

Women's Roles in the Church

WEEKEND #1: September 6-7

Greetings!

I'm excited about our upcoming conversations. As preparation, I am providing material for you to read before our time together. Your pre-reading will allow us more time for questions and discussion. While you read through this material, jot down questions and observations. Below you'll find an outline of our time together for the first weekend as well as handouts for you to read.

See you soon!

Blessings,

Ken Cukrowski

I. Friday, September 6 (7:00-8:30 PM): Introduction and Thinking Hermeneutically

How to Study Women's Roles

1. Getting Started
2. Expectations

How Do We Read Scripture? (I will bring these two pages.)

1. An Exercise in Hermeneutics (Interpretation)
2. Hermeneutics: Ten Basic Considerations

II. Saturday, September 7 (9 AM to 12 noon): Thinking Textually

Where do we start? Gathering Information from the NT

1. Terms Marked as Female (Humans) in the New Testament (English and Greek)
2. Invisible Women (discussion point)

What do we see women doing? Ten Functions Women Perform in the NT

1. Female Deacons
 - Pliny, *Epistle* 10.96.8
2. Female Patrons
3. Female Coworkers
4. Ministry Teams
5. Female Hosts of House Churches
6. Female Laborers
7. Female Apostles
8. Female Prophets
 - The Nature of Prophecy
 - Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.17.1-4
9. Female Prayer
10. Female Teachers

Getting Started

1. Commit to an extended period of time for the study.

- People need time to reflect on the material, to process their emotions, and to restudy familiar passages in light of new information and ideas.
- I suggest a minimum of twelve weeks to cover the basic material.

2. Lay out all the evidence before going to the "hot button" passages.

- The temptation will be to do the reverse—to look first at the tough passages before gathering and examining all the evidence.
- This process equips people with information so that they can begin to answer those hard questions.

3. Create a "we" atmosphere.

- Focus the congregation's efforts on struggling together to find answers based on scripture.

4. Consider using case studies and dialogues.

- Congregations have found it more productive and less stressful to discuss what a fictional character (e.g., "Larry") says or thinks than what another member says or thinks.

5. Bathe your efforts in prayer.

6. Study and reflect on Scripture.

- Teach members *how* to read Scripture. Show them how to use a concordance.
- Use a class setting where there is an opportunity for *discussion*, all voices are heard, and a diversity of opinion is respected.

7. Examine the questions in light of our Christian identity and core commitments.

8. Provide resources.

- The elders may wish to draft a statement.
- Show what other congregations have done.
- Distribute a packet of information on the topic.
- Provide books, articles, and a bibliography in the church library.

9. Demonstrate openness about the process and goals, avoiding secrecy.

10. Create a process that equips the congregation.

- Remember that this process will be used to treat other issues in the future.

Expectations

1. Openness to New Insights

- We do not fear truth; we pursue it.
- Openness does not necessarily imply acceptance.
- In fact, I expect that we will not all agree on every point.
- Nevertheless, really listen to everyone's comments.

2. Questioning Ideas Rigorously

- You should feel free to ask questions.
- The rigor, however, is directed toward the issue, not individuals.
- Show respect to one another.

3. Study of the Bible and Supporting Literature

- Bring your Bible.
- The more you prepare, pray, and reflect, the more you will be blessed.

4. Faithfulness to God's Will

- We should faithfully apply what we discover.

5. Confidentiality of Comments

- You should feel free to speak freely and explore ideas.
- You can assume it, as will I.

6. Emotion

- This issue stirs deep emotions because it cuts to our deepest identity.
- We are male and female.

7. We're All at a Different Place.

- Be patient and allow people time to think through the issue.

8. Comfort with Medical Language

- At times, we will need to describe different body parts and functions of males and females.
- You need to be comfortable hearing and using that language.

9. Let me know.

- If these expectations do not work for you, then you need to let me know.

10. Excitement of Discovery

- There is nothing I enjoy more than studying God's Word!

Cukrowski

Terms Marked as Female (Humans) in the New Testament

Named Women: 51 individuals

General

- Woman
- Girl
- Female
- Foolish woman
- Old woman

Family

- Mother
- Barren (without child)
- Without mother
- Daughter
 - Little daughter
 - Child
- Sister
- Virgin
- Bride
- Wife
- Daughter-in-law
- Mother-in-law
- Grandmother
- Female relative
- Widow
- Adulteress

Functions

- Patron
- Disciple
- Prophetess
- Queen
- Nurse
- Maid
- Slave
- Doorkeeper
- Prostitute
- Wisdom Personified

Terms Marked as Female (Humans) in the New Testament

Named Women: 51

General

- Woman (γυνή, ἡ) – 216 times
- Girl (κοράσιον, ἡ) – 8 times
- Female
 - (γυναικεῖος, –α, ον) – 1 Pet 3:7
 - (θήλυς, –εἶα, –υ) – Mark 10:6; Rom 1:26, 27; Gal 3:28;
- Foolish woman (γυναικάριον, ἡ) – 2 Tim 3:6
- Old woman
 - (γραῶδης, –ες) – 1 Tim 4:7
 - (πρεσβύτις, ἡ) – Titus 2:3

Family

- Mother (μήτηρ, ἡ) – 84 times
- Barren, without child (στεῖρα, ἡ) – Luke 1:7, 36; 23:29; Gal 4:27; Heb 11:11
- Without mother (ἀμήτωρ) – Heb 7:3
- Daughter (θυγάτηρ, ἡ) – 28 times
 - Little daughter (θυγάτριον, τό) – Mark 5:23; 7:25
 - Female child (παῖς, ἡ) – Luke 8:51, 54¹
- Sister (ἀδελφή, ἡ) – 26 times
- Virgin (παρθένος, ἡ) – 13 times
- Bride (νύμφη, ἡ) – 5 times
- Wife (γυνή, ἡ)
- Daughter-in-law (νύμφη, ἡ) – 2 times
- Mother-in-law (πενθερά, ἡ) – 6 times
- Grandmother (μάμμη, ἡ) – 2 Tim 1:5
- Female relative (συγγενίς, ἡ) – Luke 1:36
- Widow (χήρα, ἡ) – 27 times
- Adulteress (μοιχαλίσ, ἡ)

Functions

- Patron (προστάτις, ἡ) – Rom 16:2
- Disciple (μαθητρία, ἡ) – Acts 9:36
- Prophetess (προφήτις, ἡ) – Luke 2:36; Rev 2:20
- Queen (βασίλισσα, ἡ) – Matt 12:42; Luke 11:31; Acts 8:27; Rev 18:7
- Nurse (τροφός, ἡ) – 1 Thess 2:7
- Maid (παιδίσκη, ἡ) – 14 times
- Slave (δούλη, ἡ) – Luke 1:38, 48; Acts 2:18
- Doorkeeper (θυρωρός, ἡ) – Mark 13:34; John 10:3; 18:16, 17
- Prostitute (πόρνη, ἡ) – 12 times
- Wisdom Personified (σοφία, ἡ) – 3 times

¹ Only means “female child” with the feminine article.

Ten Functions Women Perform in the New Testament

1. Female Deacons

New Testament

- Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2
 1. How should we translate *diakonos*?
 - a. "Servant": Rom 15:8; 1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 11:15
 - b. "Minister": 2 Cor 3:6; Col 1:7; 4:7; 1 Tim 4:6
 - c. "Deacon": Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8, 12
 2. Why didn't Paul just use the work "deaconess"?
 - "First, prior to canon nineteen of the Council of Nicea (AD 325), there are no certain examples of the Greek feminine διακόνισσα. In this earlier period, the masculine διάκονος was used for female as well as male deacons" (Blackburn, *EWEC*, 1.303 n. 1).
 3. Notice that Paul specifies the church as the place of her service.
 4. How would you translate *diakonos* if Phoebe (female) were Phoebus (male)?

- "Women" in 1 Timothy 3:11
 1. They could be wives of deacons.
 - Why would there be "qualifications" for the wives of deacons but not for the wives of elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7)?
 2. They could be female deacons.
 - Note that both lists (below) begin with the same character trait ("serious, worthy of respect/honor"). Plus, the next two qualities are similar.

1 Timothy 3:8 (Men)	1 Timothy 3:11 (Women)
Serious	Serious
Not double-tongued	No slanderers
Not addicted to much wine	Temperate

- Apphia in Philemon 2 (?)
 1. She could be Philemon's wife.
 - But, the "you" is singular in verse two: "and to the church that meets in your (singular) house." Note the use of "their" in Romans 16:5 and 1 Cor 16:19.
 2. She could be a deacon.
 - Except for churches as a whole, the only groups mentioned in Paul's greetings are "bishops and deacons" (Phil 1:1).
 - Interestingly, she is mentioned *before* Archippus.

- "Deacons" in Philippians 1:1 (?)

Non-Christian Evidence

- Pliny, *Epistle* 10.96.8 (ca. A.D. 112)
In Asia Minor (modern Turkey), the Roman governor Pliny mentions two women whom the Christians "call deaconesses."

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when they had repeated after me a formula of invocation to the gods and had made offerings of wine and incense to your statue (which I had ordered to be brought into court for this purpose along with the images of the gods), and furthermore had reviled the name of Christ: none of which things, I understand, any genuine Christian can be induced to do.

Others, whose names were given to me by an informer, first admitted the charge and then denied it; they said that they had ceased to be Christians two or more years previously, and some of them even twenty years ago. They all did reverence to your statue and the images of the gods in the same way as the others, and reviled the name of Christ. They also declared that the sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this:¹ they had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately among themselves in honour of Christ as if to a god, and also to bind themselves by oath, not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery and adultery, to commit no breach of trust and not to deny a deposit when called upon to restore it. After this ceremony it had been their custom to disperse and reassemble later to take food of an ordinary, harmless kind; but they had in fact given up this practice since my edict, issued on your instructions, which banned all political societies. This made me decide it was all the more necessary to extract the truth by torture from two slave-women, whom they call deaconesses. I found nothing but a degenerate sort of cult carried to extravagant lengths.

2. Female Patrons

- Women in Luke 8:1-3 (cf. Mark 15:41)
- Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2
 - How should we translate the noun *prostatis*?
 1. "Helper"
 2. "Patron/-ess"
 3. "Ruler, governor, manager": Note the meaning of the verb *proistemi* in 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 3:4, 12; 5:17.
- "Not a few prominent women" of Thessalonica in Acts 17:4 (Likely)
- "A number of prominent Greek women" of Berea in Acts 17:12 (Likely)
- Chloe in 1 Corinthians 1:11 (?)
- Some of the five Female Hosts of House Churches (see below) (?)

3. Female Apostles

- Junia in Romans 16:7
 1. What's the issue? A different accent mark makes the name male or female.
 - *Iouniân* (a masculine form for the name "Junias")
 - *Iounian* (a feminine form for the name "Junia")
 2. What is the evidence for Junia (female)?
 - The first extant writer to think Junia was male is Aegidius of Rome (AD 1245-1316).
 - There is no record of anyone ever being named Junias "in ancient literature or inscriptions, either Latin or Greek" (Walters, *EWEC* 1.186).
 - Lampe has recorded over 250 instances of Junia (Walters, *EWEC* 1.186 n. 57).
 3. What does it mean to call Junia an "apostle"?
 - There is the generic sense of "missionary, delegate, or messenger." See Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14); Andronicus (Rom 16:7); Titus (2 Cor 8:23); Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25)
 - See also James (Gal 1:19); Apollos (1 Cor 4:6, 9).
 4. What does the phrase "prominent among the apostles" mean? Two Options
 - It means that Andronicus and Junia are [thought to be] outstanding *by* the apostles.
 - a. But the construction in Romans 16:7 (adjective + *en* + a human group) never indicates agency ("by") in the New Testament (Belleville, *Women in Ministry*, 42-43).
 - b. See Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 3:18; 6:5; 11:19; 2 Corinthians 10:1.
 - It means that Andronicus and Junia are notable *among* the apostles (that is, they are prominent among those people called "apostles").
 - a. All the patristic commentators read "among" (Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 423).
 - b. Agency ("by") would be expressed differently in Greek (*hupo* + genitive case).
- The Seventy in Luke 10:1 (?)
 - Could some of the Seventy that Jesus sent out include women? See Luke 23:49, 55; 24:1-11, 22-25.
 - From the time of Origin (ca. AD 185-254), many commentators assumed that women were included among the 70 whom Jesus sent (Belleville, *Women in Ministry*, 45 n. 54).
- The Women in Matthew 28:1-8 (?)
 - Can we call these women "the apostles to the apostles" (cf. Mark 16:8; Luke 24:1-11)?

4. Ministry Teams

Husband/Wife Teams

- Priscilla and Aquila
 - Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19.
 - Note the underlines above, where Priscilla is named first in 4 of the 6 passages.
- Andronicus and Junia in Romans 16:7
 - Note that in the first example, the wife appears to be more prominent; in the second example, the husband appears to be more prominent.
 - These missionary pairs may echo Jesus' example of sending out workers "two by two" (Luke 10:1; cf. Luke 19:29; 22:8). Note many other pairings in Acts (i.e., Peter and John; Paul and Barnabas; Judas and Silas; Paul and Silas; and Barnabas and Mark).

Female/Female Pair

- Tryphena and Tryphosa in Romans 16:12: they are "workers in the Lord."

Six Other Pairs¹

- The Seventy in Luke 10:1 (?)
 - Could some of the Seventy that Jesus sent out include husband/wife teams? See Luke 23:49, 55; 24:1-11, 22-25.
- Cleopas and his unnamed companion in Luke 24:13-35 (?)
- Apostles and their wives in 1 Corinthians 9:5 (?)
- "Brothers of the Lord" and their wives in 1 Corinthians 9:5 (?)
- Philologus and Julia in Romans 16:15 (?)
- Nereus and his sister in Romans 16:15 (?)

5. Female Hosts of House Churches

- References to house churches² and men who are named as hosts³
- Mary in Acts 12:12 (Jerusalem)
- Lydia in Acts 16:15, 40 (Philippi)
- Prisca (and Aquila) in Romans 16:3-5 (Rome); in 1 Corinthians 16:8, 19 (Ephesus)
- Nympha in Colossians 4:15 (Likely)
- Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2 (?) (Cenchrea)

¹It's hard to make too much of these six pairs, but it is also a mistake to make too little of them because of Jesus' example and because of the service of the first two ministry teams.

²For other explicit, likely, or possible references to house churches, see also Acts 1:13-14; 2:46; 5:42; 20:20; Romans 16:14, 15. For the (likely) presence of multiple house churches in a city, see Acts 12:17; Romans 16:4, 14, 15; 23; 1 Thess 5:27.

³See Gaius in Romans 16:23 (Corinth); Philemon in Philemon 1-2; Jason in Acts 17:6 (?) (Thessalonica); Titius Justus in Acts 18:7 (?) (Corinth). Cf. Tavia in Ignatius, *To the Smyrneans* 13.2 (?).

6. Female Coworkers⁴

- Prisca in Romans 16:3-5
 - As coworkers, Prisca and Aquila “risk their necks” for Paul’s life.
- Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4:2-3
 - Paul says, “They struggled side by side with me in the gospel.”
 - See the use of the phrase “in the gospel” in Rom 1:9 and 1 Thess 3:2.

7. Female Laborers

- Mary in Romans 16:6
- Tryphena in Romans 16:12
- Tryphosa in Romans 16:12
- Persis in Romans 16:12
- What does "labor" (*kopian*, *kopos*) mean?
 1. Work (in general): 1 Cor 4:12; 2 Thess 3:8
 2. Work of ministry: 1 Cor 3:8; 2 Cor 10:14-15; Gal 4:11; Phil 2:16; 1 Thess 3:5; 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17
- Implications of 1 Corinthians 16:16
 - This passage is the only passage where the word “submit to, be subject to” (*hupotassesthai*) is used of the relationship between the members in the congregation and people who work in the congregation, although the idea is found elsewhere (1 Thess 5:12).

⁴Paul calls a number of males "coworkers" (13 explicitly): Apollos, Aquila, Aristarchus, Clement, Demas, Epaphroditus, Justus, Luke, Mark, Philemon, Timothy, Titus, and Urbanus.

8. Female Prophets

Old Testament

- Miriam in Exodus 15:20 (see 4:13-16; 7:1-2; cf. Micah 6:4)
- Deborah in Judges 4:4
- Huldah in 2 Kings 22:8-20 (see also 2 Chronicles 34:14-28)
- Isaiah's wife in Isaiah 8:3
- Ezekiel 13:17-23 (false prophetesses)
- Note Noadiah in Nehemiah 6:14 (false prophetess).

New Testament

- Anna in Luke 2:36
- Women in Acts 2:17-18/Joel 2:28-29
- Philip's four daughters in Acts 21:9
- Women who "pray and prophesy" in 1 Corinthians 11:5
- Elizabeth in Luke 1:41-45 (?)
- Compare Luke 1:41 and 1:67.
- Women in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (?)
- Note "Jezebel" in Revelation 2:20-25 (false prophet).

What does a prophet do?

- Evidence from Acts 15:30-32
- Evidence from 1 Corinthians 14:1-4, 19, 29-32
- Predictive Element: Agabus (Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11)

Early Church History

- Ammia in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.17.1-4; 3.37.1

The Nature of Prophecy

	Acts 15:30-32	1 Corinthians 14:1-5, 19, 28-33
Context	Congregation gathered (v. 30)	The church (vv. 3-5, 28, 33)
Actions	Exhort (v. 32) Strengthen (v. 32)	Upbuilding (v. 3) Exhortation (vv. 3, 31) Comfort (v. 3) Edify (v. 4) Instruct (v. 19) Teach (v. 31)
Length	"Many words" (v. 32)	
Means		Revelation (v. 30)
Control		Be silent (v. 30)

of their sayings he continues as follows: "I have given this abstract of what I found in a work of theirs when they were attacking the work of Alcibiades¹ the Christian in which he shows that a prophet need not to speak in ecstasy." And he goes on in the same work to give a catalogue of those who have been prophets of the New Testament, and among them he numbers a certain Ammia and Quadratus and says thus: "But the false prophet speaks in ecstasy, after which follow ease and freedom from fear; he begins with voluntary ignorance, but turns to involuntary madness of soul, as has been said before. But they cannot show that any prophet, either of those in the Old Testament or of those in the New, was inspired in this way; they can boast neither of Agabus, nor of Judas, nor of Silas, nor of the daughters of Philip, nor of Ammia in Philadelphia, nor of Quadratus, nor of any others who do not belong to them." And again after a little he goes on, "For if the Montanist women succeeded to Quadratus and Ammia in Philadelphia in the prophetic gift, let them show who among them succeeded the followers of Montanus and the women, for the apostle grants that the prophetic gift shall be in all the church until the final coming, but this they could not show, seeing that this is already the fourteenth year from the death of Maximilla."

He, therefore, so writes. But the Miltiades mentioned by him has also left us other monuments of his own zeal for the oracles of God in the treatises which to be correct so far as historical fact is concerned, but the evidence of the mss. seems equally to prove that the mistake is due to Eusebius himself, and as such ought to appear in the text. See Introduction, p. lv., and *cf.* McGiffert's note *ad loc.*

9. Female Prayer⁵

Old Testament

- Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:9-20; 2:1-10

The Apocrypha and First-Century Jewish Authors

- Sarah in Tobit 3:11-15
- Tobias and Sarah in Tobit 8:4-8
- Judith in Judith 9:2-14; 13:4b-5; 7b
- 2 Maccabees 3:18-22
- Philo, *On the Posterity of Cain* 179; Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.584

New Testament

- Anna in Luke 2:37b
- “The women and Mary the mother of Jesus” in Acts 1:12-14
- Lydia and some women in Acts 16:13-15
- Wives from the church at Tyre in Acts 21:5
- Husbands and wives in 1 Corinthians 7:5
- Women in 1 Corinthians 11:5, 13
- “Real widow” in 1 Timothy 5:5
- Mary in Luke 1:46-55 (?)
- Woman who glorifies God in Luke 13:13 (?)

⁵ In many other passages, Scripture implies that women participate in prayer (e.g., Acts 2:42; 12:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 25; James 5:13, 16). For the passages from Philo, Josephus, and Judith, see M. H. McDowell’s book *Prayers of Jewish Women* (2006).

10. Female Teachers

- Priscilla in Acts 18:26
 - Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19.
 - Note the underlines above, where Priscilla is named first in four of the six passages.
- Prophets in 1 Corinthians 14:19 ("instruct"), 31 ("learn")
- Teaching and admonishing through singing in Colossians 3:16
- Anna in Luke 2:38 (?)
- Samaritan woman in John 4:29-30, 39, 42 (?)
- "Teaching" in 1 Cor 14:26 (?)
- Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4:2-3 (?)
- Lois and Eunice in 2 Tim 1:5 (?)
- "Entrust these things to faithful ones who are able to teach others" in 2 Tim 2:2 (?)
- "Teachers" in James 3:1 (?)