



ONE IN CHRIST //

MEN AND WOMEN TOGETHER IN MINISTRY

“In response to the message of the Kingdom, the leadership of the Vineyard movement will encourage, train, and empower women at all levels of leadership, both local and trans-local. The movement as a whole welcomes the participation of women in leadership in all areas of ministry.”

**– Bert Waggoner and the Vineyard USA Board of Directors
2006**

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WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP //

SERVING THE BODY OF CHRIST

Women are serving in growing numbers as leaders in Vineyard churches. In some cases, women serve as the sole senior pastor of a church. In others, husbands and wives are teaming together to share the role of senior pastor. Women also serve as staff pastors, ministry leaders, volunteers, elders, small group leaders, and church board members. Women serve trans-locally as area and regional leaders who care for groups of pastors within our movement and as members of the executive team that makes up our National Board. There are no areas of ministry or levels of leadership closed to women in the Vineyard.

In this booklet, we explore the Vineyard's commitment to gift-based leadership, how we've arrived at this commitment, and what it means for Vineyard men and women as we serve together in the church.

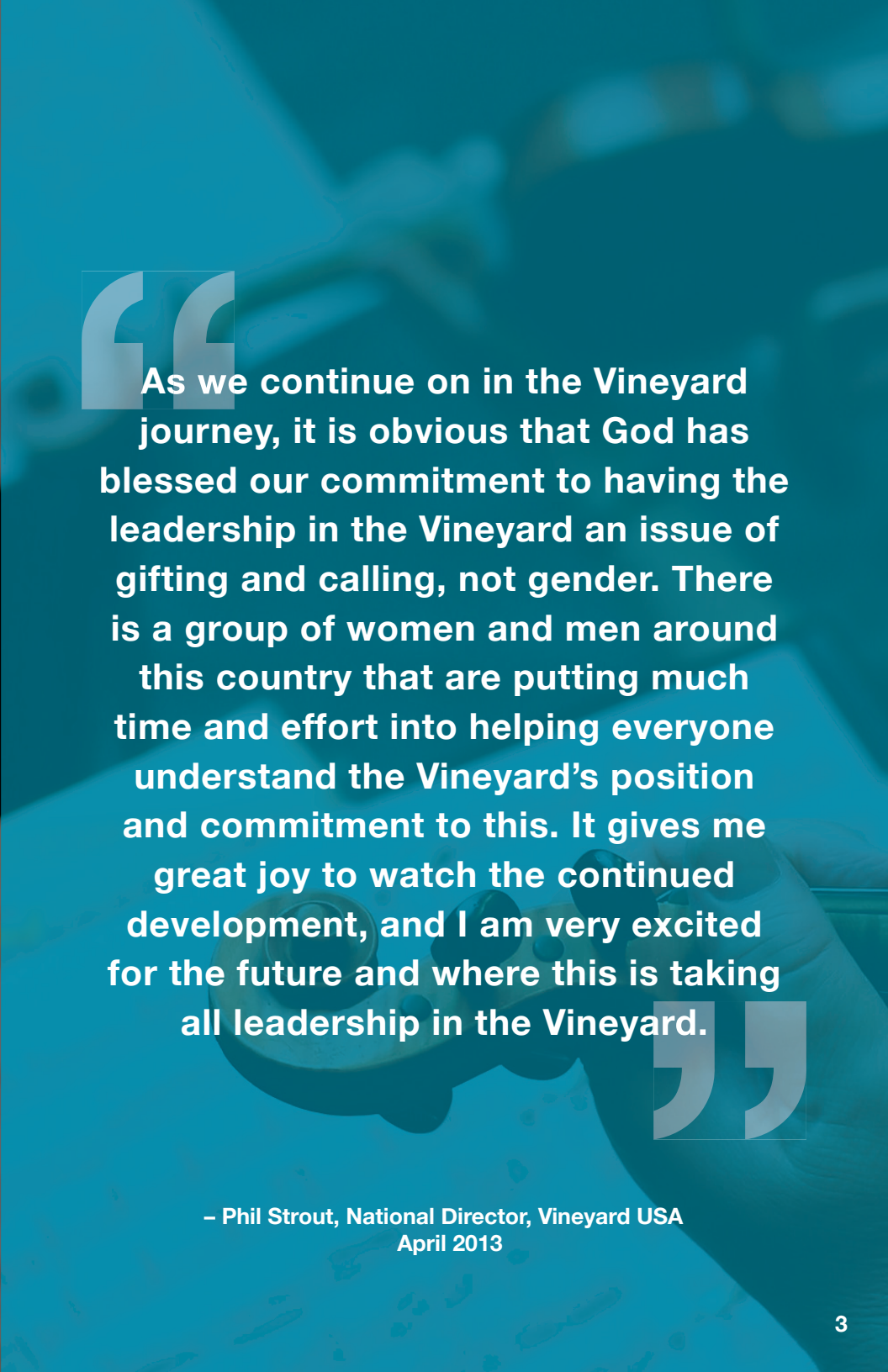
OUR PRACTICE //

GIFT-BASED SERVANT LEADERSHIP

We believe that God calls and gifts leaders within the church as He chooses and that this is not limited by gender, age, ethnicity, economic status, or any other human distinction (1 Cor. 12:11; Gal. 3:28). The role of the church community is to discern God's gifting and calling for leadership and also to discern the maturity and character required for leadership (1 Tim. 3:1-13). In the Jesus-following community, leadership centers around serving the body of Christ in humility and self-sacrificial love (Matt. 20:25-28).

In the Vineyard, every area of leadership is open to both men and women who have the desire for humble service to the community of believers and whose God-given gifting and calling for leadership has been recognized and affirmed by the church community.

The Vineyard is actively working to break down barriers that prevent women from fully using their gifts and living out God's call on their lives, and to build a community of churches in which the whole body of Christ is actively serving to the fullness of their ability.



As we continue on in the Vineyard journey, it is obvious that God has blessed our commitment to having the leadership in the Vineyard an issue of gifting and calling, not gender. There is a group of women and men around this country that are putting much time and effort into helping everyone understand the Vineyard's position and commitment to this. It gives me great joy to watch the continued development, and I am very excited for the future and where this is taking all leadership in the Vineyard.

**– Phil Strout, National Director, Vineyard USA
April 2013**



OUR HISTORY //

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP IN THE VINEYARD

“Everyone gets to play!”

Of all the early quotes by John Wimber, this one particularly stirred women. The Vineyard was birthed out of the post-hippie Jesus movement of the 1960s. The new generation was turning away from authority and hierarchy, which showed up in church as a “we’re all in this together” leveling of traditional pastor/parishioner roles. Within the Vineyard, this effect was magnified by an extravagant outpouring of the charismatic ministry of the Holy Spirit – prophecy, healing, divine events, miracles, and so much more. Recalls an early Vineyard leader, Penny Fulton, “The Holy Spirit was present everywhere all the time – we couldn’t keep up! The Spirit seemed to have little concern for the gender of the ‘minister,’ and we were all being fruitful, so neither did we.”

John Wimber was a natural evangelist to this culture. He came to faith straight from the ‘60s rock-and-roll scene, and as he rose to leadership of the burgeoning Vineyard movement, he and Carol were champions of women. Dianne Leman, co-senior pastor of The Vineyard Church in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, and member of the national Executive Team, remembers, “John Wimber always treated women with incredible dignity and respect, and I am eternally

grateful! In 1985, when Carol shared that all of us, both men and women, were called to the ministry of Jesus, my life as a disciple changed forever.”

Wimber later came to be influenced by more traditional church teachings about women as leaders. In 1994, in his leadership letter called *Vineyard Reflections*, Wimber wrote an article titled “Liberating Women for Ministry and Leadership” that captures his tensions. The intent of the article was to bring women out from under what he felt were excessive restrictions on their ability to minister and lead, and in a central passage, he wrote, “I encourage our women to participate in any ministry, except church governance. A woman can preach, teach, evangelize, heal, prophesy, counsel, nurture, administrate, and build up the flock of God.”

So women who aspired to church leadership were welcomed as prayer leaders, group leaders, worship leaders – in short, as ministers. For many, this was a dramatic advance compared to what they had known elsewhere in the Church. At one point, Wimber approved a woman as a senior pastor of a church in England after her husband and ministry partner had passed away, and there were a handful of other ordained women pastors in the movement during that time. At the same time, Wimber expressed reservations about the ordination of women, saying in the above-mentioned letter, “I believe God has established a gender-based eldership of the church... Consequently I personally do not favor ordaining women as elders in the local church.”

When Wimber passed away in 1997, the question of women’s roles within the Vineyard, and specifically the ordination of women, remained unresolved. Todd Hunter, Vineyard National Director from 1998-2000, raised ordination of women as an issue for Vineyard leadership to address. Bert Waggoner became National Director in 2001 and carried the topic forward. Multiple Vineyard churches were asking him for permission to ordain specific women, and so Waggoner asked board member Rich Nathan to formulate a recommendation. Rich consulted many pastors as well as an advisory committee and proposed at a board meeting in Boise, Idaho in April, 2001 that ordination of women be left to the conscience and conviction of the individual church. Three months later this recommendation was approved.

Functionally, this meant women could be ordained in Vineyard churches, which was exciting! However, the lack of official movement-wide endorsement left substantial ambiguity with regard to how ordained women would be received in the larger Vineyard. The decision also left unanswered questions such as whether the Vineyard could empower women as leaders through extra-local conferences, publications, and other training opportunities, and whether these same women could attain to area, regional, and national leadership positions.

In 2005, Waggoner and the National Board launched another series of extensive regional and area discussions on the issue of women’s leadership in the

Vineyard. These were undergirded by an extensive study of relevant biblical and theological materials. In 2006, after this was completed, the Board came together and unanimously approved a statement:

In response to the message of the Kingdom, the leadership of the Vineyard movement will encourage, train, and empower women at all levels of leadership both local and trans-local. The movement as a whole welcomes the participation of women in leadership in all areas of ministry.

Thus women were affirmed as being called, blessed, and capable. And advancement in leadership was affirmed as being based on gifts, character, and fruit. To protect the historical Vineyard value of local church autonomy, the statement included a clarification that, though this would be the approach on a national level, local church pastors were still free to handle these issues according to their own convictions. It stated:

We also recognize and understand that some Vineyard pastors have a different understanding of the Scriptures. Each local church retains the right to make its own decisions regarding the ordination and appointing of senior pastors.

Progress for women as leaders in the Vineyard continues to move forward. A National Women's Task Force was commissioned in 2008 to actively advance the cause of women as leaders in the movement. The task force, co-led for five years by Dianne Leman and Cindy Nicholson, provided training, inspiration, and networking for hundreds of women who aspired to leadership. The work of this task force continues on in the 2013 commissioning of the Women in Leadership Network also led by Dianne Leman.

As of June 2013, we have three women serving on the Executive Committee, two as Regional Leaders, and 64 as Senior Pastors. Carol Wimber expressed confidence that John would be pleased with where God has been taking us in a letter she wrote to Charisma magazine, saying, "Our daughter-in-law and son, Christy and Sean Wimber, have planted a Vineyard. Christy is the senior pastor... Although John did not live to see this, I know he is a part of it."

We live in a time of unprecedented freedom and support for women as leaders in our movement. Phil Strout, our National Director, writes, "As we continue on in the Vineyard journey, it is obvious that God has blessed our commitment to having leadership in the Vineyard be an issue of gifting and calling, not gender... It gives me great joy to watch the continued development, and I am very excited for where this is taking all leadership in the Vineyard."



“Women who aspired to church leadership were welcomed as prayer leaders, group leaders, worship leaders – in short, as ministers.”



OUR THEOLOGY //

WOMEN, MEN, AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Created Good: Partnership with God and Each Other

In the beginning, God created human beings, both men and women, in His¹ own image. He gave to them the shared privilege and responsibility of ruling over the earth as representations of Himself (Gen. 1:26-27). A crucial piece of God's original design for human beings was partnership between women and men. This is driven home by the creation story where we read that God said it was not good for man to be alone and that He therefore created woman as an equal counterpart² allied³ with Him (Gen. 2:18). The relationship between men and women painted in the creation story is one in which the two sexes help, defend, and care for each other, serving side-by-side as equal partners in the glorious responsibility of being God's representatives on the earth. This, along with everything else God made, was very good (Gen. 1:31).

The Curse of Sin: Partnership Broken

Partnership between women and men became damaged when human beings rejected God's rule over their lives and chose evil over good. In Genesis 3, the Bible tells us how human beings chose to disobey God, breaking their

relationship with Him, and how God spoke over them the curse they had brought on themselves and on the earth in their rebellion. From this point on, people would experience struggle, hardship, conflict, pain, and ultimately death.

Under the curse, even God's good plan for relationship between men and women became distorted as the strong began to oppress the weak, and women found themselves among the oppressed (Gen. 3:16-18).⁴ The tragic effects of human sin have continued through our history as we have found ourselves prisoners to our own sin and to the personal and intentional spiritual evil called Satan.

Men and Women Under Old Testament Law

In the Old Testament, we see, just as God predicted, a world marred by sin and conflict. Among other things, we see a world dominated by men in which women are viewed as property and are utterly dependent on the mercy of men. The Scriptures recount many stories of darkness and brutality. These are often told without excuse or comment as the events are left to speak for themselves about the tragic reality of the human condition.

Nevertheless, even from the beginning, God had a plan to rescue human beings and to bring healing to His creation. He chose a special people through whom this rescue plan would be accomplished. Through their prophets, God gave instructions for how these people were to live together. He also gave revelation regarding the redemption to come.

Many of the instructions given to God's people in Old Testament law assume a level of gender inequality that is shocking from a modern perspective.⁵ The law was not intended to free people from the effects of the curse or to set up a utopian society, but to work with sinful people in their broken state while at the same time correcting people's hearts and actions and enabling them to live in relative harmony with one another.⁶ Understood in this context, many of the instructions of the law were actually protecting women and other vulnerable groups from more extreme forms of oppression⁷ as God was preparing for a future day when Satan would be defeated, the power of sin and death would be broken, and He would bring all suffering and oppression to an end.

Breaking the Curse: Jesus and the Kingdom of God

When the time was right for the redemption of humankind, God came to the earth as a human being to do what human beings were unable to do for ourselves, to restore unity between God and humanity, rescuing us from sin and death, and restoring us to life (Rom. 5:6). Jesus came as the embodiment of restored unity between God and humanity, being in and of Himself both God and humankind knitted together (John 1:14; 10:30; Col. 1:19-20).

When Jesus began his ministry on the earth, He announced His mission to bring an end to the rule of sin, saying in the words of the prophet Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19). As He healed the sick and taught people how to love and serve each other, He overturned the work of the curse and brought God’s Kingdom rule into people’s lives (Luke 11:20). It is important to note that the teaching and ministry of Jesus consistently treats women and men with unprecedented equality (Mark 10:11-12; John 8:1-11; Luke 8:1-3, 10:38-42; Acts 1:12-2:4, 2:17-18), reflecting the original heart of the creator God. Ultimately, Jesus defeated Satan on the cross, destroying the power of sin, as He gave Himself in our place as a sacrifice, opening the way to the forgiveness and liberation of humankind and inviting us to return to God and to His original intention for us (1 Pet. 2:24). Followers of Jesus are invited into a new life of restored relationship with God and restored relationship with each other.



Women and Men in the New Testament Church

Paul's New Testament writings proclaim the restoration of unity among humankind within the community of Christ followers. "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). There must be no nationalism, no ethnocentricity, no class distinction, and no gender hierarchy in the community of Jesus because we all stand before God as equals, equally broken by sin, equally redeemed by grace, and equally in the process of being restored to God's original design for human beings. After the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus by which we are forgiven, there is no longer any need for priests to offer sacrifices on behalf of the people. Rather, all the people of Jesus function as priests, all having direct access to God by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and all offering themselves as gifts to the God who gave Himself as a gift for us (1 Pet. 2:5).

In the New Testament church, we don't see a hierarchy of leadership positions carrying differing levels of status and available to different kinds of people, but a call to servanthood in imitation of Jesus, a call given to both men and women



“In the New Testament church, [we see] a call to servanthood in imitation of Jesus, a call given to both men and women equally.”

equally. We see women embracing this call to serve and exercising every kind of leadership in the church alongside men. Women teach (Acts 18:26), prophesy (Acts 21:9), are appointed to official positions of church leadership (Rom. 16:1), lead and host church communities (Col. 4:15), and are sent by church communities as emissaries of the message of Jesus (Rom. 16:1,7). Prominent female leaders are referenced with the same terms of respect as male leaders, being called 'servant' (Rom. 16:1) and 'messenger' (Rom. 16:7).⁸

At the same time, despite its defeat, evil has not yet been expelled from our world. We still live in a world pervaded by the continued outworkings of the curse as we wait for the promise of Jesus' return, bringing the complete eradication of evil and the total restoration of God's rule. Not surprisingly, in the New Testament church, we see both healing in relationships between the sexes and continued challenges in living with the gender roles dictated by the laws and customs of the Roman Empire in which these early Christians lived. This mixture has led some to conclude that God intended gender hierarchy within the church. However, we must recognize that the early church was still functioning, just as we are today, in a broken world where certain social inequalities were inescapable societal realities that could not be systemically changed overnight. Far from endorsing these inequalities, Paul's teaching addresses the society of his time and place in such a way as to turn these inequalities on their heads, rendering them meaningless in the context of the mutual love and servanthood which was to be at the heart of relationships within the church community.

For example, in his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul describes marriage relationships with the assumption that the wife is obligated to submit to the husband (5:25-33). Similarly, he describes master-slave relationships with the assumption that the slave is obligated to submit to the master (6:5-9). This is neither an endorsement of slavery nor an endorsement of the slavery-like marriage of Paul's time. It simply acknowledges the functional and legal realities in which the original readers lived. Paul isn't condoning these social inequalities as God-given. Rather, he is instructing followers of Jesus, who live both with the glorious truth of equality before God described in Galatians and the present reality of biased societal structures which seem antithetical to this truth, on how to bring the mind of Christ into their relationships, loving and serving one another in mutual submission. It is clear that in Ephesians 5:21, Paul calls both marriage partners to mutual submission.⁹ In so doing, Paul guided early followers of Jesus toward a functional equality within a hierarchical culture and laid the foundation for the transformation of culture over time as the message of Jesus has continued to spread.

Other passages in Paul's writings have caused confusion in the church about whether women should be full participants in the worship community. Based on certain passages in Paul's letters (1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-12), it has sometimes been taught that women should not speak aloud in Christian gatherings or teach or exercise leadership over men. As confusing as these

passages are to read from a modern standpoint, one thing that is clear is that Paul was not saying women should never speak, teach or lead in the church. We know this because we have concrete examples elsewhere of Paul endorsing women doing exactly these things (Acts 18:26, 21:9; Rom. 16:1,7; Col. 4:15). It seems instead that Paul was correcting poor choices on the part of some women who were exercising their newfound freedom in disruptive ways.¹⁰ As we live out the freedom we have in Jesus, all of us, women and men, must do so in such a way as to prioritize the spread of the good news about Jesus and God's offer of forgiveness and peace over our own personal desires.

United in the Kingdom: Men and Women Serving in Today's Church

Jesus has tasked His church with bringing the lived message of the good news to the world. This is a message we don't simply verbalize but also enact with our lives. And so, our lives as followers of Jesus must be characterized by the love and grace of God and by the restored relationships promised to us in the world that is to come when God's rule is fully established. We must no longer model our relationships on the power struggles characteristic of the reign of sin and death, but on the love of God and the united strength and protective mutual care of our original design and ultimate destiny. In this unity with God and each other, we will find ourselves triumphant.

The good news about Jesus is not only a lived message, but an urgent message. Jesus left us with the command to go and make disciples (Matt. 28:19) and to pray for more workers because the harvest of people being gathered in to the heart of God is too big for us to handle without more help (Luke 10:2). The Scriptures teach us that each of us has been given by the Spirit gifts that are necessary to the growth of the church. These gifts are not given based on sex, ethnicity, or social status, but solely as God chooses to give them. We need every member of the body of Christ, both women and men, to use all the gifts God has given us in order to pursue this enormous and compelling task (1 Cor. 12:4-31). Please join us in bringing the message and power of God's love and grace to our world together.

ENDNOTES //

¹ Masculine pronouns are traditionally used to refer to God in keeping with the masculine forms used in the original languages of both the Old and New Testaments. However, this does not imply that God is in any sense male (Num. 23:19; John 4:24; Matt. 22:30; Heb. 1:7). In both Greek and Hebrew (the languages of the Bible), groups of mixed gender or persons of unspecified gender are referenced with masculine forms. Compare this to the English language convention in which a person of unspecified gender (for instance, a player referenced in the instructions to a board game) has been traditionally referred to as 'he.' God is spirit, and as such, is without gender.

² The Hebrew word "רָבָּ" means that which corresponds to' or 'in front of,' 'before,' or 'opposite' (*Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "רָבָּ.") This gives us a picture of man and woman as two equal and corresponding persons, facing or mirroring each other.

³ The Hebrew root "רָבָּ" means 'to surround' in the sense of 'protect,' 'aid,' 'help,' or 'succor' (*Strong's Hebrew and Chaldean Dictionary of the Old Testament*, s.v. "רָבָּ.") So, the woman is one who protects and provides and cares for the man. In the Bible, the noun form of this word is primarily used in reference to God coming to the rescue of his people (Ex. 18:4; Deut. 33:29; Ps. 118:7; Hos. 13:9). In most other uses, the reference is to a stronger nation coming to a weaker nation's aid in military conflict (Josh. 10:6; 2 Kings 14:26; Jer. 47:4). In this context, because it is paired with "רָבָּ", the woman cannot be construed to be a rescuer of superior strength, but must instead be understood to be an ally of equal strength and in equal partnership with the man. The resulting image of the two words together is a beautiful picture of mutual protection, aid, and care that calls us to find strength in unity.

⁴ It has been argued by some that God instructed men to be leaders and women to be followers for their own good at this time. But, this cannot be the case. All the consequences of human disobedience described in Gen. 3:16-18 are portrayed as entirely negative. None are benevolent or instructional. Just as we are not instructed to inflict pain on birthing women, plant thorns in our gardens, or kill one another in order to carry out the curse in our lives, men are not instructed here to subjugate women beneath themselves. Rather, as both men and women continued to embrace evil rather than good, this undesirable situation would come to pervade human history. These verses predicted this oppression.

⁵ In ancient middle-eastern cultures, property generally (but not exclusively) belonged to men. Sons inherited property from their fathers, but daughters (under most circumstances) did not. Polygamy was commonly accepted, but certainly not polyandry (in which a woman takes two or more husbands at the same time). Old Testament law addressed God's people assuming these and other gender biased aspects of culture without attempting to change them.

⁶ For example, according to Mal. 2:16, God hates divorce. And yet, Deut. 21:1 gives instructions for how a man may divorce his wife. Jesus explains this, saying that God never intended divorce to happen, but that it was tolerated under the law because of human sinfulness (Mark 10:5).

⁷ Divorce was at that time a male privilege that could devastate the life of a dependent woman who displeased her husband. Old Testament provisions for divorce actually protected a woman's right to remarry (and thus the chance to rebuild her life) by requiring a divorcing husband to give his wife a formal document releasing her (Deut. 24:1) (Sprinkle, 1997, 530). Num. 5:11-31 describes a procedure for trying a woman suspected by her husband of being secretly unfaithful. As bizarre and unfair as the ritual seems to the modern reader, it gave the woman a right to be declared innocent that she otherwise may not have had (Pierce, 2004, 98).

⁸ The Greek word 'διακονέω,' meaning 'slave' or 'servant,' is commonly transliterated 'deacon.' The word 'ἀπόστολος,' meaning 'messenger,' is commonly transliterated 'apostle' and was the highest term of respect given to Christian leaders in the New Testament church. We choose the words "servant" and "messenger" instead of the transliterations "deacon" and "apostle." The English words "servant" and

"messenger" retain the value for simplicity and humility inherent in the early church's choice of ordinary, functional words for their servant-leadership roles. Some manuscripts have 'Junius,' (a masculine sounding name) rather than 'Junia' (a common woman's name) called an apostle in Rom. 16:7. Junia is undoubtedly the better reading, since there does not seem have been a masculine form of that name in existence (Bauckham, 2002, 166-169).

⁹ Paul backs up this call to mutual submission by pointing both partners to the unity of their original design and their shared submission to Jesus. In verse 23, the woman is urged to recognize her husband as her source, the one from whom she was created (Gen. 2:21-22) (the understanding of New Testament usage of 'κεφαλῆ' to mean 'source' dates back to the early church fathers' interpretation of 1 Cor. 11:3-12, in which both the man and woman are recognized as the source of the other [Nathan, 2006, 17-20]). The woman is to make her submission to her husband, not an act of subservience to male authority, but an act of worship to Jesus, who is our ultimate source of life (5:21-24). In radical contrast to the culture of the time, the man, in verses 5:28-31, is to recognize that he and his wife are one, according to God's original design (Gen. 2:23-24). His submission to her is to be an act of worship as well as he honors the unity of the creation design by loving and serving her sacrificially in imitation of Jesus (5:25-30). In this way, both spouses are called put the other above themselves and return to the mutual submission and sacrificial love of God's original design for marriage.

¹⁰ It has been proposed that, because women were unaccustomed to being taught, having been excluded from religious instruction in the Jewish community before the coming of Jesus, the women addressed in 1 Cor. 14:34-35 and 1 Tim. 2:11-12 were interrupting, arguing, and talking out of turn excessively, particularly with regard to matters they didn't understand. It seems to be this behavior that is being corrected in both passages, not speaking or teaching altogether. The submission and quietness Paul describes in 1 Cor. 14:34 and 1 Tim. 2:11 would not have been unique to women but was the attitude men were normally expected to have while receiving religious instruction as well. One can imagine a modern day teacher dealing with such a situation saying, with no gender bias or permanent prohibition intended, something like "Ladies, no talking please." In 1 Tim. 2:12, Paul says it is not okay for women to 'ἀντιθεντεῖν' a man. According to BDAG, this means to assume a stance of independent authority over or give orders to someone. (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., s.v. "ἀντιθεντεῖν.") According to Strong's, it means to usurp someone else's authority. (*Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "ἀντιθεντεῖν.") Again, this behavior would be inappropriate to men in the church as well as to women. Women are not being prohibited from holding leadership positions. Rather, they are being instructed to demonstrate the humility and respect for others that is appropriate to Christian leadership (Luke 22:25-26). Another factor that seems to have been in play here is what sort of behavior was culturally appropriate for women in public. In some cases, such as 1 Cor. 11:6, Paul seems to be simply asking women to conform to certain societal norms for the sake of the good reputation of the church and the advance of the good news. This sort of request is not unique to women. Earlier in the same letter, Paul asks both women and men to limit their freedom in what they eat in order to promote unity in the church (1 Cor. 8). Paul's explanation of this in 1 Cor. 14 is confusing to the modern reader, but lest he be misunderstood, Paul is careful to clarify in verses 11-12 that men and women are in fact mutually interdependent equals, each being the source of the other's life.

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VINEYARD USA

Vineyard Women in Leadership Network

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