A New Vision
A New Heart
A Renewed Call

Volume Two

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B. A Map for Gender Reconciliation
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Introduction

It is clear from in-depth study of the relevant Scriptures, including those that appear to limit women in ministry, that Scripture is far more favourable to women in ministry than has previously been thought. To understand the meaning of the Scriptures, it is important to grasp their cultural context, the full grasp of the Greek words used and an overview of the Scriptures on women as a whole. Also of prime significance is the revolutionary way Jesus included women, especially in light of the culture and customs of his day.

While different scholars and denominations hold different positions, the groundbreaking research of the last two decades in particular has shed important light on the matter. It is now clear that the relevant Scriptures cannot be understood with just a surface reading. The following “Map for Gender Reconciliation” is a guideline for personal study to reconcile what the Scriptures say about women in ministry. The expanded Map for Gender Reconciliation (see box on Map), as well as the many books and articles listed in the “Suggested Reading” at the end of this occasional paper, provide a wealth of information for study. (See Map for Gender Reconciliation on next page.)

Scripture Explanations

Traditionally men as a gender have been fully released in ministry, and often women have not. The following Scriptures on the subject are presented to both men and women for study and prayer. First are the Scriptures that appear to be favourable to women in ministry (the Yes’s), followed by those that have been thought to limit women in ministry (the No’s).

WOMEN IN MINISTRY

YES

OLD TESTAMENT

CREATION: God makes male and female “in His own image.” Jesus quotes this in Matthew 19:4, Mark 10:6. God blesses “them,” tells “them” to rule over every living creature. Words for creation of female imply equality, the kind of help God gives. Hebrew 'ezer k'neged (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:18).

MIRIAM: A leader in Israel. Micah 6:4 quotes God as saying that He sent Moses, also Aaron and Miriam, to lead the Israelites. She is also called a prophet (Exodus 15:20).

DEBORAH: The judge/leader of Israel in her time and a prophet. Judges 4:4 tells us that she was leading Israel (NIV). Deuteronomy 17:9-12 describes the authority that she as the judge of Israel had, saying that anyone showing contempt for a judge would be put to death.
Map for Gender Reconciliation™

Women in Ministry?

YES

Old Testament
Gen. 1:27 (Jesus quotes in Mat. 19:4 and Mark 10:6), Gen. 1:28, Gen. 2:18 (Hebrew "helper" also used for the kind of help God gives, word for "suitable" implies equal standing), Micah 6:4, Ex. 15:20, Judges 4:4, Deut. 17:9–12, 2 Kings 22:11, 2 Chr. 34:22, Isa. 8:3, plus numerous other heroic Old Testament women, Joel 2:28 (Peter quotes in Acts 2:14)

Jesus

Scripture
886 verses in Scripture spoken by women 124 passages in Matthew, Mark, Luke & John regarding women 33 in Acts (31 positive)

New Covenant
The blood of Jesus, with baptism, not circumcision Col. 2:11–12, Rom. 11:27

Holy Spirit
Pentecost: Acts 1:14–2:4

Peter
Acts 2:14–18

Luke

Paul
Rom. 16:3, 2 Tim. 4:19, Gal. 3:28, 1 Cor. 11:5, 1 Cor. 1:11, Col. 4:15, Phil 4:2–3, Rom. 16:1–15, 2 Tim. 2:2, Eph. 4:7–8, 11, Rom. 16:7

John
2 John 1, 10

NO?

Needs study to evaluate*

Paul
1 Cor. 14:34–36
1 Cor. 11:3, 12
1 Tim. 2:11–15

*Also see YES scriptures for Paul

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HULDAH: A prophet who was consulted by the high priest and other leaders when the king wanted a word from the Lord after the Book of the Law was found. She gave a strong word of prophecy (2 Kings 22:11-20; 2 Chronicles 34:22-28).

ISAIAH’S WIFE: Referred to as a prophet (Isaiah 8:3).

WOMEN PROPHESYING: The prophet Joel quotes God as saying that He will pour out His Spirit on all people. Sons and daughters will prophesy. God will pour out His Spirit even on men and women servants (Joel 2:28-29). Peter quotes this Scripture in the New Testament as being fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-18).

JESUS

Jesus’ actions toward women have been called revolutionary for His culture. When Jesus was born, the position of women had degraded greatly in the 400 years since Old Testament times. The strong anti-women bias of the Greeks, who had invaded the Jews, had impacted Jewish thought and custom. The leading Greeks philosophers had contempt for women. In Jesus’ day a Jewish woman was not allowed to speak in a synagogue, had to sit in a separate part of the synagogue from the men, was generally not allowed to study the Scriptures, as a man could, and was even not to speak to a man in public other than her husband. She was considered inferior to men and her worth was in her childbearing capability, especially for sons. Like the Greek myth of Pandora, women were blamed for all man’s troubles because of Eve’s actions in the Garden of Eden. In a common prayer of the day prayed daily by Jewish men, they thanked God for not making them women. Yet Jesus was different. He treated women with inclusion and respect in ways that were unheard of in His day.

Mark 15:40 & Luke 8:1-3

When Jewish women were generally supposed to stay at home and not even talk to most men in public, many women travelled with Jesus. He allowed the women to support him financially, humbling himself to receive from them in a day when men were the ones in charge of the finances and women were considered by many to be a disgrace.

Matthew 19:4-9 & Mark 10:2-9, John 8:7

When asked about divorce by the religious leaders, Jesus brought them back to what the eminent theologian F. F. Bruce has called “first principles.” Jesus said that at the beginning God created male and female, so a man should leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, with the two becoming one. In so doing, Jesus went against the culture of His day that the woman was not a valuable equal, and that she was expected to leave her family to be married to her husband essentially as a possession. Again, Jesus defended women when He would not condemn the woman taken in adultery. By saying that anyone there without sin should throw the first stone, Jesus came against the self-righteous attitude of those present, as well as the double standard where the man was not being held
accountable for his sin. He also treated the woman as valuable when he told her to go and sin no more.

**Matthew 9:20 & Mark 5:25 & Luke 8:43**

When the woman with the issue of blood touched Jesus’ hem and was healed, Jesus’ response shattered three religious taboos of His day regarding women. First, a woman with an issue of blood was considered “unclean” by the Jews, and if she touched a man he had to go through purification rites, yet Jesus in no way responded as if she had made Him unclean. Second, a Jewish woman was not supposed to speak in public to a religious teacher, and vice versa, yet Jesus called her to public dialogue and responded in a loving manner to her, calling her “daughter.” Third, Jesus affirmed her faith in front of the crowd in a time when women were considered so inferior that it was said to be shameful for them to read aloud publicly from the Jewish religious teachings.

**Luke 13:10-17**

Jesus called a crippled woman forward into a synagogue where women were not allowed, only men, and healed her body. He even called her a “daughter of Abraham” when women were considered inferior and never called that; only men were called “sons of Abraham.” Thus Jesus included women in spiritual life equally in two profound, and unheard of, ways.

**John 4:7-26**

In a day when Jewish men were not supposed to talk to women in public other than their wives, Jesus’ longest recorded conversation in the Bible with any individual was in a public setting with a woman, the Samaritan woman at the well. He patiently answered all her questions, when women were not accorded such opportunity, and it was to this woman that Jesus revealed ‘the great revelation that God is Spirit and his worshipers must worship in Spirit and truth. Jesus told this woman that He was the Messiah. She then told her village about Jesus and many believed in Him because of her testimony.


In a day when women were generally considered inferior and not worthy or capable of studying the Scriptures, two people in the Gospels are reported to have had a revelation that Jesus was Messiah, one of whom was a woman, Martha (the other was Peter). Also, in Jesus’ day, the phrase to “sit at one’s feet” meant to be a student learning from a teacher. Therefore, when Mary sat at Jesus’ feet, she was his student, an amazing thing in His time. Further, Jesus rebuked Martha when she tried to call Mary away to work, saying Mary had chosen the better part.


When a woman cried out that Jesus’ mother was blessed for giving him birth and nursing him, Jesus refuted her. He set a broader standard for women when he said that blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it. Jesus later repeated this theme when he said that whoever did the will of His Father in heaven was His brother and sister and mother, specifically adding the word *sister* when the original statement to him men-
tioned only his mother and brothers. He again included women twice when he said that no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for Him will fail to receive 100 times as much.

Matthew 12:42

In Jesus' culture women were considered so inferior that they could not even give testimony in a court and were considered inferior to a man with no say or authority over them. Yet Jesus said that a woman, the Queen of Sheba, would rise in judgment and condemn the generation of His day.

Matthew 28:8-10 & John 20:17, Mark 16:14

In Jesus' day when it was considered disgraceful for women to even read the Scriptures aloud and their testimony was considered so unreliable that it would not be accepted in a court of law, Jesus appeared first after His resurrection to some women and gave them the first commission to report that He was resurrected. Jesus later rebuked the disciples for not believing their reports. There are many other Scriptures where Jesus acknowledged and included women in ways that were extraordinary for His culture.

SCRIPTURE

886 verses in Scripture by women.1

In a day when women did not often appear in literature and especially in a positive light, numerous Scriptures in the Gospels and Acts describe women.

NEW COVENANT

Colossians 2:11-12

In the new covenant through the blood of Jesus, the mark of the believer changes from a gender-exclusive one, circumcision, to a gender-inclusive one, baptism.

HOLY SPIRIT

Acts 1:14-2:4

On Pentecost, after 120 men and women had been praying continuously, all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in languages they did not know, declaring the glories of God to visitors in Jerusalem for the holy day.

PETER

Acts 2:14-18

On the great day of Pentecost, when the 120 men and women were filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking in foreign languages they did not know, Peter spoke to the amazed crowd and said that what was happening was prophesied by the Old Testament prophet Joel, specifically including women. Peter restated that sons and daughters will prophesy and that God will pour out His Spirit even on his servants, both men and women.

LUKE

33 references to women in the book of Acts

In a day when it was rare to even mention women in literature, and Jews generally excluded women from religious study and any significant participation, Luke refers to women on 33 occasions in his book of Acts. He said they too believed and were baptised. He tells us three different times that both men and women
were being persecuted and put in prison for their faith (Acts 8:3, 9:1-2, 22:4).  

**Luke 2:36-38**

In his Gospel, Luke tells us that when Mary and Joseph were presenting the baby Jesus to the Lord at the temple, the prophet Anna gave thanks to God and spoke of the child all were looking forward to as the redemption of Israel.  

**Acts 21:9**

Luke states in the book of Acts that the evangelist Philip had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.  

**Acts 9:36**

Luke describes a disciple named Tabitha, or “Dorcas” in the Greek, who was always doing good and helping the poor. She must have been greatly admired, because when she died of an illness the disciples urged Peter, who was in a town nearby, to come at once. He then raised her from the dead, and as a result many people believed in the Lord.  

**Acts 18:18, 19, 26**

In a day when it was very rare to list a woman’s name before a man’s in referring to a couple, if her name were mentioned at all, Luke placed Priscilla’s name first several times. This was a strong indication that Priscilla was the more respected of the two, as confirmed by the fourth-century bishop in Constantinople, Chrysostom. Luke even placed Priscilla’s name first (as seen in the original Greek) when Priscilla and Aquila explained the way of God more fully to the great teacher Apollos.  

**Acts 16:13-15**

Luke tells that Paul had a vision where he was called to Macedonia. There at a place of prayer by the river with a group of women, the first recorded convert to Christianity in all of Europe was a woman named Lydia, a dealer of purple cloth. Scripture tells us that the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message, and that she and the members of her household were baptised.  

**PAUL**

**Romans 16:3, 2 Timothy 4:19**

Like Luke, Paul referred to Priscilla’s name before her husband’s two times, which was nearly unheard of in his culture. He greeted them, with her name first, in his letter to the Romans and called them his co-workers. He again greeted them in the same order in his second letter to Timothy. Paul had travelled with them (Acts 18:18), so he certainly knew them well.  

**Galatians 3:28**

Paul makes the sweeping statement regarding gender equality, which was revolutionary, especially for his day, that for all those who are clothed with Christ, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”  

**1 Corinthians 11:5**

Paul describes head coverings for women who pray or prophesy.  

**1 Corinthians 1:11, Colossians 4:15**

Paul cites reports from Chloe’s household. He also sends greetings to Nympha and “the church in her house.” Paul uses the same phrases regarding Chloe and Nympha that he does to describe the house churches of Aristobulus,
Narcissus, Stephanas, Onesiphorus, and Priscilla and Aquila.

**Philippians 4:2-3, Romans 16:1-15**

In Philippians 4:2-3 Paul says that two women, Euodia and Syntyche, "contended at his side" in the cause of the gospel, along with the rest of his co-workers. Paul greets 29 co-workers in Romans 16:1-15, 10 of whom were women, and affirms their service to the Lord. He commends Phoebe to the Christians in Rome in glowing terms. He calls her a "deacon/minister" of the church (some translations say "servant" but the original Greek word used was *diakonos*, translated deacon/minister elsewhere in the New Testament). He uses the word *prostatis*, the only time it is used in the New Testament, to describe the kind of help she gave. This word describes patrons, those who had great impact and were highly esteemed.

**2 Timothy 2:2, Ephesians 4:7-8, 11**

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul says to entrust his teachings to reliable people who will be qualified to teach. The Greek word for "people" is *anthropos*, which means men and women, not *andros*, which means men only, and which Paul as a brilliant and precise writer could easily have chosen. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul uses the same word *anthropos* for both men and women when he says that Jesus ascended on high and gave gifts to his people. Paul then follows in verse 11 by saying that Jesus gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

**Romans 16:7**

Paul greets Andronicus and Junia, his relatives, and calls them outstanding among the apostles. Various respected scholars tell us that Junia was a common female name in Paul’s day. Bible commentators were unanimous until the 13th century that Junia was a female name, when the name of Junias, which did not exist in Paul’s day, began to be used instead by some translators to imply a male name. The acclaimed 4th century bishop of Constantinople, Chrysostom, wrote of Junia, “Oh how great is the devotion of this woman that she should be counted worthy of the appellation of apostle!”

**JOHN**

**2 John 1, 10**

John, one of the original 12 apostles, writes his second letter to “the elect lady,” or, as some translations say, “the lady chosen by God” and her “children.” John uses the term "children" 19 times in his first two letters to refer to the children of God and refers to himself as a child of God (1 John 3:1-2). In the passage of Scripture to the elect lady, he is giving a warning about false teachers, so the lady was evidently responsible for teachers who might come to her house, as occurred with all the house churches of that time.
NO?
Needs Study to Evaluate

PAUL

The three specific scriptures that have been used by some to put limits on women in ministry all come from Paul. How can this be when we have just seen his strong support for women? Respected scholars have different theories.

_I Corinthians 14:34-36_

"Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. 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. What? [Revised Standard Version and several other translations.] Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?"

_Facts:_

No "law" in the Scriptures prevented women from speaking in church, but Jewish oral law said women must be silent in the synagogues.

- Paul discusses women praying and prophesying earlier in 1 Corinthians 11:5 without rebuke.
- No quotation marks existed in the Greek to know when someone was quoting.
- A one-letter Greek word immediately follows the verses about women being silent that is often used to refute what was just said. Paul uses this word at least 14 times in the book of Corinthians to refute their misunderstandings.
- Paul addresses a rebuke (What?) in verse 36 to the second person masculine, "you men." 

_Scholars' Theories:_

1. The women, who did not have the same education their husbands did, were interrupting with too many questions when the prophecies were being weighed (referred to in verse 29); this was too disruptive, and Paul told them to inquire later of their husbands, who had been better educated in that culture, or

2. Paul is correcting the Corinthian men for not allowing women to speak, given (a) the reference to the "law," (b) the tone of rebuke that Paul uses in the verse immediately following that are addressed just to the men, (c) Paul’s mention earlier, without rebuke, of women praying and prophesying, and (d) the presence of the Greek word that Paul often uses to refute the Corinthians’ multiple misunderstandings.

_I Corinthians 11:3, 12_

"But I want you to realise that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.... For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God."

_Facts:_

- The word _head_ can mean "authority" or "origin/source." Much research and debate continues about its meaning in this passage.
- The order Paul uses of man first,
woman next, and Christ last does not make sense for a meaning of authority.

- Paul refers to the origin/source of men and women just a few verses later in verse 12.

**Scholars' Theories:**
1. Paul is saying that a man is the authority over a woman, or
2. Paul is saying that man was the source of woman, as in Eve coming from Adam’s side, given that (a) the order given makes sense for source but not authority, (b) Paul repeats similar words with the clear idea of source a few verses later, and (c) that the passage is not about authority. Therefore, Paul would be saying that the source of man is Christ, the source of woman is man (from Adam), and the source of Christ is God.

**1 Timothy 2:11-12**

“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she must be quiet. 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. But women will be saved through childbirth—if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety.”

**Facts:**
- Learning “in quietness and full submission” was a known phrase of the day for the attitude of a good student, a revolutionary concept for women, who were not taught in that day as men were.
- The original Greek word that Paul uses here for “authority” (authentein) is not the one normally used in the New Testament for authority (exousiazo). In fact, this Greek word is not used anywhere else in the New Testament, and it was rarely used at all in ancient times. Current research shows that this word probably means to “have the upper hand” or be “dominating.”
- Paul corrected false teaching repeatedly in the book of First Timothy. Ephesus was a centre of pagan worship, with some teachings that Eve was created before Adam, women were superior to men, and that it was better for women not to have children.
- The Greek verb for “permit” is in the present tense, “I am not now permitting...,” implying specific instructions for this situation.

**Scholars' Theories:**
1. A woman should not teach or have authority over a man, in particular a married woman over her husband, because Adam was created first, or
2. Paul is forbidding women from attempting to dominate men with the pagan teaching of women’s superiority and pre-eminence, given that (a) the Greek word Paul used is not the normal word for authority but is always negative and has tones of domination, (b) Paul says he makes his statement because (for) Adam was
formed first and the woman was deceived (though Scripture clearly points out that Adam sinned too), which would specifically refute the pagan teaching of Ephesus, (c) Paul begins the passage with the revolutionary concept that a woman should have the opportunity to learn too, which would be the antidote to the false teaching he is continually correcting in his letter, (d) Paul closes with reassurance regarding a believer’s surviving childbirth (which could be a sensitive topic for pagan women accustomed to prayer to the fertility goddess), and (e) nowhere else does Paul say that women should not teach or have authority over a man. To the contrary he commends women in ministry such as Phoebe and Priscilla.

Other?

APOSTLES: Some people say that women are restricted from certain forms of ministry because the twelve apostles Jesus selected were all male, however, highly respected scholars have pointed out that Jesus sent the apostles initially to the Jews, who by custom were not supposed to listen to a woman’s voice in public or in the synagogue. Scholars also point out that Jesus Himself commissioned a woman first to share the good news that He was risen.  

ELDERS: In 1 Timothy 3, immediately following the passage above regarding Ephesus with its false teaching, Paul lists very strict qualifications for elders that would not even include unmarried men. Some have used this passage to say that women should never be elders or leaders in a church. It is to be noted, however, that in Paul’s time, only men were elders in the synagogues, and only men would have had the opportunity for the type of learning that would enable them to be teachers, as Paul required of an elder. Yet it is interesting to note that even in 1 Timothy 3:11, in the context of Ephesus, Paul includes in his passage on leadership, in striking parallel in both words and grammatical structure, the characteristics for godly women (not “their” wives, as some translations incorrectly state). It should also be noted that Paul called Phoebe a deacon/minister (the Greek diaconos), the same Greek word he used to describe himself.

RULERSHIP/SUBMISSION: Some have used the Fall, and God’s statement to Eve that Adam would rule over her, to say that men should always be the leaders. The highly esteemed theologian Roger Nicole points out that God’s words were a “divine description of what would occur, not a mandate which obedient servants of God should attempt to carry out.” Likewise, he states that the husband/wife relationship described by Scripture refers to a loving relationship in the home and “in no way precludes the exercise of leadership by women in society and the church.”  

References for this article


Other Sources


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