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Position Paper for Redeemer Fellowship Church

## **Women in the Church**

Feminism means the advocacy for women's rights. This has led to women receiving the power to vote in elections, earn a college education alongside men, serve their country in the military or public office, and many other improvements in gender inequality. No one should be overlooked for an opportunity due to their gender. Feminism has provided positive advancements from the previous cultural background that habitually minimized the dignity of women. However, some of the progress has ventured into error. Proper gender roles in the home and the church have almost disappeared.

This has caused many in the evangelical church to view feminism as a dirty word. In response, positions have been reasoned and applied that minimize or even ignore the contributions of women in ministry. This is equally devastating, since it abandons God's design, who created both male and female in His image. Therefore, women should be honored and utilized alongside men in the ministry of the church.

The late, great Catholic humanitarian and writer, Dorothy Day, believed in the philosophy of personalism, which is an affirmation of the dignity of each person, created in the image of God. Churches must look to affirm the God given value of all people and utilize their strengths for the sake of the community. God says in Genesis 1:26-27, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Man is defined as human beings in this passage. Males and females, both genders, are created in the likeness of God. Women alongside men are blessed with the imprint of God's image.

This image is a reflection of the shared attributes that humanity has with God. This is not limited to just the ability to love or be interpersonal. This also includes intelligence, wisdom, and creativity. Males are not by nature smarter than females. We both have the capacity for cognitive reasoning, formulating ideas, and applying knowledge into action steps.

Males and females are also given the same covenant purpose by God in Genesis 1 as well. They are to work together to govern over God's creation as his representatives on earth. This is the root purpose for given us his likeness. As image bearers of God, we represent Him as local governors over his world. While we have dominion, we also share the commission "to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28).

Therefore, women have value that is equal to men. They should not be viewed as inferior in anyway. Women must be regularly advised, heard, and utilized within the business of a church.

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We can observe a few examples in the Bible, where women were utilized by God in spiritual leadership. Judges 4 tells the story of the prophetess, Deborah, who was judging Israel at the time of Jabin king of Canaan. Judges 4:5 says, "the people of Israel came up to her for judgment." She led the people, and motivated Barak to action, "Deborah said to Barak, 'Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has given Sisera into your hand. Does not the Lord go out before You?'" The people were redeemed from Canaan by the leadership and guidance of Deborah.

Jesus also valued and utilized women in his own ministry. We see in Luke 10:38 that women were members of his band of followers. Mary Magdalene was the first to see the resurrected Christ and be given the responsibility to tell others that he had risen from the dead. Jesus also used women as illustrations of faithfulness in his teachings like the parable of the widow (Luke 18:1-5), the generosity of the poor widow (Luke 21:1-4), and the parable of the lost coin (Luke 15:8-10). He valued them by teaching to them (Luke 10:38-40), and viewing them on the same spiritual plan as men by calling them "daughters of Abraham" (Luke 13:16).

In Paul's missionary journeys, we see the contribution of women to the growth of the early church. The first convert in Philippi was a woman named Lydia, who supported the apostle and Silas during their work in the city. It is assumed that she was a prominent member of the church in Philippi, who were strong partners in Paul's gospel work (Philippians 1:5, 4:15). Her home may have been a central meeting place for the church in Philippi due to her wealth and status in the community. Other women are mentioned in the New Testament as major contributors to the early church (1 Corinthians 1:11, 16:19, Acts 17:34).

While the Bible does exalt women as equal to men, our current culture has expanded the role of women beyond the biblical mandate. They have a particular issue with Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 2:9-13,

"Likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness-with good works. Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressors."

This passage must not be interpreted in isolation from the rest of Scripture. Paul said in his letter to the Ephesians, "Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

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Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord ... Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands " (Ephesians 4:21-22, 24). Paul associates the organization to the church with the structure of the home. Women are not considered by the apostle as inferior intellectually in comparison to men. Rather, his position on their role in the church is corresponded with their role in the home. Therefore, he calls for women to submit to male leadership in the church as in the home. At the same time, he commands men in the home and the church to love them like Christ loved and gave his life up for the church.

The culture relates equality to opportunities. A discrimination from a role or office is casted as a judgment on ability. Rather God has ordained women to respectfully assist men in their governance, and men are commanded by God to humbly lead with the help of women (Genesis 2:20). As we observe in the beginning with Adam and Eve, they were joined together and became one flesh. Equal and diverse forces uniting together to govern God's creation as his image bearers.

Now we must apply Paul's statement in 1 Timothy into our context. I agree with ninety seven percent of responders to the Association of Religious Data Archives survey. They questioned the general public on their agreement of the statement, "Do you agree or disagree that women should remain silent in the church?" The position that women should not participate with their speech in the church does not appropriately reflect the application of Paul's statement in today's culture. The congregation should look to exalt the contributions of women's strengths, passions, and ideas without compromising the male headship of the church.

While women are created equal to men, they were purposely designed to uniquely complement men in their work together to expand the glory of God as the waters cover the seas. Proverbs 31 is a great illustration of a contributing women to the life of the family. Yet we can apply principles present in the chapter to the activities of the church. King Solomon writes, "She dresses herself with strength ... Strength and dignity are her clothing." He also esteems her intellectual attributes and deep wisdom. He writes, "She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue." She does not stand idly silent. Rather, she contributes with intuition. "She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard." Her husband praises her work. She is actively participating under the headship of her husband to strengthen her family by utilizing the attributes given to her by God.

Therefore, a woman in the church under the submission of the church leadership that is outlined in 1 Timothy 3 can utilize their individual spiritual gifts for sake of building up the body (1 Corinthians 12:7). If the women's spiritually assigned gift is teaching. It is the

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responsibility of the qualified leadership to equip, encourage, and commission women teachers to teach under their authority. Some women have been given the strength of prayer. It seems appropriate and wise to have these women regularly pray over the congregation corporately and privately.

There are two constants. First, all activities within the church by women is under the leadership of the God given government of His people, which is qualified elders or pastors. Second, the church must look to regularly honor and utilize the strengths of individual women. They must be taught, encouraged, and assigned responsibilities for the purpose of building up the saints in godliness. God has and will continue to use women alongside men to expand his kingdom. This has been his design from the beginning of creation.

Both have been justified by the death of Christ, and given the same Spirit, which raised Jesus from the dead, to conform them into the likeness of Christ Jesus. Men and women have both been given the commission to make disciples of all nations, and they also are to love one another through humble service and prayer for each other to grow in the knowledge of God's will. They are called also to use their strengths and passions for the good of each other.

We should admire and celebrate God's creation of women. Their charm, beauty, and wisdom bring glory to our Father. The church must continue to testify to the world how women should be honored and valued as they utilize them in the ways ordained by God.