

1 Not only do none of the qualifications for an overseer specifically exclude women as potential
2 candidates, but women can also fulfill *all* the requirements set forth just as well as men. But even
3 beyond this, the attempt to identify gender as a fundamental requirement for the ministry of an
4 overseer ultimately undermines the primary nature of all the qualifications Paul provided for
5 guiding in the selection of church leaders: the importance of character.

6 Before examining why gender should not be seen as part of the criteria Paul established for
7 the selection of an overseer, it is important that we first place Paul's instructions in relation to the
8 specific historical circumstances that had arisen in Ephesus and that led to his letter to Timothy
9 in the first place. Placing Paul's comments in relation to the overall situation in Ephesus will not
10 only prevent us from proof texting (as the saying goes, "a text without a context is a pretext for a
11 proof text"), but also has the benefit of helping us to identify the places where we agree and
12 disagree in 1 Timothy regarding the ordination of women.

13

14

I. The Situation in Ephesus

15 Toward the end of his third missionary journey as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, Paul
16 felt that his work for the cause of Christ among the Gentiles in and around Asia Minor had
17 largely come to a close. After traveling to Jerusalem to deliver the collection of funds his
18 Gentiles churches had raised as a sign of their unity with their fellow Jewish believers (1 Cor
19 16:1-3; 2 Cor 8:20; 9:12-13; Rom 15:28), Paul planned to sail to Rome, from where he hoped to
20 begin a new missionary endeavor among the Gentiles in Spain (Rom 15:24, 28). Paul's plans,
21 however, did not materialize as he had hoped.

22 Shortly after arriving in Jerusalem, Paul was arrested and imprisoned for nearly two years
23 (cf. Acts 21:23; 23:34-35; 24:26-27). Although he was eventually transferred to Rome (cf. Acts
24 25:10-12; 27:1), he remained imprisoned there for nearly two more years. During his
25 imprisonment the spiritual vitality among the Gentile churches founded in connection to his
26 ministry had begun to suffer due to the influence of false teachings (Col 2:8, 16-23; 3:2) and the

1 outbreak of divisions among believers (Phil 4:1; Phlm 10-19).⁷ Concerned about the
2 deteriorating condition of his churches, Paul longed to revisit his churches in the East (cf. Phil
3 1:25; 2:23-24; Phlm 22). Whether Paul had the opportunity to revisit his churches or not is
4 uncertain. It has traditionally been assumed that Paul was eventually released from house arrest
5 in Rome around the year 62.⁸ If this is the case, the short interval between his release and
6 eventual second arrest and execution in Rome a few years later would provide a plausible
7 scenario in which Paul could not only have revisited his churches around the Aegean, but also to
8 have written his letters to Timothy and Titus.⁹

9 Whatever the exact circumstances, 1 Timothy makes it clear that the apostle Paul did not
10 have the time to address in person the problems that had arisen in Ephesus during his absence.
11 Until he could return in the future, he instead asked his colleague Timothy to deal with the
12 problems in his behalf (cf. 1 Tim 1:3; 3:14-15). The situation was apparently so difficult that it
13 could not wait. Although Paul is far more ambiguous than we would like in identifying the exact
14 nature of the problem, on the basis of what he does say it is clear that the root of the problem was
15 due to the influence of heretical teachings being advocated by "certain persons" within the
16 congregation (1:3). Moreover, the problems in Ephesus do not appear to be entirely unique. They
17 appear, rather, to be related in the broadest of strokes to the problems Paul also encountered in
18 Crete, since the character of the individuals and teachings involved are very similar in 1 Timothy

⁷ Whether Paul wrote Philippians and Philemon from his imprisonment in Caesarea or Rome matters little in relation to the point being made here. In either case, problems broke out in these churches during Paul's absence that resulted in his desire to revisit them.

⁸ Since Acts ends with a relatively positive description of Paul under house arrest in Rome, many scholars conclude that Paul must have been released and continued in ministry for several more years before a second arrest and execution in Rome. While a release from prison is not mentioned in Acts, it concurs with Paul's other encounters with Roman justice in Acts (16:35-40; 18:12-17), and perhaps is even suggested with the sentiments expressed by Agrippa on Paul's case (26:32). See J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on The Pastoral Epistles* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 9; Gordon Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 1-3; Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (2nd ed; TNTC 14; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 28-30; George Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1992), 15-20; William Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC 46; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), liv-lvi.

⁹ Although some early Christian sources claim Paul did visit Spain (1 Clement 5:6-7; *Acts of Peter* 1:1; Muratorian Canon), it is impossible to know if they represent an independent tradition, or are merely a conclusion drawn from Paul's plan outlined in Romans. The latter is more likely the case, assuming the historical validity of the movements of Paul implied in 1 Timothy and Titus. It would have been impossible for Paul to travel to Spain and Asia Minor within the brief time between his first and second Roman imprisonment. Ellen White is silent on the issue of whether Paul actually visited Spain.

1 and Titus. With this basic background in mind, we now turn to the relation of Paul's letter to
2 Timothy and the situation in Ephesus.

3

4

II. The Context of Paul's Instructions Regarding Church Leaders

5 Aware of the difficulties Timothy faced in Ephesus, Paul wrote 1 Timothy with the goal of
6 not only encouraging his younger colleague in his task, but as also a way of providing him with
7 the instructions and the authority he needed to carry out his duty. Paul did this by writing
8 Timothy a personal letter that he clearly expected the Ephesians would also read (1 Tim 6:21).¹⁰
9 In writing with this purpose in mind, Paul's letter mirrors a style of writing scholars classify as
10 the *mandata principis* (literally, "commandments of a ruler").¹¹ This sort of letter was routinely
11 sent to Roman officials who were charged with implementing imperial policy in the provinces.
12 Although written as personal letters to specific officials, these letters were read publically for the
13 purpose of making the ruler's wishes known to all and as a means of empowering the local
14 delegate to implement them.¹² With a similar purpose in mind, Paul asserts his authority as an
15 apostle in the opening salutation of his letter and then designates Timothy as his "true son in the
16 faith" (2:2). Identified as Paul's legitimate representative, the believers in Ephesus were not to
17 view Timothy's actions as his own, but as the will of the apostle Paul himself.

18

A. The Heresy in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3-20)

20 Following his salutation, Paul immediately states the purpose of his letter. Timothy is to
21 oppose the false teachers whose controversial and misguided teachings were undermining the
22 genuine work of the gospel in Ephesus (1:3). Instead of proclaiming the power of the Risen
23 Christ that transforms human lives and that results in the manifestation of "love that issues from
24 a pure heart and good conscience" (cf. 1:5; 12-16), the false teachers proclaimed an exclusive

¹⁰ The fact that the "you" of the final greeting is plural rather than singular indicates Paul certainly envisioned from the very beginning that his letter would be read by more than only Timothy (1 Tim 6:21).

¹¹ See the discussion in Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (The Anchor Bible 35a; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 140-41.

¹² Paul's adoption of this writing style explains the reason for the impersonal tone and lack of warmth in 1 Timothy as compared to his other personal letters (e.g., 2 Timothy and Philemon).

1 gospel, a gospel that consisted in nothing more than sensational ideas they claimed were based in
2 the "myths and genealogies" they found in the Old Testament Scriptures (cf. 1:3-4; Titus 1:14;
3 3:9). So caught up in their pursuit of winning acclaim for themselves as "teachers of the law"
4 (1:7), they had completely failed to recognize that the true purpose of the law was to serve as a
5 moral agent in identifying human sinfulness (1:9-10), and thereby pointing to the need of Christ.
6 Losing sight of this most basic tenant of the Christian faith resulted in Hymenaeus and
7 Alexander, apparently two former church members (cf. 1:20; 2 Tim 2:17-18), becoming so
8 caught up in the heretical teachings that they had been disfellowshipped (cf. 1:19-20; 1 Cor 5:1-5).

9

10 **B. Instructions for Dealing with the Ephesian Heresy (1 Tim 2:1-3:16)**

11 Having set forth Timothy's responsibility in dealing with the false teachers in Ephesus, Paul
12 next turns his attention in 2:1-3:15 to providing Timothy with practical instructions for actually
13 addressing the problems within the church. Although false teachings are not specifically
14 mentioned, the use of conjunction "therefore" (*oun*) that begins this section (2:1) indicates Paul's
15 counsel is directly connected to his discussion of the heresy mentioned in the previous chapter.

16 **1. Focus on Mission (2:1-7).** Paul first instructs Timothy to encourage the believers to pray
17 for "all" people (2:1-2). The repetition of the word "all" (1:1, 2, 4, 6) indicates that the emphasis
18 is not on prayer, but specifically prayer for the salvation of "all" people. The emphasis on "all"
19 was certainly meant to counter the exclusivist mentality of salvation implicit in the speculative
20 teachings (1:1:4-6) and ascetic ideas (3:3) the false teachers proclaimed. Under their influence,
21 the church was losing sight of its primary reason for existence—to share the good news of Christ
22 with those outside the church. Timothy's first task, therefore, was to remind the believers of the
23 universal scope of the gospel message that was rooted in Jesus who "gave himself as a ransom
24 for all" (2:7). In focusing on the mission of the church, Paul hoped the believers would see that
25 the true gospel did not consist in esoteric ideas intended to tantalize the minds of a few select
26 individuals, but in the good news of God's saving power available for all.

27 **2. Limit the Influence of the False Teachers (2:8-15).** Paul's next step in countering the
28 false teachers was for Timothy to limit the disruptive behavior their influence was having upon

1 the church body. In doing this, Paul singles out specific behavior associated with both men and
2 women.

3 Paul first addresses men.¹³ He urges that they "should pray, lifting holy hands without anger
4 or quarreling" (v 8). Of course, the fact that the apostle singles out men does not mean that his
5 counsel does not also apply to women (e.g., 1 Cor 11:5). It merely indicates that in context to the
6 specific situation in Ephesus, it was mainly a group of men who were struggling with
7 inappropriate attitudes towards others. While Paul certainly has in mind the conflict and division
8 that had arisen between the believers in connection to the teachings that were dividing the
9 church, his use of the word "quarreling" suggests a specific connection with the false teachers.¹⁴
10 He describes them later as individuals whose craving for "controversy and for quarrels about
11 words" (cf. 6:4-5; 1:7; 3:3) result in strife and division, rather than a spirit of harmony and unity.
12 The divisive work of these individuals was poisoning the spirit of patience, love, and forgiveness
13 necessary for genuine worship to be effective (cf. Phil 2:14; Eph 4:31; Col 3:8). This behavior
14 had to change if the church was to fulfill its divine destiny as the body of Christ.

15 Paul next turns his attention to the disruptive demeanor of women within the church. In
16 addition to dressing in an immodest manner, women were also involved in some sort of teaching
17 ministry that Paul felt had to be stopped. The exact nature of what the problem entailed is a key
18 area of dispute. Was the problem simply that these women were "teaching and exercising
19 authority" over men, as suggested in many modern translations? Or was the problem more
20 specifically focused on the *manner* in which these women were teaching, as implied in the
21 "usurping" nature of their behavior as translated in the KJV.¹⁵ To explain the basis of his
22 prohibition, Paul alludes to the creation and the fall in verses 13 and 14. What Paul has in mind
23 in these references to the Genesis account is another one of the major dividing questions at the
24 heart of the disagreement within the Adventist church regarding the role of women in ministry.

¹³ Although the word translated as "men" (*andres*) can refer to either a single or married man, Paul's adaptation of the household code and the discussion of women in what follows suggest that he primarily has husbands in mind. This would certainly not have been a surprise since the vast majority of men at the time would have been married.

¹⁴ Philip Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 202.

¹⁵ For a fuller discussion on the situation in 1 Timothy 2:8-15, see Carl P. Cosaert, "Paul, Women, and the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timothy 2:8-15" (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Baltimore, MD, July 23, 2013), 21-37.

1 Does the allusion to Genesis affirm a complementarian/hierarchical or egalitarian view of the
2 relationship between men and women?

3 **Paul and Creation – Evaluating the Arguments**

4 Those who favor a complementarian/hierarchical perspective understand Paul's injunction
5 prohibiting women from teaching or exercising authority over men to be a universal and timeless
6 truth barring women from assuming an authoritarian position over men—a truth, they believe,
7 rooted in creation and the fall. Rather than arising from a specific problem unique to the church
8 in Ephesus, the issue is simply that in the act of teaching the women were violating the
9 proscribed hierarchical relationship established in creation. Whether women were involved in
10 spreading falsehood, or were merely expounding the truth, is irrelevant. It is simply a universal
11 truth that women are not in any circumstance to teach or have authority over men. The evidence
12 for this, they believe, is twofold: (1) man was created before woman and was thus established as
13 the head; and (2) the woman was deceived into assuming a headship role in the Garden, thereby
14 introducing the sin problem.

15 **Man created first.** In stating that Adam was created first it is claimed that Paul grounded his
16 prohibition in "the order of the creation of Adam and Eve as the archetypes of man and woman
17 and the implication of this order for headship and submission in such relationships"¹⁶—namely
18 "male authority"¹⁷ over women. Paul's use of verb *plassō* ("to form") in verse 13 is interpreted as
19 a textual echo to the "whole of the creation nature"¹⁸ in Genesis 2, and specifically to the two
20 events seen as indicative of male headship over women: the creation of woman as man's "helper"
21 (Gen 2:18), and in Adam's naming of women (Gen 2:23). Those advocating for this position last
22 July argued that Paul's appeal to the pre-fall order of creation proves his prohibition is
23 "unequivocally universal" rather than "culturally motivated."¹⁹

24 While Paul certainly appeals to the creation account in Genesis in connection to his
25 prohibition against women, it is far from clear that in doing so he was advocating for male

¹⁶ Knight, 142.

¹⁷ Mounce, 130.

¹⁸ Knight, 143.

¹⁹ Sorke, 23; Damsteegt, 30.

1 headship. Adam was created first, but this "first-then" terminology does nothing more than to
2 define a sequence of time. A clear example of this is seen in Paul's description of the sequence of
3 events associated with the Second Coming. In describing the resurrection of the dead, Paul states
4 the "dead in Christ will rise *first* then" the living righteous will be caught up together with them
5 in the air (1 Thess 4:16-17). The fact that the dead in Christ rise first does not indicate they have
6 any sort of functional headship over those who are then caught up in the air with them. It simply
7 states the sequence of the two events. Moreover, as Richard Davidson's recent TOSC paper on
8 Genesis 1-3 clearly demonstrates, a careful examination of the literary structure of the creation of
9 humans in Genesis 2 does not indicate that the creation of man before woman implied any sort of
10 hierarchical relationship.²⁰ Instead the account in Hebrew moves from incompleteness to
11 completeness, with the creation of woman as the climax and equal of Adam. The full equality of
12 the man and the woman being demonstrated in the author's use of the same exact number of
13 words in Hebrew to describe the creation of each of them.²¹

14 **Woman as Man's Helper.** Since Paul does not specifically refer to the creation of woman as
15 man's "helper" (Gen 2:18), or to Adam's naming of women (Gen 2:23), we would be wise not to
16 read these events *into* the passage—nor to make the additional mistake of then basing our
17 interpretation of the passage on events that are not actually mentioned in the text! But even if we
18 were to assume, for the sake of argument, that Paul had these other events in mind (which I'm
19 not convinced he does), they still fail to establish a pre-fall male headship over women. While
20 many assume that the description of woman as "a helper" fit for man (ESV) relegates women
21 into a subordinate status below men, the Hebrew word for "helper" (*'ezer*) carries no such
22 connotation. Of the nineteen occurrences of *'ezer* outside of Genesis 2, sixteen refer to God as
23 the "Helper of Israel," while the three remaining uses refer to military allies of equal status.²²
24 Rather than indicating inferior status or rank, the term is relational, and specifically that of a
25 beneficial relationship. In connection to the creation, Adam found no equal companion fit for
26 him among the animals. It was only in the creation of woman that Adam finally found a partner
27 *equal* to himself.

²⁰ Richard M. Davidson, "Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations" (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee. Baltimore, MD, July 24, 2013), 6.

²¹ Davidson, 6.

²² *Ibid.*, 8-9.

1 **The Naming of Woman.** The claim that in naming woman Adam demonstrated the inherent
2 authority men have over women also cannot be proven. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that
3 the act of naming is not an indication of an individual's "authority" over another, but rather the
4 quality of "discernment" demonstrated on the part of the name-giver.²³ As such, Adam's
5 "exclamation in Gen 2:23 is a cry of discovery, of recognition ... rather than a prescription of
6 what this creature built from his rib shall be."²⁴ Understanding Adam's declaration of "woman"
7 as a joyful recognition of Eve as his second self rather than the demonstration of his authority
8 over her also seems prudent since it is questionable whether Adam actually named the woman in
9 the first place. A careful reading of the creation account reveals that the word "woman" (*'ishah*)
10 "occurs in the narrative *before* Adam ever meets her (Gen 2:22)."²⁵ This earlier use of the term
11 suggests that the designation of Adam's partner as "woman" did not originate with man, but God.

12 While Paul does appeal to the creation account to explain the nature of his prohibition, he
13 does not do so to establish the superiority or headship of men over women. On the contrary, Paul
14 appeals to the *equality* of men and women established in the creation account in order to counter
15 the domineering behavior of women in Ephesus. The indication that the problem of teaching and
16 authority being carried on by women in Ephesus was connected to a domineering behavior is
17 found in the Greek word translated as "authority." If Paul had wanted to ban women from
18 holding any position of authority, he would have used the verbal form of the common Greek
19 word that he uses elsewhere to refer to authority—*exousia* (e.g., Rom 9:21; 13:3; 2 Cor 13:10; 2
20 Thess 3:9). But he does not. He uses instead a verb that is so extremely rare that it not only
21 occurs nowhere else in the NT, but it is also known to occur only four times in all of Greek
22 literature before the Christian era. In both its verbal and cognate noun forms, *authenteō* has a
23 negative element of force associated with it.²⁶ As a verb it can mean "to rule/reign," and "to

²³ Ibid., 10-11; George W. Ramsey, "Is Name-Giving an Act of Domination in Genesis 2:23 and Elsewhere?" *CBQ* 50 (1988): 24-35; Rick R. Marrs, "In the Beginning: Male and Female (Gen 1-3)," in *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity* (ed. Carroll D. Osburn; 2 vols.; Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1995), 2:17-18.

²⁴ Ramsay, 34.

²⁵ Davidson, 11.

²⁶ Henry Baldwin's recent examination of every use of *authenteō* in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graece*, revealed 314 references, including 85 uses of the verb itself. Baldwin identified a range of four basic meanings: (1) to rule/reign; (2) to control, to dominate; (3) to act independently; and (4) to be the originator of something. Although Baldwin argued that the root meaning of *authenteō* is authority without any particular negative connotation, the evidence suggests otherwise. Baldwin did not only quickly discount the nuance of exercising autocratic power as not

1 control" or "dominate."²⁷ Recognizing this negative aspect, the earliest translations of the NT
2 into Latin and Syriac translate *authentēō* with words that refer to a dominating form of
3 behavior.²⁸ Clearly the domineering nature of the teaching and authority being carried on in
4 Ephesus was something unusual.

5 In response to the women in Ephesus who were teaching and exercising authority in a
6 domineering manner that would have reflected negatively upon men in general and their
7 husbands in particular, Paul appeals to the creation account to remind them that Eve was created
8 to be Adam's equal partner, not his boss.

9 **Paul and the Fall– Evaluating the Arguments**

10 While Paul's terminology in verse 13 served as an allusion to the creation account in Genesis
11 2, the terminology in verse 14 points to a connection to the story of the role of Eve in relation to
12 the fall in Genesis 3.²⁹ Complementarians/hierarchicalists see in this allusion to the fall a second
13 reason why all women are not to exercise authority over men.³⁰ In the act of following the words

applicable to 1 Timothy, but he also discredits Chrysostom's clear use of *authentēō* to mean "to domineer" or "play the tyrant" by labeling it as an "unique usage." Such a use is hardly unique. Contrary to Baldwin's conclusions, an examination of the four earliest verbal forms of *authentēō* that are either contemporary with or prior to Paul's use of the verb all have an element of force associated with them.

In an attempt to avoid any negative connotations associated with *authentēō*, Baldwin also refuses to acknowledge the domineering abuse of power that would have naturally been associated with the verb due to the negative meanings of its related nouns. For example, the cognate noun *authentēs* was used in early Greek literature to refer to a (1) "murderer." During the Hellenistic age, it also came to refer to an (2) "author, perpetrator," as in the "original authors" behind a murderous plot, or as in an (3) absolute "master." The cognate *authentia* also means "absolute authority." (See LSJ, 275). It seems difficult to believe that the basic idea of the verb would have been entirely free from the idea of violence and force associated with these cognate nouns. See H. Scott Baldwin, "A Difficult Word: ἀυθεντέω in 1 Timothy 2:12," in *Women in the Church* (ed. A. J. Köstenberger, T. R. Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1996), 65-80, 269-305; "An Important Word: Αυθεντεω in 1 Timothy 2:12," in *Women in the Church* (2nd ed.; ed. A. J. Köstenberger and T. R. Schreiner; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005), 39-51; Marshall, 456-60; See Cosaert, 30-32.

²⁷ BDAG, 150; Louw–Nida, 37.21.

²⁸ Both the Old Latin (4th century in the Pauline Epistles) and the Vulgate translate *authentēō* with the Latin verb "*dominari*" meaning "to rule over," "to domineer." D. P. Simpson, *Cassell's Latin Dictionary* (Macmillan, 1968), 201. It certainly is not neutral. This same word is used to translate other New Testament words where a negative or absolute form of authority is in view (e.g., 1 Pet 5:3; Acts 19:16; Mark 10:42; Rom 6:9, 14). The same is true in the earliest Syriac copies of Paul's letter. Dated to the 5th century, the Peshitta translates *authentēō* with the verb "*mrah*." It means, "to venture, dare, be rash, hasty" or "headstrong." In relation to 1 Tim 2:12, *mrah* is defined as "to lord it (over)." William Jennings, *Lexicon to the Syriac New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 131.

²⁹ The connection is seen in Paul's use of the verb *apataō*, which means "to deceive" or "mislead." This verb occurs in the LXX only in Genesis 3:13.

³⁰ Sorke, 25.

1 of the serpent and eating the forbidden fruit, it is claimed "Eve substituted Adam's authority with
2 Satan's."³¹ But even more than this, it is claimed that in giving the fruit to Adam, and in his
3 compliance in taking it from her, Eve was guilty of usurping "Adam's headship authority."³² In
4 other words, Eve's sin was in assuming the headship role of man, while Adam sinned by acting
5 in the submissive nature assigned to all women. In violating this hierarchical ordering of the
6 sexes, Paul is said to have established his rationale for preventing women from teaching: that is,
7 in Eve's "transgression in her role as woman to Adam."³³ In explaining the significance of this
8 point at last summer's TOSC meetings, one paper cited the following quotation made by the
9 evangelical scholar Thomas Schreiner as a definitive reason for their position against women's
10 ordination:

11 The Genesis temptation, therefore, is indicative of what happens when
12 male leadership is abrogated. Eve took the initiative in responding to the
13 serpent, and Adam let her do so. Thus, the appeal to Genesis 3 serves as a
14 reminder of what happens when God's ordained pattern is undermined."³⁴

15 In response to Eve's involvement in the fall, the TOSC paper went on to claim that in
16 response to Eve's sin of overreaching her appointed place God placed a "curse on the woman."³⁵
17 In addition to multiplying her pain in childbirth, God told the woman that her husband would
18 "rule (*mashal*) over you" (Gen 3:16). The nature of Adam's rule over his wife was further
19 described as "a male-focused domination [over women] as a guard against the desire for future
20 disobedience and sin: the man's responsibility to guard against disobedience is renewed. The
21 issue is not male dictatorial dominance but leadership-driven deliverance; God hereby grants
22 Adam a second chance to obey where he previously failed"³⁶ (that is to say in Adam's failure in
23 both surrendering his headship over to his wife, and in his inability to restrain her waywardness).

³¹ Ibid., 25.

³² Ibid., 27. "Sin came into our world as a result of man neglecting and women disregarding the husband's leadership role." Doug Batchelor, "Women Pastors: A Biblical Perspective." Sacramento Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, 6 February 2010.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Thomas Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15: A Dialogue with Scholarship," in Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005), 115; Sorke, 27.

³⁵ Sorke, 26.

³⁶ Ibid.

1 Following this line of reasoning, the ordination of women is interpreted to be the equivalent
2 of Eve's original sin. And as such, a woman seeking ordination and exercising spiritual authority
3 over adult men within the church would be comparable to Eve offering Adam the forbidden fruit.
4 It is therefore the duty of the church to overcome in the very areas where Adam failed: (1) in
5 refusing to surrender male headship to women pastors; and (2) in reigning in those individuals
6 (whether women, unions, or divisions) who would seek to encourage Eve's waywardness from
7 the divine ideal. Women are not fit as spiritual leaders because it would violate the creation order
8 of male headship. Some advocating this position also see in Paul's words the idea that a woman's
9 gentler and more emotional nature makes her more prone to deception (like Eve), whereas the
10 more logical nature of a man provides males with the spiritual sophistication necessary for
11 detecting falsehood and dealing with doctrinal matters in relation to the church.³⁷

12 While it is undeniable that Paul has in mind the story of Eve's role in the fall recorded in
13 Genesis 3, the complementarian/hierarchical perspective again reads far more into Paul's allusion
14 than is actually stated in the text. Neither the Genesis account nor Paul identifies Adam or Eve's
15 sin as a violation of male headship. In fact, the Genesis account explicitly identifies the sin of
16 both Adam and Eve as eating the fruit God had forbidden (Gen 3:11). Nowhere does God
17 identify Eve's sin as a rejection of male headship, at least not in the text. While later in the
18 account God does rebuke Adam for listening "to the voice of your wife" (Gen 3:17), the problem
19 "was not in 'listening to' or 'obeying' his wife *per se*, but in 'obeying' his wife *rather than* or *in*
20 *opposition to* God's explicit command not to eat of the fruit."³⁸ The authority that was violated in
21 the Garden was not man's authority over woman, but God's authority over man and woman!

³⁷ E.g., Doug Batchelor argues that men "have more neurons in their brain, and some of that is because we have more mass and that may mean more nerve endings.... According to the British Journal of Psychology, [men] on an average score five points higher on an IQ test." Kelly claims, "His [Paul's] point is that since Eve was so gullible a victim of the serpent's wiles, she clearly cannot be trusted to teach" (*A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 68; Raymond F. Collins, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 71-2; Mounce, 136-38. Daniel Doriani takes a slightly different perspective. Rather than interpreting the woman's deception as a negative indication of her lack of mental acumen, he sees it as evidence of the different strengths and weaknesses associated with each of the sexes. In this case, he claims men are more inclined to doctrine while women have an ability to nurture and develop relationships" ("Appendix 1: A History of the Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2," in Andreas J. Köstenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin, *Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 265-67).

³⁸ Davidson, 23.

1 It is also important to note that God's solution to the problem of sin did not involve placing a
2 "curse" upon the woman. A careful reading of the text reveals that God *only* pronounces a curse
3 upon the serpent and the ground (Gen 3:14, 17). This is not to say that there were no
4 consequences for Adam and Eve's sin, for there certainly were consequences that affected the
5 entire human race. Consequences, however, are very different than saying God specifically
6 placed a curse upon every female for the entire span of sinful human history.³⁹ This is not just a
7 case of semantics. Viewing God's response to Adam and Eve as a curse paints a picture of a
8 wrathful God intent on inflicting harm on the human race that is more akin to what we find in
9 Ancient Near Eastern Creation stories than that of the loving and gracious God found in the
10 Hebrew Scriptures.

11 It is far more consistent with the themes of Scripture to understand God's divine judgment
12 upon the man and the woman as involving consequences as well as promised blessings (Gen
13 3:16-19).⁴⁰ The consequences of sin introduced four temporary situations into human history that
14 had not existed previously: (1) pain in childbirth (3:16); (2) toil in labor (3:17, 19); and, of
15 course, (3) death (3:19). Yet in the mist of these three negative consequences, God's grace is also
16 evident in a fourth consequence, one that was intended to be more positive in nature. God not
17 only offers the promise of the defeat of death in his curse on the serpent (3:15), but also in the
18 words that appear in the middle of God's judgment upon the woman and the man: "Your desire
19 shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. The "desire" and the "rule" introduced here
20 point to "a divinely-ordained, intimate (sexual) yearning of wife for husband...[designed] to
21 sustain the union that had been threatened in the ruptured relations resulting from sin," and in the
22 "protection, care, and love" of a husband for his wife as illustrated in the blessing of God's "rule"
23 (*mashal*) over this followers.⁴¹ Thus instead of a revealing a descriptive account of the conflict
24 between the sexes, God introduced a remedial provision within the relationship between wives
25 and husbands (not between all men and all women) that was meant to preserve the harmony of

³⁹ It is interesting that Ellen White also avoids directly describing God's judgment of Eve as a "curse." When discussing Eve's subjection to Adam after the fall, she only refers to her subjection as "part of the curse" (3T 484). In preparing this material for later publication in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, she drops the language of curse entirely. She instead refers to it as "this sentence" which was intended to be a "blessing to them" (PP 59).

⁴⁰ Davidson, 26; Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961-1964), 1:63.

⁴¹ For a fuller account of the various ways Genesis 3:16 has been interpreted, see Davidson, 26-27.

1 their union together (PP 58). This fourth provision is the temporary move from the non-hierarchy
2 relationship of Adam and Eve before the fall to that of the servant-leadership of husbands within
3 the home as a result of sin after the fall.⁴² Yet even in this case, the goal within every home
4 immersed in God's grace and looking forward to the restoration of all things should not be
5 "domination" but the "restoration" of the full equality experienced between husband and wife
6 before the onset of sin.

7 While Paul does appeal to the fall as a reason or explanation of his restriction on women, the
8 reason is not simply because they were teaching, but because of the domineering manner in
9 which it was done. The way in which they were acting also appears to be a result of the deceptive
10 influence the false teachers had over these women in Ephesus (cf. 2 Tim 3:6-13). This
11 connection is not only implied in the relationship between the two references to "deception" in
12 verse 14 and the problem of false teachings emphasized throughout the letter, but also in Paul's
13 statement that some women in Ephesus had already succumbed to deception and "strayed after
14 Satan" (1 Tim 5:15). In light of the circumstances in Ephesus, Paul's reference to Eve would
15 have served as a vivid warning to the women in Ephesus of the danger of listening to the false
16 teachers and being influenced by them. The story of Eve's involvement with the fall illustrated in
17 the strongest of terms just how tragic the results could be for the church in Ephesus if these
18 women continued to allow the false teachers to influence them.

19 Concerned about the influence of false teachers in Corinth, several years earlier Paul also
20 appealed to the story of Eve's deception as a warning of the danger of being deceived and
21 disobeying God. He wrote, "I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your
22 thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Cor 11:3). Viewed
23 from this perspective, Paul's proscription in Ephesus was not aimed at barring all women from
24 the right to exercise leadership roles in church, but in addressing a specific problem that had
25 arisen in Ephesus.

⁴² Ellen White describes this movement from the non-hierarchical relationship of Adam and Eve before the fall, to the subjection of Eve "to her husband" after the fall as a temporary relationship in response to sin and for the express purpose that "their union could be maintained and harmony preserved" (PP 58). It is significant to note that she strictly limits this relationship to the home, and does not apply it to the relationship between men and women in church. See PP 58-59; 3T 484.

1 Paul finishes his allusion to Genesis in this section of his letter with terminology reminiscent
2 of the hope of salvation connected to the bearing of children (Gen 3:15-16). Although the serpent
3 had deceived Eve and led her into sin, God had promised the birth of a descendant, who would
4 one day defeat the serpent. In the pain that would accompany the birth of every child, there was
5 also to be a reminder of the hope that lay in God's promise of a deliver. Rather than looking
6 disparagingly at marriage and motherhood (cf. 4:3; 5:9-10, 14), Paul reminds the women in
7 Ephesus of the value of marriage and childbearing as God-given blessings.

8

9

III. Qualifications for Selecting Church Leaders

10 At first glance Paul's discussion of the qualifications for overseers that begins chapter 3
11 appears to be the introduction to an entirely new discussion. Upon closer examination, however,
12 the section is actually a continuation of Paul's preceding instructions to Timothy on how to
13 respond to the false teachings that were crippling the spiritual life of the church in Ephesus.

14 After first instructing Timothy to counter the exclusive mentality of the false teaching by
15 reminding the church of the universal scope of the gospel mission by having them pray for all
16 people (2:1-7), Paul had then instructed Timothy to limit the influence of the false teachings by
17 stopping the disruptive behavior those teachings had encouraged among men and women within
18 the congregation (2:8-15). In this chapter Paul now turns his attention to the selection of
19 qualified leaders, outlining the personal qualities necessary for overseers (3:1-7) and deacons
20 (3:8-13), who will be able to guide the church through the difficult time they are facing. This
21 section concludes with a statement of the theological convictions that stand at the basis of all of
22 Paul's instructions: the church is the household of the living God, a "pillar and buttress of the
23 truth." (3:14-16).

24 The selection of church leaders plays an important part in Paul's instructions to Timothy. The
25 challenge the church faced with the false teachers made the selection of the right kind of leaders
26 a matter of great import. The church needed individuals who would be able to provide the
27 spiritual leadership necessary for not only protecting the church from falsehood, but who also
28 would be able to help it move forward in spreading the gospel.

1 If local elders had been involved in the spreading of the false teachings, as seems apparent in
2 the repeated attention given to the role of elders in the letter, and particularly in the contrast
3 between those who are worthy of the position and those who are not (3:1-7; 5:17-22),⁴³ Paul's
4 counsel here would have taken on even greater significance for the church in Ephesus. The
5 apostasy of individuals who had once been church leaders would have been a violation of the
6 sacred trust the congregation had placed upon those to whom they looked for spiritual leadership
7 and direction in living the life of faith. The controversy surrounding their departure would have
8 weakened the faith of some, and probably prompted others to surrender their faith entirely. The
9 leadership vacuum their departure caused would have left the church in urgent need of new
10 leaders to take their places. The fall out could have also extended beyond the congregation itself,
11 tarnishing the reputation of the church in the eyes of unbelievers, many who would have already
12 been skeptical about the claims of the gospel.

13 To guide the church in the selection of the right sort of spiritual leaders, it is important to
14 note that Paul did not focus on the duties or skills associated with the ministry of an overseer, but
15 on the *character* that should define a spiritual leader. He first states that an overseer must be
16 "above reproach" (3:2). What is involved in a life above reproach is spelled out in the eleven
17 character traits that follow in vv 2-3. A person without reproach is someone who is self-
18 controlled, not greedy, gentle, not quarrelsome, and pure in their teaching, etc. (see Table 1).
19 Only two duties are listed: the ability to teach (v 3), and the ability to manage a household well
20 (v 4-5). An overseer must also be well thought of by non-believers (v 7), but not a recent convert (v 6).

21 The emphasis Paul places on virtue—not gifts and abilities—indicates *character is the most*
22 *important criterion in the selection of spiritual leaders*. Too much rides on the ministry of an
23 overseer to entrust it to individuals of questionable character. The similarity between the traits
24 listed and the vices of the false teachers (see Table 1) not only connects the selection of elders

25

⁴³ According to Acts, Paul had foreseen years earlier (Acts 20:29-30) the problem affecting the local leadership in Ephesus. Additional indications of the connection of the local elders with the false teachings can be seen in: (1) Paul's identification of those responsible for spreading the error as "teachers" (1:3, 7; 6:3), since "teaching" is also mentioned as one of the primary tasks of elders (3:2; 5:17); and (2) in the fact that the vices associated with the false teachers mirror the very traits specified as unbecoming of church elders (Cf. 1 Tim 3:2-7; 1:7; 5:6; 6:4-5, 9-10). This suggests that it was the faulty character of the erring elders that prompted Paul to discuss the type of qualities that should characterize the life of church leaders.

1 **Table 1: Qualifications of Overseers/Elders and Connections with the False Teachers**

| | Overseers 1 Timothy 3:1-7 | Elders/Overseers Titus 1:5-9 | Connections with the False Teachers |
|-----|--|--|--|
| 1. | "above reproach" ἀνεπίληπτος | "above reproach" ἀνέγκλητος (v 6a) | |
| 2. | "one-woman man" μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνὴρ | "one-woman man" μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνὴρ (v 6b) | Forbid marriage (1 Tim 4:3) Sexually immoral (2 Tim 3:6) |
| 3. | "sober-minded" νηφάλιος | "disciplined" ἐγκρατής (v 8f) | |
| 4. | "self-controlled" σώφρων | "self-controlled" σώφρων (v 8c) | Uncontrolled (2 Tim 3:3) |
| 5. | "respectable" κόσμιος | | |
| 6. | "hospitable" φιλόξενος | "hospitable" φιλόξενος (v 8a) | |
| 7. | "skillful in teaching" διδασκτικός | "give instruction" παρακαλεῖν ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ (v 9) | Teach different doctrine (1 Tim 1:3) Teachers of the law (1 Tim 1:7) Teachings of demons (1 Tim 4:1) False Teachers (2 Tim 4:3) |
| 8. | "not a drunkard" μὴ πάροινος | "not a drunkard" μὴ πάροινος (v 7c) | |
| 9. | "not violent" μὴ πλήκτης | "not violent" μὴ πλήκτης (v 7d) | |
| 10. | "gentle" ἐπιεικής | "not arrogant" μὴ αὐθάδης (v 7a) | |
| 11. | "not quarrelsome" μὴ ἄμαχος | "not quick-tempered" ὀργίλος (v 7b) | Quarrelsome (1 Tim 6:4; 2 Tim 2:23; Titus 3:9) |
| 12. | "not a lover of silver" μὴ ἀφιλάργυρος | "not greedy" μὴ αἰσχροκερδής (v 7e) | Desire to be rich (1 Tim 6:5, 9-10) Teaching for gain (Titus 1:11) Lovers of silver (2 Tim 3:2) |
| 13. | "managing household... children submissive" | "children are believers... not rebellious" (v 6c) | Disobedient to parents (2 Tim 3:2) Rebellious (Titus 1:10) |
| 14. | "not a recent convert" μὴ νεόφυτος | | Do not be hasty in laying on of hands (1 Tim 5:22) |
| 15. | "outsiders think well of" | | |
| 16. | | "lover of good" φιλάγαθος (v 8b) | Do not love good (2 Tim 3:3) Lovers of pleasure (2 Tim 3:4) |
| 17. | | "just" δίκαιος (v 8d) | |
| 18. | | "holy" ὅσιος (v 8e) | "unholy" (2 Tim 3:2) "ungodly" (2 Tim 2:16) |

1 with the discussion of the false teachers, but also suggests the current problems in Ephesus had
2 arisen to some extent out of a disregard of character in the appointing of overseers in the past.

3

4

IV. Gender and the Ministry of an Overseer

5 While character is the primary criterion that should guide the church in the selection of
6 overseers, what role, if any, should gender play in that process? Those opposing the ordination of
7 women claim that gender does matter—an "elder/overseer must be of the male gender."⁴⁴ It is
8 claimed that Paul's "list of qualifications is so detailed that the inclusion of gender-specific
9 details excludes alternative qualifications."⁴⁵ The gender-specific details they believe exclude
10 women from serving as overseers boil down to three specific conclusions: (1) The indefinite
11 pronoun *tis* in 3:1 is masculine indicating that only "men" should aspire to the work of an
12 overseer; (2) The phrase "husband of one wife" refers exclusively to men; and (3) The
13 requirement of managing one's household is "unmistakably talking to men."⁴⁶ As the following
14 study will seek to demonstrate, the examination of each of these points fails to prove in a
15 convincing manner that Paul sought to limit the ministry of an overseer to only the male gender.

16 A. Aspiring to the Ministry of an Overseer (1 Tim 3:1) - Objection 1

17 "If anyone [*tis*] aspires to the office of overseer, [he] desires a noble task." ESV

18 Paul begins his discussion of the qualifications of overseers by affirming the ministry of an
19 overseer. As Fee notes, the use of the conditional sentence in Greek with a generalizing
20 indefinite pronoun ("if anyone") indicates that Paul's emphasis is "less on the person than on the
21 position."⁴⁷ In other words, Paul is not trying to introduce gender into the discussion, but simply
22 to commend the ministry of an overseer as a work worthy of aspiration. This is also evident in
23 the main clause where Paul not only designates the position as a "noble task," but in how he

⁴⁴ Stephen Bohr, 26. In fact, the emphasis they place upon the issue of gender and a willingness in practice to minimize some of the other criteria suggest gender, not virtue, is for them the single most important criterion in the selection of overseers/elders (See Sorke, 37).

⁴⁵ Sorke, 32.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁷ Fee, 79.

1 emphasizes its importance in Greek by fronting the noun phrase a "noble task" before the verb
2 "desires" (*kalou ergou epithumei*). The importance Paul has to place upon the ministry of an
3 overseer before even discussing the qualifications for the position implies that not all of the
4 believers in Ephesus were convinced the position was desirable. These sorts of feeling may have
5 emerged from either a negative stigma associated with the ministry of an overseer due to the
6 influence of the false teachers, a reluctance to deal with the difficult task of confronting the false
7 teachers, or simply because other forms of ministry were more attractive.⁴⁸ Whatever the case,
8 the ministry of an overseer had clearly fallen into such disrepute that Paul had to reaffirm its
9 positive contribution to the life of the church and the honor associated with it.

10 It was argued at last summer's TOSC meeting that the "anyone" in Paul's initial comments
11 about aspiring to the ministry of an overseer refers exclusively to men and thereby excludes
12 women from consideration.

13 "The pronoun τις *tis* ("a certain one") carries a masculine parsing... although
14 grammatically the form could be feminine. While other phrases might be
15 taken generically... the gender-specific oscillation between men and women
16 in 1 Tim 2:8-15 mandates an exclusively masculine reading.... In the specific
17 employment of a sentence, this indefinite pronoun takes on one gender only
18 [i.e., masculine]."⁴⁹

19 This statement claims far too much. By definition the indefinite pronoun is used in Greek to
20 refer to one or more unspecified beings, objects, or places. When in reference to humans in the
21 New Testament it refers almost exclusively to both males and females without distinction.⁵⁰ The
22 fact that the pronoun is masculine in gender in 1 Tim 3:1 also proves little since the *masculine*
23 *gender was the default gender when speaking collectively of both men and women*. The only
24 valid reason to limit the indefinite pronoun to a specific gender is if the context clearly indicates
25 such an interpretation is warranted. For at least two reasons, the claim that the "gender-specific
26 oscillation between men and women in 1 Tim 2:8-15" not only suggests but even "mandates an
27 exclusively masculine reading" cannot be substantiated.

⁴⁸ I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 475.

⁴⁹ Sorke, 32-33.

⁵⁰ Without considering its use in 1 Tim 3:1 and the parallel passage in Titus 1:6, the indefinite pronoun *ei tis* ("if anyone") occurs 58 times within the New Testament in relation to humans. Out of those 58 times it only refers exclusively to either the male or female gender nine times.

1 In an attempt to render the indefinite pronoun in 1 Tim 3:1 as exclusively masculine in
2 reference, it is claimed that the context of the passage moves from masculine (2:8) to feminine
3 (2:9-15) and then back to masculine (3:1-8). While Paul certainly discusses men and women in 1
4 Tim 2:1-3:16 it does not move on a foundational level from male to female to male, but from
5 problem to solution within the context of the church at worship and the selection of its leaders. If
6 Paul had intended an exclusive masculine reading of the indefinite pronoun, then one would
7 assume that the parallel use of the indefinite pronoun *ei tis* ("if anyone") in Titus 1:6 would also
8 contain some sort of limiting contextual reference associated with gender. But it does not. There
9 is no movement in the nearly identical passage in Titus that moves from women to men leading
10 up to the discussion of the qualification of elders. The assumption would be that when Paul says
11 "anyone," he actually means what he says.

12 A second problem with claiming that the indefinite pronoun in 1 Tim 3:1 requires a
13 masculine reading is that the passage does not conform to Paul's standard way of limiting the
14 indefinite pronoun to a particular gender. When Paul wants to specify the gender of an indefinite
15 pronoun he does so by the inclusion of gender specific nouns or pronouns along side the
16 indefinite pronoun. For example, in 1 Tim 5:4 Paul restricts the use of *ei tis* ("if anyone") only to
17 women by the inclusion of the feminine noun for widow: "But if any widow (*ei de tis chēra*). He
18 does the same in 1 Tim 5:16 by the inclusion of the feminine adjective for believing ("if any
19 believing woman"). This is Paul's standard practice not only in 1 Timothy, but also in his other
20 writings (cf. 1 Cor. 7:12, 13, 36).⁵¹ If Paul only had men in mind, one would certainly have
21 expected him to include a specific masculine noun or pronoun in direct connection to the
22 indefinite pronoun, but he does not. In fact, there is not even one masculine pronoun in the entire
23 passage in Greek.⁵²

24 Additional evidence that Paul does not have a specific gender in mind in 1 Tim 3:1 or 5, can
25 be seen in the 10 other uses of the indefinite pronoun in 1 Timothy that are not accompanied by a

⁵¹ The only example where Paul uses an indefinite pronoun in relation to a specific gender without a corresponding noun or pronoun is in 2 Corinthians 2:5. This passage, however, is an anomaly since Paul is trying deliberately to avoid identifying the name of the specific offender in the church who had repented. For this reason, Harris notes that *ei tis* is "conditional only in form; in sense it is equivalent to ὃς, "the person who" (Murray Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 223).

⁵² Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2009), 448.

1 gender identifying noun or pronoun. In each of these ten cases, the indefinite pronouns simply
2 function as a generic reference to humans (1:3, 6, 8, 19; 4:1; 5:8, 24; 6:3, 10, 21). This would
3 lead one to conclude that the corresponding use of the indefinite pronoun in 1 Tim 3:1 would
4 also not refer to a particular gender.

5 The argument that the indefinite pronoun "mandates an exclusively masculine reading"
6 claims a stronger degree of gender exclusivity than can be substantiated with the use of the
7 indefinite pronoun in 1 Tim 3:1, and in the process it ends up distorting Paul's emphasis on a
8 general commendation of the value of the ministry of an overseer by reading into the text a
9 specific emphasis on the issue of gender.

10 **B. A One-Woman Man (1 Tim 3:2) - Objection 2**

11 "Therefore an overseer must be ... the husband of one wife." ESV

12 The primary argument of those opposed to the ordination of women is the belief that the
13 second criterion of Paul's list for overseers applies only to men: "An overseer must be...the
14 husband of one wife" [literally, "a one-woman man"]. Regardless of what Paul means by a "one-
15 woman man," the use of the word "man" (*anēr*) is seen as exclusive terminology that clearly
16 prohibits women from serving as an overseer.⁵³ For this reason, it was claimed at the TOSC
17 meeting last summer, "The text does not offer the flexibility of reading this phrase generically,
18 'the spouse of one spouse.'"⁵⁴ Another paper argued similarly: "The fact is that the Greek is
19 gender specific. Even those who literally translate 'one woman man' must admit that according to
20 the text itself the elder/overseer must be of the male gender because the text does not read 'a one
21 man woman'.⁵⁵ Incredulous that this criterion could be interpreted in any other manner, the
22 paper rhetorically states: "After all, is it so difficult to understand the phrase 'husband of one
23 wife'?"⁵⁶

24 As it turns out, the ambiguity of the phrase "a one-woman man" has actually been more
25 difficult to understand than was recognized. Attempts to define specifically what Paul had in

⁵³ Sorke, 34.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Bohr, 26.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 3, n.6.

1 mind with this criterion have led to a long and contentious debate. Part of the problem is that the
2 phrase is extremely unusual. While it occurs three times in Paul's writings (1 Tim 3:2, 12; Titus
3 1:6), it appears nowhere else in extant Greek literature. The ambiguity of the phrase has led to
4 five primary interpretations: (1) An overseer must be married; (2) An overseer must not practice
5 polygamy; (3) An overseer must never divorce, or remarry after the death of a spouse; (4) An
6 overseer must practice marital faithfulness; and finally (5) An overseer must be male. As logical
7 as some of these interpretations may appear, they all are not equally valid interpretations.

8 **1. An Overseer Must be Married.** According to this interpretation, Paul is emphasizing the
9 importance of marriage for church leaders. It is beyond argument that marriage provides life
10 experiences that can support, strengthen, and enhance the ability to minister effectively in a
11 congregation. To a certain extent, this interpretation also makes sense since Paul's opponents
12 appear to have taken a rather disparaging view of marriage (cf. 4:3; 5:14). But while Paul speaks
13 strongly in favor of marriage as a divine institution (1 Cor 7:1-16; Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-19), it
14 is hard to imagine that his main point was to require that church leaders be married. Why would
15 Paul require something that was a traditional expectation of men at the time and also the reality
16 for the vast majority of men? Since at the time most everyone was married at an early age, it
17 would have made little sense to require marriage as one of the criteria for ministry. It would be
18 virtually meaningless.

19 In addition, if being single really disqualified an individual from serving as a church leader,
20 Paul (and likely Timothy too) would have been disqualified, since Paul certainly appears to have
21 been single at least during the last two decades of his life (1 Cor 7:7-8; 9:5).⁵⁷ For these reasons,
22 the emphasis behind Paul's counsel must surely lie elsewhere.

23 **2. An Overseer Must Not Practice Polygamy.** The belief that Paul's primary intent was to
24 prohibit polygamy also fails to offer an entirely satisfying interpretation. While being the
25 "husband of one wife" certainly excludes polygamists from the ranks of church leaders, Paul
26 most likely had a more precise prohibition in mind. This seems to be the case for two reasons. .

⁵⁷ To claim that Paul would not have been disqualified because he had been married at an earlier stage in his life, because he was apparently not married at time, undermines the very nature of this interpretation. If it means an elder must *be* married, then the criterion of marriage must not be explained away.

1 First, although there are traces of polygamy among Greek myths, monogamy was the regular
2 practice in the Greco-Roman world of Paul's day.⁵⁸ While men had considerable sexual
3 freedom, they were not married to more than one woman at a time. Within Palestinian Judaism in
4 NT times, polygamy was practiced in an extremely limited sense among aristocratic leaders, and
5 most notably Herod the Great.⁵⁹ The practice was in serious decline, however, and was
6 eventually outlawed in a growing body of legislation.⁶⁰ As Lea and Griffin note, "Such a practice
7 would be so palpably unacceptable among Christians that it would hardly seem necessary to
8 prohibit it."⁶¹ This suggests that unless Paul envisioned something beyond polygamy, his
9 counsel would have been largely superfluous. Moreover, to be consistent, Paul's similar
10 terminology in 1 Tim 5:9 requiring a widow to be a "one-man woman" would have to imply also
11 the practice of polyandry among some women in Ephesus—an implausible conclusion since
12 polyandry was a custom entirely foreign to the Greco-Roman world.

13 **3. An Overseer Must Never Divorce/Remarry.** Some claim that Paul's counsel requires
14 that church leaders never divorce, or as some argue, never even remarry after the death of a
15 spouse. Compared to the previous explanations, this interpretation has more evidence in its favor.
16 Divorce was an all too common problem in the ancient world, both among Jews and Gentiles (cf.
17 Matt 5:31-32; 19:8-9). The New Testament makes it clear that the early church was not exempt
18 from having to deal with this societal problem. Jesus clearly spoke out against the practice of
19 divorce, except on the grounds of marital infidelity. Paul echoed those same sentiments in his
20 counsel to the Corinthians (1 Cor 7:10, 39). And for those who could endure it, Paul even
21 encouraged a life of celibacy after the death of a spouse for the sake of full-time ministry (1 Cor
22 7:7-9). Recognizing the difficulties associated with divorce among church leaders and some of

⁵⁸ *NTDNTT*, 2:575.

⁵⁹ At various times, Herod was married to at least ten different women (Josephus *Ant* 17.14; *War* 1.477). Although many of these were serial marriages, some of the later marriages were certainly polygamous. *NTDNTT*, 2:578.

⁶⁰ Although monogamy was made the official law of the Romans in A.D. 212 (*lex Antoniana de civitate*), the law included a special exemption for Jews. The Emperor Theodosius, however, eventually outlawed the practice among Jews in a decree issue in 393 (Eugene Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1975), 20-21).

⁶¹ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr. *1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1992), 109.

1 the statements made by Jesus and Paul, this interpretation was commonly advocated by early
2 Christians after the death of the apostles.⁶²

3 The problem with this viewpoint is, however, that it often fails to apply the entire testimony
4 of Jesus and Paul on the issue of divorce and remarriage. While divorce is spoken against
5 strongly, Jesus and Paul do allow for remarriage in certain circumstances (cf. Matt 5:31-32; 1
6 Cor 7:15). And while Paul does speak of the benefits of a life of celibacy, he also allows, and in
7 some contexts, even encourages individuals to remarry after the death of a spouse (cf. 1 Cor 7:8-
8 9; 1 Tim 5:14). Although it is not impossible that elders were to be held to a higher standard, it
9 still seems unlikely that these concessions would have been denied to church leaders. Thus this
10 interpretation also appears to fall short of identifying Paul's primary intent.

11 **4. An Overseer Must Practice Marital Faithfulness.** Another interpretation argues that
12 Paul's statement requires that an overseer live a life marked by unquestionable sexual purity.
13 Since the vast majority of people were married at the time sexual purity would be expressed in
14 the terms of a monogamous relationship, though in a general sense it certainly could apply to
15 single individuals. This view would not prohibit a church leader from remarrying after the death
16 of a spouse, or even after divorce (depending on the circumstances, of course). It would,
17 however, prohibit all forms of sexual promiscuity, such as the same-sex relationships (cf. Rom
18 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9-10). The similar phrase in 1 Tim 5:9 requiring a widow be have been a "one-
19 man woman" would seem to corroborate the idea that marital faithfulness is likely in mind.
20 Requiring marital fidelity of church leaders not only affirms the institution of marriage (as
21 opposed to the view of Paul's opponents), but it also affirms the importance of sexual purity as a
22 prerequisite for those responsible for leading out in the life of the church. Highlighting the
23 importance of sexual purity among church leaders was not a needless concern. Promiscuity was
24 the norm in the ancient world, and as Paul's letters indicate, it was a far too common problem
25 among Gentile converts (e.g., 1 Cor 5:1-2; 6:15-18; 1 Thess 4:3-5). In light of the problem of
26 promiscuity among Gentile believers, it certainly would be strange for Paul to have excluded *any*
27 reference to sexual purity among the criteria for selecting overseers. Of all the views so far, this
28 interpretation is the strongest.

⁶² See, for example, Tertullian's comments to his wife on this issue in *To His Wife* 1:6, 1:7.

1 **5. An Overseer Must Be Male.** Although those opposing the ordination of women are
2 willing to concede that the phrase a "one-woman man" likely requires that overseers be
3 monogamous, they still maintain that the "text clearly states that they [overseers] must be
4 monogamous *men*."⁶³ This gender exclusive reading of the passage is, however, highly
5 problematic. As already demonstrated, the exact meaning of the phrase a "one-woman man" is
6 anything but clear. Since it is difficult to substantiate that Paul's primary intent was to require
7 that overseers be married, we need to be cautious in assuming on the basis of an overly
8 literalistic reading that his intent was to require that overseers be exclusively men.⁶⁴ After all, if
9 Paul had wanted to limit the work of an overseer to men, he could have said it directly: "An
10 overseer must be above reproach, *a man*, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to
11 teach." Yet Paul did not. Instead, he chose the far more ambiguous expression, "a one-woman
12 man."

13 If this phrase should not be understood in a gender exclusive manner, how should it be
14 understood? The unusual nature of this expression and the difficulties associated with translating
15 it literally suggest that it is probably better understood as an idiom—an expression where the
16 words together have a meaning that is different from the individual words themselves. As anyone
17 who has studied a foreign language knows, idioms are notoriously difficult to understand. The
18 problem is that "when we use an idiom we say one thing, but we mean another."⁶⁵ Although the
19 individual words are easily understood, the actual meaning of the expression is more obscure.
20 The Bible is full of these sorts of expressions. Notable examples from Paul's letters include
21 phrases like, "heap burning coals on his head" (Rom 12:20); "a door was opened" (2 Cor 2:12);
22 and "a thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor 12:7). In each of these statements, a literal reading makes little
23 sense, though the words themselves are clear. The expression as a whole—not the individual
24 words—vividly portrays a particular point Paul was trying to emphasize. In these examples, the
25 point Paul was trying to convey appears to have been a sense of remorse leading to repentance
26 (Rom 12:20), a significant opportunity (2 Cor 2:12), and a particular annoyance (2 Cor 12:7).

⁶³ Bohr, 25.

⁶⁴ Ekkehardt Mueller, "Husband of One Wife—1 Tim 3:2," *Biblical Research Institute* (June 2005), 4.

⁶⁵ George M. Lamsa, *Idioms in the Bible Explained and A Key to the Original Gospels* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), ix.

1 What particular aspect then was Paul seeking to portray more vividly with the expression a
2 "one-woman man"? The key to understanding the particular emphasis Paul is seeking to convey
3 is found in the way he orders the words in Greek. As already noted in our discussion of 1 Tim
4 3:1, an author can place special emphasis on a word within a sentence in Greek by a practice
5 called "fronting"—placing a word in a prominent place earlier in a sentence, rather than at its
6 customary place. In the expression a "one-woman man" the emphasis is not on "men," but on the
7 word "one." If Paul had wanted to emphasize that the overseer be a man, he could have placed
8 that word first—"a man of one woman." As Mueller notes, the fact that Paul does not do that
9 "clearly excludes a position claiming that Paul focused on the maleness of the bishop/elder."⁶⁶
10 To claim that Paul's focus was on the maleness of an overseer would be tantamount to claiming
11 that in the similar phrase in 5:9 ("one-man woman") Paul was emphasizing the femaleness of
12 widows! That would be absurd. The expression focuses rather on the "oneness" of the candidate,
13 that is the issue of sexual purity—again understood in Paul's day in the context of a monogamous
14 relationship.

15 **C. Deacons and Women (1 Tim 3:8-13)**

16 Although the emphasis of the expression a "one-woman man" is on sexual purity rather than
17 gender, the question remains whether it still precludes women from consideration? Paul's use of
18 this same phrase in his discussion of deacons in 1 Tim 3:8-13 strongly suggests the answer is no.

19 Having set forth the qualifications for overseers in 1 Tim 3:1-7, Paul next turns his attention
20 to a second group of church leaders—deacons. The section follows the same basic pattern of the
21 preceding one by listing a similar set of qualifications for deacons that focus on character. What
22 is interesting is that sandwiched between references to deacons in 3:8-10 and 3:12-13 is a
23 reference to women in verse 11. What relation do women have to the discussion of deacons?
24 There are two primary interpretations.

25 **1. Woman As Wives.** Some claim that the women Paul has in mind are the wives of the
26 deacons, who would supposedly need to be evaluated along with their husbands. Since the Greek
27 term *gynē* can refer to either a "woman" or a "wife" it is thought that a reference to the "wives"

⁶⁶ Mueller, 4.

1 of the deacons would fit logically with the description of marriage and children of deacons in the
2 following verse (3:12).

3 While identifying the women as wives makes some sense in relation to the individual terms,
4 it makes little sense within the larger context. If the behavior of the wives of deacons was so
5 important to warrant discussion, why is there no corresponding discussion of the wives of
6 overseers in the previous section (3:1-7)? It seems clear Paul was not advocating celibacy.
7 Moreover, if the wives of the deacons had to meet certain standards, why is nothing said about
8 the qualifications for the wife of an overseer? Since the reputation of overseers had significant
9 implications for the way the church was perceived within the local community, it would certainly
10 have been important to also insure that their wives were godly women. Also, if "wives" were
11 really in mind, Paul would have indicated this by the addition of a possessive pronoun or a
12 definite article, as he does elsewhere (cf. 1 Cor 7:2, 3; Eph 5:22; Col 3:18).⁶⁷ The absence of
13 such critical elements indicates Paul likely had something other than the wives of deacons in
14 mind in verse 11.

15 **2. Women As Deacons.** A more likely interpretation is that the "women" mentioned in v 11
16 are a reference to female deacons. This is not only implied in the structural context of the
17 passage, but it is evident in the terminology that connects the ministry of a deacon in v 8 with the
18 women in v 11. The adverb "likewise" that introduces the discussion of deacons in v 8 with the
19 preceding discussion of overseers indicates a parallel relationship between the two. That parallel
20 connection is the set of qualifications necessary for each ministry.⁶⁸ While there are requirements
21 for the ministry of an overseer, there are "likewise" qualifications for the ministry of a deacon.
22 The fact that the word "likewise" also begins the discussion of women in v 11 indicates that what
23 follows is another set of qualifications for a ministry function within the church—in this case
24 qualifications for a group of female deacons. As Payne points out, if Paul merely had wives in
25 mind "the verse would not be similar either in identifying a church office or in listing

⁶⁷ Although some modern translations include the possessive pronoun "their" in 3:11 (e.g., KJV, NKJV, ESV, NET), it is not present in the Greek text.

⁶⁸ This can be seen in the fact that vv 8-11 are dependent on the verb "it is necessary" (*dei*) in v 2.

1 qualifications for those office holders themselves."⁶⁹ Moreover the entire passage deals with
2 qualifications for church ministries, not with qualifications for wives.

3 An additional indication that female deacons are likely in mind is the qualifications Paul sets
4 forth for them. As Table 2 indicates, the first four qualifications listed of the women in v 11
5 parallel those listed of deacons in v 8. If Paul simply had the wives of the deacons in mind, why
6 would he require women who held no official position within the church to meet the same
7 requirements and even in the exact same order as those of deacons in v 8? If these requirements
8 were given with the assumption that these women were wives who would join their husbands in
9 the task of ministry, then these women would in effect be deacons nonetheless!

10 If Paul intended for these women to be understood as female deacons why did he not simply
11 address them as deaconesses in the first place? If the word had existed at the time, he certainly
12 would have. But the first recorded reference to a feminine form of the word "deacon" (*diakonos*)
13 does not appear until nearly three hundred years later with a reference to "deaconesses"
14 (*diakonissa*) in connection to the Council of Nicea in 325. With no such word available to him,
15 Paul's reference to women (*gynē*) in the middle of his discussion of deacons would have signaled
16 he envisioned the *work of a deacon was broad enough to include a role for both males and*
17 *females.*

18 Paul's reference to the woman Phoebe in Romans 16:1 as a deacon provides an example that
19 in actual practice women did serve in an official capacity as deacons within the early church. "I
20 commend to you our sister Phoebe, a *diakonos* (deacon/servant) of the church at Cenchreae." If
21 Paul had merely intended to affirm Phoebe's helpful service to the church, he would have
22 expressed it either by the use verb "*diakoneo*" (Rom 15:25), or with the actual word for service
23 "*diakonia*" (1 Cor 16:15). Instead he uses terminology in Greek that makes it "virtually certain"⁷⁰
24 that Phoebe served as a deacon in the church of Cenchreae. Paul describes her as "being a deacon
25 of the church at Cenchreae" (*ousan diakonon tēs ekklēsias en kegchreais*). It is the use of the
26 participle form of the Greek verb "to be" that indicates the focus is not on the service she

⁶⁹ Payne, 455-56.

⁷⁰ C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; 2 vols.;
Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 2.781.

1

Table 2: Qualifications of Deacons and "Women" in 1 Timothy 3:8-13

| | Deacons 1 Timothy 3:8-10, 12-13 | The "Women" 1 Timothy 3:11 |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | "worthy of respect" σεμνός (v 8) | "worthy of respect" σεμνός |
| 2. | "not double-tongued" μὴ δίλογος (v 8) | "not slanders" διάβολος |
| 3. | "not addicted to much wine" μὴ οἶνω πολλῶ προσέχοντας (v 8) | "sober-minded" νηφάλιος |
| 4. | "not fond of dishonest gain" μὴ αἰσχροκερδής (v 8) | "faithful in all things" πιστὰς ἐν πᾶσιν |
| 5. | "holding fast to the faith" ἔχοντας τὸ μυστήριον τῆς πίστεως (v 9) | |
| 6. | "being blameless" ἀνέγκλητοι ὄντες (v 10) | |
| 7. | "one-woman man" μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνὴρ (v 12) | |
| 8. | "managing their children and household well" (v 12) | |

2

3 performed, but on the "recognized ministry" or "position of responsibility" she held "within the
4 congregation."⁷¹

5 While Phoebe holds the distinction of being "the first recorded deacon in the history of
6 Christianity,"⁷² she certainly was not the last. Although the nature of their ministry varied from
7 place to place, women continued to serve as deacons throughout the earliest centuries of the
8 Christian church. The earliest evidence of their ministry outside the New Testament is probably
9 in the writings of Pliny the Younger. In a letter written to the emperor Trajan in 112, Pliny
10 reports having tortured two Christian slaves "who were being called Deaconesses [*ministrae*]."⁷³
11 Over the course of the second and third centuries, references to female deacons appear in the

⁷¹ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16* (WBC 38b; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 886-87.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 887.

⁷³ Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96, cited in Cecilia Robinson, *Ministry of Deaconesses* (London: Methuen, 1898), 81-2. Since Pliny was stationed in Greek-speaking Bithynia, his description of these women's position in the church is likely a Latin translation from Greek. Although he does not refer to them in Latin as *diāconi*, his choice of the word *ministrae* seems to be synonymous "for a *diāconus* can be defined as a "minister of the church, a deacon." (Elizabeth McCabe, "A Reexamination of Phoebe as a "Diakonos" and "Prostatis": Exposing the Inaccuracies of English Translations." *SBL Forum*, n.p. [cited 26 Aug. 2013]. Online: <http://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?ArticleId=830>.)

1 writings of Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 150-220), Origen (A.D. 185-254), and in a work
2 entitled the *Didascalia Apostolorum*. The account in Origen is particularly significant since in
3 commenting on Roman 16:1-2, he explicitly connects the ministry of Phoebe as a female deacon
4 with the women in 1 Timothy 3:11. During the fourth century, deaconesses are mentioned during
5 the proceedings of the Council of Nicea and in a writing known as the *Apostolic Constitutions*, as
6 well as in all the prominent Greek Fathers in the fourth and fifth centuries.⁷⁴

7 What is significant in connection to the ministry of Phoebe and other female deacons during
8 the earliest centuries of Christianity is that the requirement that a deacon be a "one-woman man"
9 *was not seen as an obstacle to the ministry of female deacons*. Although the phrase may suggest
10 that Paul primarily had male deacons in mind, as Mounce notes, it certainly "does not require all
11 deacons to be men."⁷⁵ Even the staunch complementarian Douglass Moo acknowledges that it
12 "would be going too far to argue that the phrase clearly excludes women."⁷⁶ Thus in actual
13 practice the expression a "one-woman man" served more as a reference to sexuality purity than it
14 did to gender. Since this exact same expression serves as a qualification for elders, its use here
15 indicates that it should not be seen as a prohibition barring women from serving as overseers.
16 So although the expression itself may be gender specific, it certainly is not gender exclusive.

17 **D. Managing A Household (1 Tim 3:4-5) - Objection 3**

18 "He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive,
19 5 for if someone [*tis*] does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's
20 church?" ESV

21 The final objection raised against the ordination of women is the belief that women are
22 disqualified from leading/managing a church because they are unable to meet the criterion of
23 providing leadership within a household. An overly literalistic approach to this passage led
24 advocates against women's ordination to maintain at last summer's TOSC meeting that the
25 requirement of managing a household is not only gender specific of men, but that it also requires
26 an overseer be married with children. "The Lord, as Head of His church (Eph 5:30), is interested

⁷⁴ Mounce, 210-12.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 204. He also states, "There is nothing in this paragraph that would prohibit women from being deacons ('one-woman man' assumes male deacons but does not necessarily require it)..."

⁷⁶ Douglas Moo, "The Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15: A Rejoinder," *Trinity Journal* 2 (1981), 211.

1 in having His church under husbands and fathers who have a proven record of successful
2 leadership in their homes."⁷⁷ Adopting this same line of reasoning, another TOSC paper claimed,
3 "Strictly speaking, a male without family would thus not qualify for eldership."⁷⁸

4 While it is certainly true that in Greco-Roman society the father of the family, the
5 *paterfamilias*, held ultimate authority over the affairs of the household (at least in name), it does
6 not mean that women/wives played absolutely no leadership role in the family themselves. In
7 actual practice outside of the father's role in conception, the duty of raising a family largely
8 rested upon the wife, who was also responsible for managing all the daily affairs of the
9 household (cf. Prov 31:10-31). Societal changes in the ancient world provided women in Paul's
10 day with "extensive authority and management"⁷⁹ opportunities in both the home as well as in
11 the public forum.⁸⁰ Women could own their own property, run businesses, hold public offices,
12 direct the activities of household slaves, as well as providing for the needs of their children.⁸¹

13 To claim that women could not serve as elders or deacons due to this criterion makes little
14 sense (1) in light of the day to day realities of the life of women in Paul's day, (2) the fact that
15 managing one's household was not seen as an obstacle for the ministry of female deacons in
16 earliest Christianity, and even more significantly (3) due to the fact that the apostle Paul actually
17 instructs women/wives to "manage their households" in 1 Tim 5:14. The verb that translates the
18 entire phrase "manage their household" is *oikodespoteō*, meaning "to be master of the house" or
19 "to rule the household."⁸² Although used only here in the New Testament, it is the cognate form

⁷⁷ Damsteegt, 30.

⁷⁸ Sorke, 37. Although this statement was made without qualification in the paper presented at the TOSC meeting in July, the published version backtracked somewhat by going on to claim, "However, the text does not need to be read in an absolute sense" (Ibid.). This statement is surprising since it conflicts with the absolute sense that is applied to the rest of the passage.

⁷⁹ S.M. Baugh, "A Foreign World," in *Women in the Church* (2d ed.; eds. A. Köstenberger and Thomas Schreiner; Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2005), 50-51.

⁸⁰ See Cosaert, 15-20.

⁸¹ Jewish inscriptions dating as far back as the second century also reveal that some women were identified with an array of dignified titles associated with the life of the synagogue: head of the synagogue, leader, elder, etc. Unfortunately, whether these titles were merely honorific or indicate the actual influence and authority of these women in religious matters is difficult to determine with certainty. The challenge lies in the fact these titles are at times also used in relation to children. While this does not rule out the fact that some women in various locations held positions of religious authority, the titles alone do not prove they did. Lynn Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2009), 210-14; Günter Mayer, *Die jüdische Frau in der hellenistisch-römischen Antike* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1987), 90f.

⁸² BDAG, 695; NIDNTT, 2:509-10; LSJ, 1204

1 of the more common noun *oikodespotēs*, which means "master of the house" (cf. Matt 21:33;
2 24:43; Luke 12:39; 13:25; 14:21). Although this responsibility is applied to a woman/wife in
3 relation to her domestic duties, Towner notes "there is no reason to lessen significantly the sense
4 of authority involved in the role."⁸³

5 Not only does a gender exclusive reading of this passage ultimately fail to provide a
6 convincing argument against allowing women to serve as overseers and deacons, but taken to its
7 logical conclusion it also disqualifies both single men and married men without at least two
8 believing children from serving as overseers or deacons. And according to the parallel passage in
9 Titus, an elder's children would also have to be believers (Titus 1:6). This is unlikely to have
10 been Paul's intent since his comments in 1 Corinthians 7:7 imply that at least at this stage of his
11 life he was single, and for the reason that he also encourages some individuals to remain single in
12 order to serve the Lord more fully in ministry, including individuals never married (1 Cor 7:27-
13 28, 32-35).⁸⁴

14 Although some of those advocating against the ordination of women apparently failed to
15 recognize the difficulties associated with a gender exclusive reading of this particular criterion,
16 others attempted to qualify the requirement that overseers and deacons must be fathers, though in
17 a less than convincing fashion. Backtracking on the statement in the original TOSC presentation
18 that elders had to have children, the published version of the paper argued that the participle in
19 the phrase "having [*echonta*] children in subjection with all respect" should be understood as a
20 conditional participle, meaning "if an elder has children."⁸⁵ While the phrase "if an elder has
21 children" may sound entirely plausible at first, it actually makes little sense. If this reasoning
22 were followed, the passage would read, "He must manage his own household well, if an elder
23 has children in submission with all reverence." No modern translation of the Bible translates the

⁸³ Towner, 356.

⁸⁴ Sorke states that Paul was in fact both married and a father. His claim, however, is based solely upon Ellen White's statement that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin (AA 112) and a passage in the *Desires of Ages* where she states that members of the Sanhedrin "must be married men, and fathers" (DA 133). To connect these two passages together is to state more than White actually says. While it is true that members of the Sanhedrin seem to have been married, since the New Testament is silent on this issue, and the Jewish leaders were certainly capable of disregarding traditional practice when it suited them, it is impossible to know for certain the extent of Paul's connection with the Sanhedrin. The New Testament also says nothing about Paul's marital or parental status. In light of so many unknowns in this regard, it seems best not to mistake assumptions for evidence.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 37

1 passage in that manner. The participial clause is best left as a participle of attendant circumstance
2 describing the way in which an individual is seen to be a good household manager—that is in the
3 way the children in the home are treated and how they act in turn.

4 Instead of trying to find a way to read the passage in an overly literalistic manner that also
5 avoids the conclusion that overseers must be fathers, it is far easier to realize that Paul's primary
6 point is not that an overseer has children. His point is that an overseer must be the kind of person
7 who knows how to manage a household well. In the Greco-Roman world of Paul's day, marriage,
8 and the children that followed, were the common experience for the vast majority of men and
9 women. Rather than making a criterion out of a societal reality, Paul was using a societal reality
10 as a way of evaluating an individual's ability to manage a household well. It was a criterion that
11 could be applied to both men and women. How can you tell if a person will be a good leader,
12 consider that individual's familial relationships. How do they treat their children, and how do
13 their children (whether minors or adults)⁸⁶ treat them in return. In those situations where an
14 individual has children, this criterion can still be applied. Rather than disqualifying someone
15 from serving as an overseer, the lack of a spouse or children would simply require that that
16 individual's ability to manage would have to be evaluated in a different manner, perhaps in their
17 relationship with others, whether at work or with other family members.

18 As we have seen in the previous arguments against the ordination of women, the objection
19 that women or single individuals cannot serve as overseers cannot be substantiated. This sort of
20 overly literalistic approach to the text ends up focusing the primary criteria for overseers and
21 deacons on issues of gender rather than the type of character traits that are clearly Paul's primary
22 concern.

⁸⁶ Rather than making a distinction between minors or grown children, the terminology suggests that Paul likely had in mind all the children that make up the family unit as a whole. If he had wanted to specifically identify minors, he could have used a number of different terms. A small child up to the age of seven was referred to as a *paidion* (e.g., Matt 2:8ff; John 16:21; Matt 11:16; Mark 7:28), and the related word *paidarion* could also referred to little children, or even a young man (John 6:9). A diminutive form of *teknon*, *teknion* was a nursery term used of little children, and by application a term of affection used by Jesus or the apostles to their spiritual children (John 16:33; Gal 4:19; 1 John 2:1). TDNT 5:636-38. Instead, Paul uses the term *teknon*, a word that simply refers to children in relation to their parents. It is used of children not yet born (Gen 3:17; 17:16 LXX) and even of adult children (Gen 27:13 LXX). Since the authority of a father extended even over the lives of even his adult children, the concept of submission does not require that small children are only in view (cf. 2:11). Regardless of age, the relationship of children to their parents in the closely connected family units in Paul's day would testify to the character of the leadership exercised in the home.

V. Paul's Prohibition and the False Teachings

Rather than basing Paul's exclusion of women from all teaching and leadership roles within the church on the basis of a permanent subordination of all women to all men that cannot be proven from either the account of creation or the fall, it is better to view Paul's instructions as a response to the immediate context of his letter to Timothy itself—the inroads the false teachings were making in Ephesus, and particularly among women (cf. 5:15; 2 Tim 3:6-7).

The extent to which the false teachings were negatively influencing believing women in Ephesus can be seen in the prominent attention Paul gives to women in the course of his dealings with the false teachings. He is concerned about the behavior of women in worship (2:10-15), their behavior as widows (5:5-6, 10-11, 14), and the fact that they have been going from house to house (likely a reference to the house churches in Ephesus), saying things they should not (5:14). That Paul's concern involved much more than merely the spreading of gossip is evident in his identification of the behavior of these women as straying "after Satan" (5:15). The fact that these women were "saying things they should not" also points to a connection with the "certain persons" Timothy was charged to keep from teaching a "different doctrine" (1:3), and with the women prohibited from engaging in a teaching ministry within the church (2:12). The influence of the false teachings on these women can also be seen in the fact that their behavior mirrors the heretical ideas being taught. Their desire not to marry and bear children (5:11-16), for example, coincides with the false teachers' advocacy of celibacy (4:1-3; 5:9-10).

What was it about the false teachings that attracted a following among a number of the believing women in Ephesus? On the basis of the details that can be gleaned from Paul's comments it seems highly probable that some women were attracted to ideas that devalued the traditional role of marriage and motherhood and encouraged ideas of female superiority and dominance (2:12, 13). Although Paul does not state this explicitly, it seems highly probably for the following reasons:

First, the disdain with which the false teachers viewed the institution of marriage (2:3) certainly would not have encouraged a favorable view of the traditional role of women as wives and mothers. With this sort of mentality being advocated, it is no wonder that Paul had to

1 encourage young widows to remarry, manage their households, and to speak positively about
2 bearing children (cf. 5:14; 2:15).

3 Secondly, the problems in Ephesus appear to mirror some of problems that had plagued the
4 believers in Corinth, although the details in both situations are somewhat different. The problem
5 in both churches was rooted in the rejection of a future physical resurrection in favor of a
6 spiritual resurrection in the present (cf. 1:20; 6:20-21; 2 Tim 2:16-18; 1 Cor 7:1-7, 25-38; 15:12,
7 35). The arrival of the promised age to come led to distorted views of sex and marriage (cf. 4:1-
8 3; 5:14; 2:15; 1 Cor 7:1-16), and a tendency among women to disregard traditional aspects
9 associated with dress (cf. 2:4; 1 Cor 11:5-16).⁸⁷

10 The belief that the age of the Spirit had already arrived in all of its fullness would certainly
11 explain why some women in Ephesus would have felt free to set aside their traditional roles as
12 wives and mothers to adopt a more "spiritual lifestyle" that included ascetic ideas involving
13 singleness, celibacy, and that also led to behavior that would have been seen as domineering and
14 suggestive of a belief in the superiority of the female gender (cf. 4:3; 2:15; 5:14).

15 These sorts of ideas would certainly have been given even more currency in the minds of
16 some in light of the prominent role women played in the worship of Artemis as the mother-
17 goddess in Ephesus, as well as the social trends in the Roman Empire that had opened the door
18 for women to play greater roles in the public sphere.⁸⁸ It may even be the case that these ideas
19 drew upon "an unbalanced emphasis on Paul's own teachings that Christians were 'raised with
20 Christ'... and that in Christ there is neither 'male nor female'" (cf. Eph 2:6; Col 2:12; 3:1; Gal
21 3:28).⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Towner, "Gnosis and Realized Eschatology in Ephesus (of the Pastoral Epistles) and the Corinthian Enthusiasm," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31 (1987): 98-103; Douglas Moo, "What Does it Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2:11-15," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 1991), 181-82.

⁸⁸ Cosaert, 6-20; Nancy Vyhmeister, "Proper Church Behavior in 1 Timothy 2:8-15" in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* (ed. N. J. Vyhmeister; Berrien Spring, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1998), 339-40; Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Roman Women in the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

⁸⁹ Moo, 181.

1 Such radical theological views would not only have brought these women in conflict with
2 their husbands, not to mention men in general, but they would have also risked damaging the
3 reputation of the church within the larger community—the very people the church was called to
4 reach with the gospel. These ideas were also diametrically opposed to the testimony of Scripture
5 as proclaimed in Paul's gospel message that rooted salvation in the definitive work of Christ
6 (Rom 3:21-31), and the belief that males and females were equal in Christ (Gal 3:28).

7 The fact that a number of women in the church in Ephesus were misled by these false
8 teachings should really come as no surprise. Women were often the targets of charlatans,
9 especially wealthy widows. This was because women were seen as easily fooled.⁹⁰ It is not that
10 women were by nature less intelligent than men, or that they lacked the capability to think
11 rationally. It was simply that in Paul's time most women received only a rudimentary formal
12 education. They had little time for further formal education since they would have started
13 preparing for marriage and motherhood by the time they reached the age of ten or eleven.⁹¹
14 Undereducated and often disempowered, women were placed in a position that made them
15 especially vulnerable to charlatans who were, as Johnson describes, "unscrupulous manipulators
16 of desperate human need."⁹²

17 The vulnerability of these sorts of women to false teachings would have been even more
18 magnified among those who were Gentile converts to Christianity. As even a cursory reading of
19 Paul's letters testify, Gentile converts often struggled to understand the most basic tenets of their
20 newly found faith (1 Thess 1:9-10; 4:13-18; 2 Thess 2:1-3; Gal. 1:6; 3:1-5; 1 Cor 15:12-13, 29).
21 With little practical experience in Christianity, and only the most minimal background in the Old
22 Testament Scriptures, Gentile believers were always susceptible to being led astray by false
23 teachings (1 Cor 11:3-4). Faced with these sorts of challenges, it is no wonder that Paul spoke of

⁹⁰ Women are often characterized in this manner in ancient literature (cf. 2 Timothy 3:6; Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet* 6; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.13.3, 6.). While some of it is certainly nothing more than the standard rhetoric of the day, it likely has some basis in reality considering the vast educational disadvantage women had in antiquity.

⁹¹ Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History* (2nd ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 100-05; David Matz, *Daily Life of the Ancient Romans* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2008), 1-2.

⁹² Johnson, 413.

1 the importance of providing women in his churches with proper instruction in the fundamentals
2 of the faith (cf. 1 Cor 14:34-35; 2 Tim 2:11).

3 The likelihood of the influence of the false teachers upon believing women in Ephesus would
4 certainly explain why Paul felt compelled to issue an injunction barring those same women from
5 exercising a teaching ministry within the church. Under the influence of the false teachers, these
6 women were teaching in a manner that was seen as domineering over the men in the
7 congregation. *They were not fit to teach because they were women, but because they had been*
8 *deceived by the false teachers*, just as Eve had been deceived by the alluring word's of the
9 serpent. Under these circumstances, these women were in no position to continue as teachers;
10 they first needed to become learners (2:11).

11 Understanding Paul's prohibition against women in Ephesus as being a temporary and local
12 response to a unique situation eliminates the otherwise apparent contradiction between his
13 instructions in 1 Timothy and the affirming manner in which women are portrayed in his
14 ministry in Acts and his letters as equal colleagues in the task of proclaiming and teaching the
15 gospel (cf. Acts 18:26; Phil 4:2-3; Rom 16:3, 6, 12; 1 Cor 11:5; Titus 2:3-4). The recent
16 involvement of the women in Ephesus with the false teachers also explains why Paul would not
17 have overtly included a reference to women in his discussion of the qualifications for the
18 selection of an overseer, as he does in his discussions of deacons. Due to the domineering
19 manner that had become associated with the teaching of women in Ephesus, the believing
20 women in Ephesus were not ready at that time to serve as overseers. They needed to be free from
21 the influence of the false teachers. They had to be trained more fully in the true gospel before
22 they could begin teaching again. The fact that none of the requirements actually prohibited a
23 woman from serving as an overseer, however, would have left the door open for women in
24 Ephesus to have served in that capacity in the future, without actively having encouraged it in the
25 present.

26

27

VI. Conclusion

28 Our decision on the best way to understand Paul's counsel in 1 Timothy is not
29 inconsequential. As followers of the God of Scripture, we are called to apply His word to the

1 way in which we order our lives, and not only our private lives as individuals, but also the life of
2 the church as well. While differences of opinions on some issues have little to no real significant
3 difference on how we actually order the life of the church, the way in which we interpret Paul's
4 prohibition against women is not one of them—at least not if we take his counsel seriously. Thus
5 our decision on this issue will lead us in one of two very different directions.

6 If Paul's counsel in 1 Timothy regarding women is viewed as a temporary and local response
7 to the false teachings confronting the believers in Ephesus, then by application the passage has a
8 universal and timeless application to *similar situations* within the church today where falsehood
9 threatens to undermine the proclamation of the true gospel. In a postmodern world where there is
10 no such thing as absolute or universal truth, and where the gospel of pluralism proclaims that
11 every perspective is equally valid, 1 Timothy behooves us to be more diligent in protecting the
12 church from the influence of falsehood, whether it originates from without or within the church.
13 Rather than evaluating the health of the church on the size of its membership or in the amount of
14 tithes and offerings it generates, the spiritual condition of the church should be measured in
15 terms of its faithfulness to its divinely ordained task of proclaiming the gospel message that is at
16 the heart of the three angel's message in Revelation. While the church certainly needs to allow
17 for diversity of expression in non-essentials, it also needs to be concerned about encouraging a
18 united voice on the cardinal doctrines of our faith as rooted in the good news of Jesus. Rather
19 than choosing spiritual leaders solely on the basis of their gifts and abilities, Paul's letter should
20 remind us that the most important criterion is the character of a person. And in some cases, as
21 was the situation in Ephesus, it also reminds us that protecting the church from falsehood
22 requires that at times "certain individuals" need to be prohibited from exercising a teaching role
23 within the church.

24 The application for the life of the church is very different, however, if we interpret Paul's
25 instructions in 1 Timothy from the perspective that all women are prohibited from teaching or
26 exercising authority over men within the church due to a permanent subordination of women to
27 men that is rooted in creation. Accepting this point of view would not only require us as a
28 denomination to (1) decide decisively against the ordination of women once and for all, but it
29 would require even far greater actions on the part of the church. Action would need to be taken
30 to (2) officially censure and denounce the behavior of those unions and conferences that have

1 proceeded to ordain women over the course of the last few years without General Conference
2 approval. Of course, this would also require (3) invalidating the ordination status of any women
3 ordained during that time. Such a decision would also need to (4) require that commissioned
4 women ministers not function in any role where they would be exercising authority over a man.
5 This would bar women from not only serving as senior pastors, but it would also prevent female
6 associate pastors from assuming duties where male headship would be violated, such as
7 preaching and teaching from the pulpit—at least when adult men were present. (5) It would also
8 require, of course, all female religion teachers at our seminaries and colleges and universities to
9 be restricted to teaching women. And (6) if "women do not qualify for the position of
10 elder/minister"⁹³ then all female pastors, whether ordained or not, would simply have to be
11 dismissed from denominational employment. Finally our denomination would also need to (7)
12 rescind the decision at the General Conference Spring Meeting in 1975 that voted to authorize
13 the ordination of women as local elders, as some already suggested at the TOSC meeting last
14 summer in Baltimore.

15 If we were to seriously and consistently adopt the ideological perspective of those advocating
16 against women's ordination, women would not be the only individuals affected. Men would also
17 be affected. The only men who would qualify to serve in a position of spiritual leadership within
18 the church would be those who are married and have at least two children, since "strictly
19 speaking a male without family would...not qualify for eldership."⁹⁴ And according to a similar
20 reading of the parallel passage in Titus, those children would also need to be believers (Titus
21 1:6). Single members of the clergy would need to find a spouse and either bear or adopt children
22 or find different employment.

23 While some may feel that I've overstated the application, I would simply respond by saying
24 that if God ordained that women should not serve in an authoritative role then we have no other
25 choice. Reading the passage in what I would call an overly literalistic manner does not give us
26 the privilege to pick and choose to what extent we want to accept the inspired instructions in
27 Scripture—at least not if we are consistent and honest with the text. Making distinctions between

⁹³ Damsteegt, 30.

⁹⁴ Sorke, 37; see also, Damsteegt, 30.

1 teaching and preaching, or trying to qualify Paul's statements by allowing a woman to teach and
2 exercise authority as long as she is under the authority of a local male pastor are entirely artificial
3 and hardly convincing. While at the same time our current practice of choosing not to ordain
4 women to the gospel ministry, but allowing them to serve as a "commissioned" ministers with
5 virtually the same authority as an ordained minister also seems rather disingenuous on our part.
6 If women are truly subordinate to men on the basis of creation, how can we then make these
7 sorts of exceptions and still claim to be true to the text?

8 In light of the tremendous benefit this church has received through the prophetic ministry of
9 a female, Ellen G. White, I pray that our own experience would teach us that an individual's
10 spiritual teaching authority is not rooted in a person's gender, but in God's divine calling. If Ellen
11 White's calling as a prophet qualified her as a woman to teach and exercise authority over men,
12 which she certainly did and continues to do today through her writings, in the very least why
13 then should we also not recognize that God's calling upon a woman to engage in pastoral
14 ministry also qualifies her for that task?