follow Christ in His word, we will live in contrast to the culture around us and there is tension in the process. This was true for the early church and it is true for us today. Following Christ in a direction that is counter to culture requires hearing with faith and obedience by faith and grace toward each other. The result is transformation and joyful blessedness that is only possible out of reverence to Jesus Christ (Gal 3:5, Eph 5:15-21).

It is the desire of Hope Church to submit in all things to Jesus Christ and to enjoy, to the greatest extent possible, the fellowship that we have in him. The guidelines we have put together for the roles of men and women in Hope Church are intended to reflect our best understanding of the teaching of Scripture. These guidelines carry no authority of their own but are subject to the authority of Scripture. Following these guidelines does not produce a greater righteousness or position with God since Christ *is* our righteousness and in him there is no condemnation (1 Cor 1:30-31, Rom 8:1). These guidelines simply reflect a heart desire to walk in the blessedness of the new life that we have by faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 2:20).

## Specific roles for men

**Pastor / elder:** The words pastor, elder, overseer, shepherd, preacher and teacher are often used interchangeably to describe a single role that is given exclusively to men. This is the role of authority in the church that Christ has appointed for oversight, stewardship, teaching, equipping, protection from false doctrine, and the soul-care of his church.

Eph 4:11, 1 Tim 2:12, 3:1-7, 2 Tim 1:11, Titus 1:6-9, Heb 13:17, James 3:1, 1 Peter 5:1-3

### **Teacher of the body**

Anyone taking on the **role of teacher** in a gathering that includes men which may include meeting in a home or place of worship. This does not exclude others present, both men and women, from participating in discussion and in the process of learning. 1 Timothy 2:11-12

### **Managing with authority over men:**

Anyone assuming a role of authority over a group in the church that includes men. *This is not about administrative or organizational management.* This is about authority to exhort, to confront sin, and to resolve conflict in a group that includes men. This stems from the role of Pastor / elder but may be extended to qualified men as given in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. An example of this is seen in Acts 6:1-6 where conflict had arisen as Hellenists were being neglected in the daily distribution. Note that up to that point, oversight of the distribution was not being done by the disciples. What necessitated their involvement, or the involvement of qualified men, was the need for managing authority to resolve conflict.

This exclusiveness of men in the last two roles is largely informed by our understanding of 1 Tim 2:11-12. There are some important things to note in this passage:

*11 Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness.  
12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man;  
rather, she is to remain quiet.*

The context of these verses is a gathering of the body, of both men and women, for worship and teaching. The main point of verse 11 is not that women be quiet and submissive, but it is that women be allowed to participate in the learning. This is made clear by the greek verb for “learn” in verse 11 which is in the imperative. Including women would have been counter to both the greek and jewish cultures at that time they did not hold women in high esteem. So Paul’s main point of verse 11 is, “let them learn!”

Verse 12 clarifies what verse 11 means by “quietly” and “all submissiveness”. The greek word for “teach” is in the infinitive and communicates more the *role* of teaching rather than a specific *action* of teaching. The meaning of “quietly” is clarified as not taking the role of the teacher. *It is not saying that a woman should not speak in this context or should not participate and share*

*opinions in the process of learning.* The clarification in verse 12 regarding learning quietly, is that while women should be included, they should not be put into the role of teacher when men are involved.

Exercising authority is related to, but separate from the role of teacher. It is not saying, “teach with authority” as one idea. This is here to clarify what is meant by “all submissiveness”. The role of oversight authority over the body is primarily given to elders and to those helping with that oversight in the role of deacon. Again, the clarification is that while women should be included in the worship and teaching, it should not be to the extent of taking on the role of oversight given to elders.

## Specific roles for women

### **Teaching younger women**

There is a role of discipling younger women that is given specifically to women and not to men (Titus 2:3-5). There are also many practical reasons in ministry for Godly women to be involved in discipling and counseling other women. At Hope Church, we see women’s ministry as a vital part of accomplishing the mission of Christ.

## Roles for everyone

### **Teaching children and youth**

Both men and women bring important and unique elements to the teaching of children and youth. Paul attributes the legacy of faith in Timothy to the teaching of his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5).

### **Laboring side by side in the gospel.**

Don’t think for a minute that because of the leadership roles given to men that the women were not involved in the ministry of the early church. Some of the early converts that we see in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea were leading women in the community and highly involved in the ministry. Phillipians 4:3, Acts 16:11-15, 17:4,12, Romans 16:1-3

Christ has gifted each of us individually according to his own will for the purpose of ministering to each other and encouraging one another to grow in the knowledge of Christ.