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WOMEN in MINISTRY

In the beginning God created man and woman (Gen. 2:7, 21, 22). Therefore there is no distinction between the two sexes regarding the essence of life (Gal. 3:28). They are equal before God. The notion that men are superior to women cannot find any biblical ground.

However, men and women are different in God's creation which evidence in their physical and psychological makeup. As a result, men and women may carry different responsibilities. The Bible teaches that the first priority of women is to take care of the family (Pr. 31:10-31; 1Tim. 2:15; Tit. 2:5). The responsibilities of wives include bearing and fostering children (1 Sam. 1:23; Ps. 128:3), housework (Ex. 2:16), and assisting husbands (Gen. 2:18; 1 Sam.25:23-31). In the family setting, Apostle Paul stated clearly that the husband is the head of the wife (Eph. 5:23; Won 11:3). But the headship of the husband does not mean that the husband should have authoritarian dominance over his wife. This head-body metaphor in fact emphasizes the oneness and the interdependence between husband and wife.

Certainly the Scripture does not exclude women from leading roles in society. For example, Moses' sister Miriam (Ex. 15:19-21) and the prophetess Deborah (Jud. 4:4) both made extraordinary contributions to their countrymen. In the reign of King David a woman saved the whole city through her wisdom (2 Sam. 20:16-22).

In the New Testament, many women followed Jesus (Lk. 8:3; 23:27). Their ministries were treasured and encouraged (Matt. 26:12-13). In the apostolic period, quite a number of distinguished ladies held significant roles in the churches. For instance, the church in Philippi was founded at Lydia's home (Acts 16:14, 15). Deacon Philips had four daughters who were all able to prophesy (Acts 21:4). In Romans 16 Paul mentioned seven sisters in his list of coworkers. It is apparent that sisters had great impact on the early church.

As for 1 Timothy 2:12, where Paul stated, "I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men" (RSV), the NIV translated as "I do not: permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man." The word translated as "man" is "andros" in Greek. It is better translated as "husband." In short, the forbidding command here has nothing to do with the public teaching role of women. A document entitled "Exegetical Arguments for the issue of Women Ministry in 1 Timothy 2:11-15" is attached for reference and further understanding (Appendix A).

Today in many places of the world the number of female missionaries exceeds that of male. The scope of their ministries includes serving the tables, nursing, as well as teaching and preaching. As a matter of fact the number of lady ministers taking full responsibilities of pastoring one or more churches has increased continually in the mission field. The Confession of 1989 Lousaane Conference ("The Manila Manifesto"), organized by Evangelical leaders, has this statement, "We affirm that the gifts of the Spirit are distributed to all God's people, women and men, and that their partnership in evangelization must be welcomed for the common good."

Presently as we objectively examine the overall ministries of BOL in Torrance, we realize that the lack of women participation in leadership is apparent. Therefore we should motivate all the

sisters to serve in various capacities of the ministries, including teaching and preaching. It means that women with recognized gifts should be provided the opportunities to teach and preach to both adults and children. Hopefully through this endeavor we can bring about greater blessings upon BOL in Torrance in the days ahead.

In addition, we agree upon the following positions and practices.

1. Women with eligible qualifications can be ordained as elders according to Article 7.2D in the Bylaw.

Note: However, we should seek men first because of the order of creation. In normal condition we prefer to choose men to hold the office, yet it doesn't exclude women from being ordained. In the following two situations we uphold the legitimacy of ordaining women as elders.

- a. If there is a woman who meets the qualifications listed in Article 7.2D and is recognized with outstanding gifts in leadership and strongly recommended by the MC, she should be ordained as elder.
- b. Although calling a woman to be an elder may not be the normative, the church will include qualified women in its search to fill the elder position.
In the Bylaw ideally we should have seven elders to assist the pastors to shepherd the members. If we can have one or two women as elders, it would certainly stimulate more women to get involved in leadership.

2. Women who have the gifts of shepherding and preaching can be ordained as pastors according to the Policy of Ordination.

Note: Besides the qualifications spelled out in the Operational Manual we should check with her personal opinions, family status and the need of the church. For instance, a woman minister who has been serving in the church for a certain period of time and is recognized with these qualifications may be considered a good candidate to be ordained. Nevertheless the ordination might not occur if she turns down the offer or the MC doesn't see the need.

3. Women with special gifts and calling can take positions as Congregational Pastor, Assistant Pastor, Pastoral Assistant, Christian Education Director/Minister/Pastor, Music Director/Minister/Pastor, Youth Director/Minister/Pastor, Missions Director/Minister/Pastor, Women Ministry Director/Minister/Pastor, and Children' Ministry Director/Minister/Pastor according to Article 8.0 in the Bylaw.

Note: Basically we will not take the initiative to seek a woman pastor for any congregation. We foresee there are only two possibilities that a woman will become a Congregational Pastor in our church.

- a. She is ordained in our church and at the same time is accepted by membership as the Congregational Pastor.
- b. She has been the assistant pastor in our church for a certain period of time and eventually is accepted by membership as the Congregational Pastor.
As for the Senior Pastor we all think the office in this church is designed for a man only.

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APPENDIX A

EXEGETICAL ARGUMENTS FOR THE ISSUES OF WOMEN MINISTRY IN 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-15

In verse 11, the translation of NIV reads, "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission." The "quietness" here does not mean to keep silent. Rather, it describes an inner attitude of serenity and peace. "Submission" means to receive and to obey. Accordingly the accurate interpretation of this verse is that when a woman learns the Word of God, she should listen to the teacher attentively and quietly and comply with the teaching from her heart, but not interrupt or even argue. (Note: The teaching must be sound and correct. The reason for Paul's instruction to the church in Ephesus will be stated in the next point.)

In verse 12, the translation of NIV reads, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man: she must be silent." The expression "to have authority over" implies "to monopolize and dictate." But, please notice, the "man" here, which is "andros" in Greek, should be better translated as "husband." Hence this verse prohibits women to teach openly and to rule over their husbands. Now we must ask, whether this command of not allowing woman to teach publicly is given because of the particular situation at that time, or because it is a universal principle to be followed. Apparently the former seems to be preferred. There are at least four reasons to support this view:

First of all, there was a kind of Judaistic Christianity which influenced the Ephesians during that period. This sect brought the teaching of Gnosticism into the church and encouraged asceticism. That is why Paul mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:3 that some even forbid marriage. Moreover, the practices in the temple of the Great Goddess Artemis in Ephesus brewed women's liberation movement in the society. Many unlearned women were deceived by false teachers and tried to liberate themselves from the traditional family bond. They claimed that they had obtained the revelation from God and began to give orders to men. For this reason Paul prohibited women to teach on open occasions in case some heretic doctrines might be channeled into the church.

Secondly, from verses 13 to 15, the remark of "the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" has to do with the deception of women at that time. The admonition of "self-restraint" is to warn the women not to be drifted away by the contemporary trend so as to give up their proper role of wife and mother. The expression "will be saved through childbirth" implies that a married woman should take up the family responsibility, not shun the duty of childbearing. If so, she will be able to be "saved" in the end. The "saved" here does not mean to be born again, rather, to be "redeemed" in the last day due to her sanctified life ("Redeemed" includes the meanings of "accepted and glorified by God"). Therefore, from the context we may conclude that Paul is emphasizing the proper behavior of a God-fearing wife, not referring to all women, including the unwed and widows.

Thirdly, 1 Corinthians 11:5 reads, "...every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head...." It is obvious that a woman could pray or preach in the worship service, provided that she covered her head. However, the covering of the head was a

contemporary custom observed by all the virtuous ladies in the society. Paul delineated from spiritual perspective that it symbolized the obedience of a wife to her husband. The covering of the head is no longer the custom of our society. Hence as long as a Christian woman honors her husband as the head, her praying or preaching is in accord with the teaching of the Scripture. In addition, I Corinthians 14:34 mentions that "Let the women keep silent in the church." Actually what Paul bans is the self-willed speaking of women in the meetings.

Fourthly, Paul's other epistles reveal that he does not agree with imposing limitation upon women's ministry because of sexual distinction. For example, in Romans 16 among the 28 names recorded, at least seven or eight are female Phoebe is a deaconess. The couple Priscilla and Aquila are commended as fellow workers by Paul, and elsewhere betrays that the wife, Priscilla, held a more significant role. "Junias" in verse 7 may have been a "woman apostle." All these women labored for the Lord. Their ministries may include preaching the gospel and teaching. Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4:2 are described by Paul as "who have shared my struggle in the gospel." It is quite possible that they also preached.

In summary, when discussing Paul's view on women ministry, we should look at and analyze all his epistles, not just taking hold of a few verses and drawing conclusions from them. Galatians 3:28 states, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free man, neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This is a very important basis of the equality of man and woman in Christ. Paul stresses that through Christ's redemption the differences in race, social class, and sex become insignificant. This is his basic stand on the issue of sex. However, the teaching of submission of a wife to her husband should not be neglected which is the order God designs for the family (Eph. 5:24). But nowhere in the Bible teaches that woman should obey man. It would be illogical and ridiculous to draw an inference that woman must obey man from the relationship between husband and wife. Lastly, the words of Dr. Ronald Y. K. Fung, a recognized New Testament scholar in the Evangelical circle and an expert of Greek among the Chinese churches, may properly conclude the argument. He says, "In Paul's epistles we cannot find anywhere that indicates the opposition of ordaining women. What we do discover is the principle that women can serve according to their gifts. And the whole purpose of spiritual gifts and ministries is to build up the church so that she might have tremendous impact on the society" (A LIFE OF MINISTRY, p. 234).