

Global Perspectives on Women in Leadership

Description

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Plato said *ideas* rule the world. All action begins as an idea. Paul said, â€œTake every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor 10:5).â€• Why? Because ideas have consequences.

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Here is an important example:

The most prominent indicator of whether a girl will be sold to a brothel, killed as a fetus, abused in her marriage or family, or denied a place of decision making in her country, community or church is determined not by her gender, but by the ideas by which we assess gender; that is the value we ascribe to females. Nonprofit organizations refer to this phenomenon as the â€œGirl Effect.â€•[1] What do they mean? In study after study, the research suggests when a culture values females as equally as males, those culture are more likely to observe equal numbers of girls and boys surviving through adulthood. The single indicator for gender-justice in a community begins with an ideaâ€”what theologians call ontologyâ€”that is the value we ascribed to groups of individuals.

My thesis is, for every devaluation made at the level of oneâ€™s being â€” oneâ€™s ontology, there is an equal and opposite consequence in the form of exclusion, abuse or injustice. Today we will consider how the being of females has been devalued by the worldâ€™s major philosophical and religious traditions, and how these devaluations have led to abuse and injustice. Then, we will consider how the teachings and life of Jesus and Paul opposed their devaluation which the church has been slow to embrace. Turning first to Hellenism, we observe an inferiority ascribed to females which was believed to be innate and unchangeable. According to:

- **Aristotle** (384 BC â€“ 322 BC) â€œIt is the best for all tame animals to be ruled by human beings. For this is how they are kept alive. In the same way, the relationship between the male and the female is by nature such that the male is higher, the female lower, that the male rules and the female is ruled.â€•[2]
- **Plato** (427-347 BC) â€œ[Womanâ€™s]â€• native disposition is inferior to manâ€™s.â€•[3]

Ideas have Consequences. The daily lives of females reflect their cultural value. Patriarchy and the

paterfamilias dominated Roman culture.

- Girl babies were often exposed, representing the pre-eminence of males.
- Men had sexual partners apart from their wives including slaves, prostitutes (or *hetairai)* and boys/men. Often, men found greater companionship through intimacy with other men.
- Women did not participate in philosophy and politics.
- Women did not join male social gatherings.
- The purpose of marriage was not oneness or intimacy between husband and wife, but was a social arrangement that produced legitimate heirs.[4]

Note the contrast with the early Church. Women also participated in the agape meals and they served beside men as teachers, evangelists, missionaries, apostles, prophets, coworkers with Paul, and by doing they engaged with men in social and theological spheres. Women were also martyred beside men for advancing the gospel with equal influence. Christian marriages were monogamous and Paul asks both husbands and wives are to submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21, 1 Cor 7: 3-5). Marriage is viewed as a one-flesh relationship for the purposes of love, intimacy, and reflects the mutual love and sacrifice within the Godhead.

Turning next to the Judaism, a Jewish male was instructed to pray every day: â€œThank you (God) for not making me a Gentile, a woman and a slave.â€•[5] Therefore females rarely studied Torah, and Jewish worship was segregated by gender. Again, note the difference within the early church. It is believed that Paul wrote Galatians 3:28 â€" â€œThere is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesusâ€• to show an interdependence among believers who had been at odds in the larger culture. Under the power of the Holy Spirit, men and women, slaves and free, Greek and Jew work together in Christâ€™s New Covenant Community.[6] Hence, the early Christians lived in a manner that valued females, and this stood in contrast their culture and world.

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Take for example Brahmanism, a philosophical system that devalued females. According to the writings of Manu (a Brahman social commentator) females are more mutable and morally corrupt than males.

- Woman possesses a *temper* or *nature* that is “â€¦mutable [or inconstant].” The nature of women is characterized by heartlessness, through which they become disloyal towards their husbands, however carefully they may be guarded in this world. [7]
- Because women are destitute of strength and also of knowledge [they] are as impure as falsehood itself [and] that is a fixed ruleâ€¦[8] [9]
- Given the inferiority of women, they must always be under the authority of males, their father, husband, sons and grandsons. [10]
- Due to their innate inferiority, women â€œwere forbidden to read the sacred Scriptures, [they have] no right to pronounce a single syllable. [11]

Philosophical assumptions have functional consequences. Therefore:

- The gods are rarely evoked for the birth of girls.
- For years it was possible for a wife to be replaced if she did not give birth to a son after the 11th year of marriage.
- The Indian government has tried to limit access to ultrasounds in selecting for gender.
- The devaluation of females is noted by the numerous instances of girls taken to Hindu temples as

prostitutes, as *Devi Dasi* or the devilâ€™s whores, a problem persists to this day.
- The subordination of women within Brahmanism has also led to a brutal patri-linear culture in which females become part of her husbandâ€™s household, where they are often isolated and easily devalued and abused. Notice how Scripture Gen 2:24 and Eph 5:31 oppose this practice of subjecting females to the authority of her husbandâ€™s family.

Like Brahmanism, Islam insists upon the inferiority of females, at the level of being. The Islamic commentator, Bukhari, explains that:

- â€œThe character of women in likened to a rib, crookedâ€¦ *This crookedness* then is inherent and incurable*,* the man has to live with it and make the most out of it.[12]

- â€œâ€¦ the woman is not equal to the manâ€¦ for how can the commanding and the commanded, the great and the small, the knowledgeable and the ignorant, the sane and the mad, the unjust and the just, the honourable and the insignificant, the able and the unable, the working and the lazy, the strong and the weak be equal?â€•[13]
- The Koran reads: â€œMen gave authority over women because God has made the one superior to the otherâ€¦ Good women are obedientâ€¦ As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them. Then if they obey you, take no further action against them.â€•[14]

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Do these ideas have consequences? In their chapter on â€œIs Islam Mysogynistic,â€• WuDunn and Kristoff in *Half the Sky* [15] make what they admit is a politically incorrect statement. They write, â€œOf the countries where women are held back and subjected to systematic abuses such as honor killings, genital cutting, a very large proportion are predominantly Muslim. â€˜Most Moslems worldwide,â€™ they write, â€˜donâ€™t believe in such practices, and some Christians doâ€”but the fact remains that the countries where girls are cut, killed for honor, or kept out of school or the workplace typically have large Muslim populations.â€™â€•

A devaluation of individuals, based on their being, their ontology, is noted throughout human history. While females have suffered from this mistaken notion more than any other groups, here are a few other examples.

Not long ago, Nazi Germany issued one of the most extensive campaigns to devalue Jews at the level of their being. The Nazis, before they were able to convince their fellow Germans to round up the Jews and send them to death camps, had to first insist upon their inferiority. Triumphantly they note the great success they have had re-educating Germans regarding the inferiority of the Jews. They write:

â€œâ€¦ there are only a few people left in Germany who are not clear about the fact that the Jew is not, as previously thought, distinct from â€˜Christians,â€™ â€˜Protestants,â€™ or â€˜Catholicsâ€™ only in that he is of another religion, and is therefore a German like all of the rest of us, but rather that he belongs to a different race than we do. The Jew belongs to a different race; that is what is decisive. [16]

By suggesting that the Jews comprise a difference race, the Naziâ€™s were able to construct an inferior category of â€œJewsâ€• which they resolved by their genocide. The genocide was made plausible by first positing that Aryan Germans were the superior race and by showing that the Jewshad no share in their blood-line.

American Slavery

In a similar manner, the American institution of slavery was based on a perceived inferiority at the level of oneâ€™s being. The French scholar Compte A. De Gasparin said that slavery was centered on â€œa native and indestructible inferiorityâ€¦â€•[17] This so-called innate inferiority was rooted not in oneâ€™s moral choices, but came through oneâ€™s ancestry and was, therefore, an unchangeable condition. It was skin color that placed Africansâ€”under the permanent domination of those said to be their superiorsâ€”whites. This is one reason why the Civil War failed to redress ethnic prejudice, because the so called inferiority was associated not with slavery but with ethnicity noted by skin color. Slavery was a consequence of ethnic prejudice, not the root cause. You can amend the US Constitution and free slaves and new forms of ethnic abuse will emerge because the root problemâ€”ethnic prejudiceâ€”has not been addressed. WuDunn and Kristoff write extensively about this in their book *Half the Sky*. They insist that Westerners and UN are famous for holding conferences, passing laws no one enforces, and nailing up posters that no one can read. The point is, dealing with the roots of prejudice is a person by person transformation, and it cannot be issued from on highâ€”from the West. It must be made incarnate-as it wereâ€”and lived out in each community.

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Mark Noll also said it would take more than guns and blood to overcome ethnic prejudice of which slavery was only one manifestation. In fact, it would take many *years* before the US was even made conscious of their own philosophical constructs that fueled prejudice and oppression based on skin color. [18]

To make my point, last year in the Baptist News, an article appeared that illustrates my point. It reads:

Ethicsdaily.com has reported a social shift that may represent a larger leap than our recent election of an African-American president. Bob Jones University, perhaps the most fundamentalist and segregated Baptist school in the world,[19] has issued an apology for its practices and policies of racial segregation.

In 1986, a member of the Bible department [at Bob Jones] had articulated the schoolâ€™s position. Separation of the races, this faculty member wrote, was Godâ€™s design. The school was submitting to the authority of Scripture in its policies, it said.

Now the school says something other than â€œbiblical obedienceâ€• shaped its racial practices. The statement reports that policies were â€œcharacterized by the segregationist ethos of American Culture. Consequently, for far too long, we allowed institutional policies regarding race to be shaped more directly by that ethos than by the principles and precepts of the Scriptures. We conformed to the culture rather than provide a clear Christian counterpoint to it. In so doing, we failed to accurately represent the Lord and to fulfill the commandments to love others as ourselves. For these failures we are profoundly sorry.â€•[20]

It was the inability to regard African Americans as equal members of the human family that made it

possible for slavery advocates to ignore the profound ways in which slavery transgressed biblical values such as the sacredness of marriage and families, sexual purity, reading Scripture and using oneâ€™s spiritual gifts in advancing Christâ€™s kingdom. Quoting Noll â€œso seriously fixed in the minds of white Americans, including most abolitionists, was the certainty of black racial inferiority that it overwhelmed biblical testimony about race, even though most Protestant Americans claimed that Scripture was in fact their supreme authority in adjudicating such matters.â€• [21] Prejudice muddied their biblical clarity. Many individuals did not perceive their racial prejudice as an obstacle to in interpreting Scripture carefully. There were several prominent exceptions.

Missionaries working in Africa who were vocal in denying the presumed inferiority of Africans upon which the system of slavery was defended. Noll again, suggests that one missionary wrote that nowhere in his experience had he observed evidence of the so called â€œnative inferiority which many good and learned men suppose to exist.â€• [22] In fact, the deplorable ignorance ascribed to African culture has been created by the slave trade. His point was, if you can control for opportunity, you can also control for ability.

The Economist

Well, this spring *The Economist* published a series of articles that provide additional insight into the devaluation of females and its daily consequences. In understanding why over 100 million girls have gone missing, the lead article suggests that baby girls are victims of what they refer to as â€œancient prejudiceâ€• â€“ a philosophical devaluation which when coupled with modern technology, make it easy to detect the sex of a child and select for gender. There is one country that has managed to change this pattern.

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In the 1990s South Korea had a sex ratio almost as skewed as Chinaâ€™s. Now, it is heading towards normality. It has achievedâ€¦ because the culture changed. Female education, anti-discrimination suits and equal rights rulings made son preference seem old-fashioned and unnecessary. [23]

Interestingly, the largest Christian church in the world is, coincidently, located in Seoul, South Korea, Yoido Full Gospel Church is pastured by David Cho. Cho holds an egalitarian perspective and is outspoken about his belief in womenâ€™s gospel leadership, as noted by Cunningham and Hamiltonâ€™s book, *Why Not Women*. Cho said that his church grew the moment he opened positions of leadership to women.

Similarly, the Noble Prize researcher Amartya Sen noticed a correlation between a cultureâ€™s devaluation of females with steep drops in their numbers. [24] By contrast, in those communities where gender equality is valued, the ratio of women to men resembles gender ratios in the United States. The message is clear. When culture values women and men equally, these very attitudes stem the abuse of females. What is more, when dollars are invested in womenâ€™s health, education, and businesses, we not only raise womenâ€™s standard of living, but also that of their families and communities. Educating women reaps clear social benefitsâ€”these women elevate the health, economic, and educational standards within their social networks.

Those communities that do not view females as valuable as men are cultures where females live under the continual tyranny of marginalization, abuse, domination and gendercide. By contrast, those cultures that value the intrinsic worth and therefore capacity of females reap the â€œGirl Effect.â€• According to the Self Employed Womenâ€™s Association of India, once they began supporting the business

ventures of the poorest women in their culture, their investments paid rich dividends.[25] India, is not alone. In one country after another, females seem to hold the key, as Scripture has always taught, and as NGOâ€™s are now learning. Economists are concluding that one of the most vital indicators that predict a countryâ€™s capacity to grow and develop is the status of females living there.

A similar observation was made during the modern missionary movement. As women entered the missionary force, outnumbering men two to one, their leadership led to one of the greatest shifts in Christianity density in 1500 years, moving the heartland of Christianity from the west to broadly scattered locations throughout Asia, Africa and the Americasâ€”as Dana Robert notes.[26] What is more, women missionaries were keenly interested in the heath and well being of other women and children. Their gospel efforts were thoroughly combined with social action. Releasing women to on the mission fields had the same positive social impact as when NGOâ€™s invested in women by funding their education or businesses.

Perhaps you are like me when you read this research on the Girl Effect, you cannot help but remember Godâ€™s purpose in creating woman as a strong helper.

Genesis 2:18

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In the early chapters of Genesis, the only cloud hanging over Edenâ€™s sinless world was man without woman. In Genesis 2:18 we read that â€œIt is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a strong helper as his partnerâ€• (Gen. 2:18, NRSV). What is the good or strong help women offer? According to R. David Freedman, the Hebrew word used to describe womanâ€™s help (*ezer*) arises from two Hebrew roots that mean â€œto rescue, to save,â€• and â€œto be strong.â€[27] *Ezer* is found twenty-one times in the Old Testament. Of these references, fourteen are used for God, and four refer to military rescue.

Perhaps the most common is Psalm 121:1-2 where *ezer* is used for Godâ€™s rescue of Israel: â€œI lift up my eyes to the mountainsâ€”where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.â€• What stronger help is there apart from Godâ€™s rescue?

According to Genesis, Eveâ€™s creational destiny was to lend a vital form of power. If you accept this, it explains two perplexing issues. First, it shows how women, as a whole, never perform according to the cultural devaluation made of them. Though nearly every religious and philosophical tradition has asserted their inferiority, women prove otherwise. Throughout history and within Scripture, we observe womenâ€™s significant leadership, a fact not enthusiastically incorporated into curricula used in churches, colleges, or seminaries. Second, if *ezer* is womanâ€™s â€œcreational destiny,â€• this also explains why women are so devastated and demoralized when churches and organizations fail to recognize their God-intended purposes. Treating females as inferior and subordinate not only violates an essential component of their humanity but also their destiny as *ezer*. The idea that women are not quite human can be traced through the great Christian theologians beginning with those Church father who were trained in Greek Philosophy. Here are a few examples:

- **Irenaeus** (130â€“202 A.D.) â€œBoth *nature* and the law place the woman in a subordinate condition to the manâ€• (Emphasis, mine.)
- **Augustine** (354â€“430) â€œNor can it be doubted, that it is more consonant with the order of *nature* that men should bear rule over women, than women over men.â€•
- **Chrysostom** (347â€“407) â€œThe woman taught once, and ruined all. On this account â€¦let

her not teachâ€¦ for the *sex is weak and fickle*â€¦â€• (Emphasis, mine.)
- **John Calvin,** in his commentary on Timothy (1509-1564) said women are â€œ*not to assume authority over the man;* for the very reason, why they are forbidden to teach, is, that it is not permitted by their *condition*. (Emphasis, mine.)
- **John Knox** said, that â€œ*Nature*, I say, does paint [women] forth to be weak, frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish; and experience has declared them to be inconstant, variable, cruelâ€¦ Since flesh is subordinate to spirit, a woman's place is beneath man's.â€• (Emphasis, mine.)

Consider the work of Mark Driscollâ€"pastor of the Mega church in Seattle. Sounding like John Knox, Driscoll writes:

â€¦when it comes to leading in the church, women are unfit because they are more gullible and easier to deceive than men. â€¦ women who fail to trust [Paulâ€™s] instruction â€¦ are much like their mother Eve. . . Before you get all emotional like a woman in hearing this, please consider the content of the womenâ€™s magazines at your local grocery store that encourages liberated women in our day to watch porno with their boyfriends, master oral sex for men who have no intention of marrying themâ€¦â€“ and ask yourself if it doesnâ€™t look like the Serpent is still trolling the garden and that the daughters of Eve arenâ€™t gullible in pronouncing progress, liberation, and equality. [28]

These prominent Christians failed to recognize the opposition to gender prejudice in the teachings and ministry of Jesus and the apostle Paul. They failed to observe, as Dorothy Sayers pointed out,[29] there is one teacher among them all who did not devalue women. Jesus was the great exception in treating women as fully human. The teachings of Christ are lacking in all cultural â€œwisdom regarding women.â€• Unlike all the great teachers in history, Jesus assumed women were fully human and equal to men.

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And, what is even more striking, Jesus was also completely comfortable with women. He approached them as he did men, in public, regardless of cultural taboos. He offered them Godâ€™s unconditional love, healing and forgiveness. And, he commissioned them to build Godâ€™s kingdom (John 20:17-18), just as he commissioned men.

Christ did not overlook gender, but he opposed gender bias that limited womenâ€™s dignity and service. Jesus consistently challenged the cultural devaluation of womenâ€™s bodies, such as when he healed a hemorrhaging woman in public (Luke 8:40-49). Of course the assumption was if he touched her, he too would be unclean, a belief he overturns allowing her to touch him in public, declaring that she had been healed of her disease. She was not unclean but ill.

Jesus spoke with women unselfconsciously, in broad daylight, despite the disapproval of his disciples (John 4:4-42). Unlike the rabbis of his day, Jesus allowed women to sit at his feet and study his teachings (Luke 10:38-42)â€"preparing them for service as disciples, evangelists, and teachers. In all ways, the equality of women was self-evident, implicit, and most importantly, consistently part of Christâ€™s teachings and practice.

When a woman called out to Jesus, saying â€œBlessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.â€• Jesus responded, â€œBlessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey itâ€• (Luke 11:27-28). For Jesus, a womanâ€™s value resides not in her cultural roles, but in her intimacy with God.

Like the life and teachings of Jesus, Paulâ€™s life also proved shattering to the sexism of his culture.

Jesus ate with sinners and prostitutes. He engaged women theologically, expecting them to respond not as a distinct class, but as people, as disciples, and as heirs of Godâ€™s kingdom. Jesus broke social and religious taboos related to gender, and Paul did the same. As with Jesus, women were among Paulâ€™s closest coworkers, those who labored beside him in the gospel (Rom. 16:1-7, 12-13, 15).

Gender inclusivity is also seen at Pentecostâ€”the birthday of the church (Acts 2:1-18). Access to God is no longer mediated through an elite group of Jewish males, but through Godâ€™s Spirit poured out on many tribes and nations, on both men and women. This is the fulfillment of Joelâ€™s prophesy: â€œIn the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesyâ€• (Acts 2:17-18). There is no gender, ethnic or age preference noted in the birth of the Church and the gifts expressed at Pentecost.

While the tradition of the Pharisees silenced and excluded women from priestly roles even restricting them from reading Torah, yet Paul though once a Pharisee realized that, like women, slaves, and gentiles, he too was grafted into Christ and made part of the new covenant (1 Cor 15:8). He, like all believers, received power and gifts for service dependent not upon human privilege of gender, but upon Godâ€™s Spirit and for Godâ€™s pleasure. This is good news for women.

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Thus, Paul boldly suggests in Galatians 3:28 that Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, male and female are all one in Christ. He offered these words to a world in which nearly half of the population were slaves, and/or women. In a profound way, Gal 3:28 is one of the most radical social statements ever made, because oneâ€™s identity, dignity and sphere of influence was, in the first century, determined by oneâ€™s ethnicity, gender and class. Paul tells the church in Galatia that to be clothed in Christ is to be heirs of Christâ€™s kingdom, suggesting that what we inherit through our earthly parents (class, ethnicity or gender) cannot compare to our heritage through Christ.

Through Gal 3:27-29 and elsewhere Paul continually places the ethos of the new covenant above the gender and cultural norms of his day. Thus Paul tells Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother (Philem.1:16) who later became bishop of Ephesus. With these words to Philemon, Paul allows kingdom values to take precedence over cultural expectations for slaves, pointing to the fact that the world as we know it is passing away (1 Cor. 2:6, 1 Cor. 7:31).

In the same way Paul asks husbands and wives to share authority in marriage (1 Cor. 7:3-4). In fact, all Christians are to submit to one another (Eph. 5:21). In the same breath Paul also places additional responsibility on husbands, asking them to love their wives as they love their own bodies â€” a new request for first-century men! Taking it one step further, Paul requires husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church, denying even their own lives if needed. How radical this must have seemed to first-century husbands. Remember, men in general and husbands in particular held ultimate authority over women and wives. As such, husbands could require the sacrifice (even the very lives) of their slaves and also their wives. Paul now asks husbands to give *their* own lives as sacrifice for their wives — a complete reframing of gender and authority. A new Christian culture was forming. Paul even writes that the free are now slaves and the slaves are now free (1 Cor. 7:21-22). This world in its current form is passing away.

Paul places the burden of sacrificial love squarely on the shoulders of those who held the most cultural

authorityâ€”men. Husbands are those whom Paul primarily addresses in Ephesians 5, asking them to live out kingdom values, reminding them not to be deceived by their temporal authority, for this world in its present shape is passing away (1 Cor. 2:6, 1 Cor. 7:31).

Paul was certain that God was building a new covenant people, with Jesus as head, and you and me as joint members of Christâ€™s body. That is why Paul did not hesitate to celebrate the woman Junia as an apostle. Nor was he reluctant to require respect for Phoebe as a deacon and leader in the church of Cenchrea. Nor does Paul shy from celebrating the leadership of women teachers like Priscilla and house church leaders like Lydia, Chloe, Nympha, Apphia, the elect lady. The new wine of Jesus would require a new wine skin where slaves and women leaders could participate equally in accomplishing the purposes for which God had gifted them.

In examining the more than 100 New Testament references to the term â€œauthority,â€• New Testament scholar Linda Belleville [30] suggests that it is not an individual or an office to which God commonly extends authority, but to the church as a whole. When two or more are gathered in Christâ€™s name, Jesus is with them, imparting his authority to their corporate lives and service. Paul told the believers at Corinth that theyâ€”as the Churchâ€”hold authority to judge the world as well as the angels (1 Cor. 6:2). Jesus said that what the church binds on earth is bound in heaven, and what the church looses on earth, is likewise loosened in heaven (Matt. 18:18).

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Authority is also given to individuals, not to rule over or to dominate, but to serve. Jesus said that those who wish to be first must become a slave, â€œjust as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serveâ€• (Matt. 20:27-28). Perhaps this is why Paul, though an apostle, most often referred to himself as a slave or servant (Rom. 1:1, 1 Cor. 9:9, Titus 1:1, etc). Recognizing that leadership in the kingdom of God was radically different from that exercised by nonbelievers, Paul viewed ministry as service. While the Gentiles lord their authority over others, those who are called followers of Jesus must be prepared to freely lay down their lives for others. Servant-leadership is the responsibility of *both* men and women.

The Scriptures also speak of the spiritual gifts (in Romans, Corinthians and Ephesians) as a responsibility to serve. Never does Scripture indicate the spiritual gifts are given along ethnic or gender lines because the spiritual gifts are first and foremost an opportunity to serve. In speaking of the spiritual gifts, Paul reminded Christians in Rome not to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, but with sober judgment to count others as better than themselves, remembering that though each person may have a spiritual gift, the gifts are for serving others. For as Paul said, â€œeach member belongs to all the othersâ€• (Rom. 12:5b). Paul reminds the Christians at Corinth that they are mutually dependent upon one another. For, â€œThe eye cannot say to the hand, â€˜I donâ€™t need you!â€™ And the head cannot say to the feet, â€˜I donâ€™t need you!â€™â€• (1 Cor. 12:21). The eye needs the hands, just as the head needs the feet. The parts of the body are not divided from one another, but function best when they have equal concern for one another.

Finally, service in inseparable from oneâ€™s character and moral choices. Here Scripture deals a death blow to any notion of privilege ascribed to oneâ€™s gender or ethnicity or class. Here are two examples:

Notice that in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 Paul limits women at Ephesus from teaching, not because of their gender, but because of the type of authority they exercised. While this passage is frequently used to limit womenâ€™s authority as a whole, notice that the intention of Scripture is quite different. What is

often missed by those unfamiliar with the Greek is that Paul selects an unusual Greek word when speaking of authority, in verse 12. Rather than using the most common Greek terms for healthy or proper authority or oversight, like *exuosia* or *proistemo*, Paul selects the termâ€"*authenteinâ€"*a word that would have caught the attention of first century readers! Why? What does this word mean?

The word Paul chooses was used in his day to imply a domineering, misappropriated, or usurped authority. *Authentein* can also mean to behave in violent ways. It can even imply murder! *Authentein* appears only once in Scripture, here in 1 Timothy 2:12, and it was used by Paul and other authors to connote authority that was destructive. For this reason, various translations of Scripture rendered the special sense of this word as follows:

- Vulgate (4th â€“ 5th century AD) as, â€œI permit not a woman to teach, neither to **domineer** over a manâ€•
- The Geneva Bible (1560 edition) as, â€œI permit not a woman to teach, neither to **usurp authority** over the man.â€•
- King James Version (1611) as, â€œI suffer not a woman to teach, nor **usurp authority** over a man.â€•
- The New English Bible (1961) â€œI do not permit a woman to be a teacher, nor must woman **domineer over** man.â€•[31]

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This unusual Greek verb makes it clear that what Paul is objecting to in 1 Timothy 2:11-12, is an ungodly, domineering use of authority.

Finally, because leadership concerns character, in determining who may or may not serve as an elder, overseer, deacon, pastor, or church board member, it is not gender, ethnicity, education, wealth, age, experience or a personâ€™s capacity to influence others that Scripture celebrates but oneâ€™s moral choices. The table here shows the character qualities required in elders, overseers, deacons, and widowsâ€"who also served as leaders.

Clearly, what marks leadership is not gender, but oneâ€™s capacity to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. By contrast, those who display the fruit of the flesh (e.g. fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousingâ€¦ Gal. 5:19-21) have disqualified themselves from leadership.

Elders/Overseers: (1 Tim. 3:2-3)	Temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of moneyâ€¦
Deacons: (1 Tim. 3:8)	Serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for moneyâ€¦
Widows: (1 Tim. 3:11)	Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all thingsâ€¦
Fruit of the Spirit: (Gal. 5:22-26)	Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-controlâ€¦

To follow the teachings of Scripture, the selection of leaders, deacons, pastors, elders and teachers should be from individuals who best exhibit the fruits of the Spirit, regardless of gender.

Conclusion:

What can we say by conclusion? How ironic that while Scripture informs us that womenâ€™s creational destiny is that of *ezer*â€”a strong help, and while NGOs, economists and journalists likewise recognize this capacity as the Girl Effectâ€”the ability of females to be of powerful help to their communities, even so, Churches continue to devalue females at the level of being by suggesting that they are, like Eve, gullible.Yet, ideas have consequences.

The presumed inferiority of women has translated into the painful and crippling reality that one in four women have been sexually and/or physically abused by a man, usually someone she trusted. At the very minimum, 25% of the worldâ€™s women carry the crippling shame of abuse, because of the ideas ascribed to gender. The cultural devaluation of women, with its subsequent injustice, is one we can redress, with Godâ€™s power. But it means taking captive every thought to Christ, and making good use of every opportunity living out the gospel, as men and women. The Girl Effect was part of the Genesis account, lived out throughout Scripture and noted in the work of the early egalitarians. When will it become the clear teaching and practice of churches today?

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[1] Kristoff and WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. (New York, New York: Knopf Publishing group, 2009), p. xiv-xx.

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[2] Aristotle, *Politica*, ed. Loeb Classical Library, 1254 b 10-14.

[3] Plato, *Laws* 6.781a, b trans. A.E. Taylor, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters*, Bollingen Series LXXI, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, (Princeton University, 1963), 1356.

[4] See Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves. Women in Classical Antiquity*

[5] Menahoth 43b-44a**,** Talmud, Shabbath 86a-86b.

[6] See Gordon Feeâ€™s *Commentary on Galatians*, and *Paulâ€™s Letter to the Galatians* by Ben Witherington

[7] Pandita Ramabai *The High Caste Hindu Woman,* (1991) p. 79.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Manu IX: 15-17, see writings of Manu at http://www.hinduwebsite.com/sacredscripts/hinduism/dharma/manusmriti.asp Accessed June, 2010.

[10] Manu IX: 2, 3

[11] Pandita Ramabai, *The High Caste Hindu Woman* (New York, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1901), p. 81. See also Manu IX: 18.

[12] *Sahih Bukhari,* Arabic-English Translation, Vol VII Hadith No. 113-114.

[13] Tuffaha, Ahmad Zaky, *Al-Marâ€™ ah wal-Islam*, first edition, Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, Beirut, 1985, p. 37.

[14] *The Koran,* (London, England: Penguin Classics Translated with notes by N.J. Dawood, 1990), 64.

[15] Kristoff and WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. (New York, New York: Knopf Publishing group, 2009)

[16] http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/rim3.htm

[17] Comte Agenor de Gasparin, *The Uprising of a Great People*, translated by Mary Booth, (New York, Scribners, 1862),103-4.

[18] See Mark A. Noll. *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006

[19] Bob Jones University did not permit inter-racial dating.

[20] http://www.ethicsdaily.com/news.php?viewStory=13489 Accessed June 1, 2010.

[21] Mark A. Noll. *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006, p. 73.

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[22] Ibid., p. 118.

[23] *The Economist*, March, 2010, p. 13. [24] Kristoff and WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. (New York, New York: Knopf Publishing group, 2009), p. xv. [25] Kristoff and WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. (New York, New York: Knopf Publishing group, 2009), p. xiv-xx.

[26] Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice*, (Macon: GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), ix.

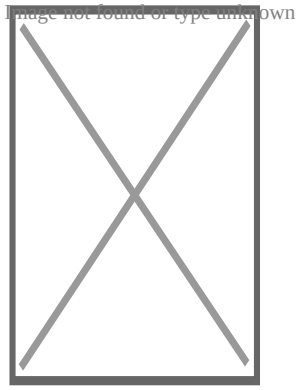
[27] R. David Freedman (*Archaeology Review* (9 [1983]: 56-58).

[28] http://www.dennyburk.com/mark-driscoll-on-women-in-ministry-2/*Accessed March 24, 2010*

[29] See Dorothy Sayers, *Are Women Human*?

[30] Linda Belleville, *Women Leaders in the Church: Three Crucial Questions*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000)

[31] Linda Belleville, *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*. Edited by Groothuis, Pierce and Fee. (Downer Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2005)



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