

# Statement on Women Serving in the Church

## Woodcreek Church



### General Statement

As Woodcreek Church, we want to love God and love one another. Remaining Biblically faithful, we desire to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph. 5:21), do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but humbly count others as more significant than ourselves (Phil. 2:3). We look to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, as our example of submission (John 6:38) and grace (John 1:14).

Our heart is to love, support, encourage, uplift, and celebrate the ministry of women in the church. We believe women should use their God-given gifts to the utmost of their abilities for the edification of the church (Eph. 4, 1 Cor. 12, Rom. 12). We also strive to be Biblically faithful to the guidelines we see in Scripture for how this is done in the church. Based on God's unique design of creation, Woodcreek Church holds to a theological vision of complementarianism. Our commitment is to be faithful to the Bible, encourage and celebrate spiritual gifts, while providing opportunities for women to flourish in ministry at Woodcreek Church.

With profound sadness, we recognize that a distorted view of Scripture has led to hurt and abuse within the global church. We, as Woodcreek Church, are committed to honoring and empowering the women of Woodcreek. We reject any version of complementarianism, or other theological position, that contributes to the belief that Biblical manhood or womanhood includes or permits practices such as marginalization, subjugation, intimidation, neglect or any form of abuse.

As a church, we submit to the Bible as God's inspired and authoritative Word as our foundation for life and ministry. As affirmed in our statement What We Believe, "We believe the Bible is true in all that it teaches and without error in the original writings. We believe it has absolute authority over us. (Ps. 19:7-11; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). Any attempt to understand personhood and gender must begin with divine revelation and God's created order.

### Detailed Explanation

#### Ordered Design

From the opening pages of Scripture, we find that God, in His wisdom, created two complementary sexes for our good and His glory. In light of His good created order, and the fact that men and women both share in divine image bearing, God intends for men and women to have different yet complementary roles and responsibilities in the church and home. These role distinctions do not arise from cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity but are an integral part of God's plan for humanity, as revealed in Scripture. We should recognize them as God's grace to men and women, protecting, preserving and practicing them for His glory, our joy and for the sake of human flourishing (Gen. 2:18-25; 1 Cor. 11:2-16, 14:33-35; Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).

God's design for male and female was beautiful and perfect. Adam and Eve respected each other, served each other, and complemented each other. Sin, through the Fall, ruined this harmony. We believe Scripture, through both the Old and New Testaments, seeks to recover God's original design, not to abolish what God created at the beginning.

## **Women Serving in Scripture**

All Christians are charged with the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) and both men and women are to participate in the ministry of the church (Eph. 4:11-16). The Bible explicitly encourages and assumes that women will be involved in the ministry of the church. Jesus went out of His way, and against the culture of His day, to honor women. He spoke with them, had them among His disciples, and benefited from their support (Luke 10:39). In short, He treated them as the valuable image bearers of God that they were and still are.

Scripture is replete with examples of women serving the Lord and the church in their giftings. In a beautiful example of generational transfer, Paul instructed older women to teach the Bible to younger women in his letter to Titus (Titus 2:3-5). Philip the Evangelist had four unmarried daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:8-9), and in Corinth (at least) there were other women who prophesied (1 Cor. 11). Priscilla, along with her husband, Aquilla, explained the way of God more accurately to the teacher Apollos (Acts 18:26). Phoebe was a servant, and perhaps a deaconess, of the church in Cenchreae, a patron of Paul and many others in the early church, and possibly delivered Paul's letter to the Romans (Rom. 16:1-2). Junia was a fellow prisoner with Paul and well known to the apostles (Rom. 16:7). Euodia and Syntyche were fellow laborers in the Gospel with Paul (Phil. 4:2-3).

These are just a few examples of faithful service by women in Scripture for the Lord. We celebrate the Biblical picture of men and women serving the church of the Lord Jesus Christ together. At Woodcreek church, we rejoice in the rich history of women of faith and honor those who are serving the Lord in our midst. We rejoice in Biblical examples of men and women using their gifts in the church for the glory of God. We rejoice in the Biblical depiction of men and women laboring alongside one another in the world and the church for the sake of the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 12:4-31). When men and women aren't empowered to engage and use their gifts, in complementarian partnership, both genders suffer and the mission of the church—to proclaim the gospel and make disciples of all nations—suffers.

## **Relationship of Men and Women in the Church**

As male and female image bearers flourish in partnership in the body and family of Christ, we expect that the primary relationship between Christian men and women is that of brotherly and sisterly love. The New Testament describes the church as having the kind of love for one another that is reserved for family. (Rom. 12:10, 1 Pet. 3:8) This is uniquely Christian. (John 1:12, Rom. 8:14-17, 12:5, Gal. 6:10, Eph. 1:3-10, 2:19-22, 1 Tim. 5:1, Titus 3: 5-7). Therefore, the relationship in the local church between men and women is the relationship of brothers and sisters, co-heirs (Rom. 8:14-17, Gal. 3:19, 1 Pet. 2:9-10, 1 John 3:1-3), united in Christ (1 Cor. 12:24-25, Eph. 2:19-22, Phil. 2:2, Col. 1:11-12), equally valuable (Rom. 12:4-5, 1 Cor. 12:12), and not subordinates (Gen. 1:27, Gal. 3:27-29, Eph. 3:6). Cultivating an environment of brotherly and sisterly love is at the heart of complementarianism. Our relationships should be marked by honor (Rom. 12:9-10), care (Col. 3:14, 1 Pet. 4:8, 1 John 3:11, 16-18, 4:7) and sacrifice for one another (John 15:12-13, Phil. 2:3-5).

## **Roles of Men and Women in the Church**

We believe that equal involvement in the church between men and women does not mean interchangeable involvement. We believe the Bible reserves the office of elder and that of teaching the corporate church body specifically for qualified men.<sup>1</sup> Scripture commissions elders to lead the church (1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:1-2), preach the Word (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9), protect the church from false teaching (Acts 20:17, 28-31; Titus 1:9) pray for and visit the sick (Jas. 5:14; Acts 20:35), equip the saints for ministry (Eph. 4:11-12) and use proper judgment in theological and doctrinal matters (Acts 15). In performing these responsibilities, elders practice sacrificial male headship. Therefore, although we

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<sup>1</sup> A qualified man is a man who has been trained, reviewed and meets all of the qualifications of an elder at Woodcreek Church, as established by Scripture (1 Tim. 5:17, Titus 1:5-9). However, not all qualified men hold the office of elder. There are men on staff and in the congregation who meet the qualifications of elder but do not hold the office. A man who does not meet the qualifications of elder does not meet the requirements of being a qualified man.

encourage all men and women to actively participate in the life of the church, we reserve the office of elder, and the responsibilities unique to it, for certain qualified men within the church. Apart from the role of elder and teaching the corporate church body, we believe the Bible explicitly encourages and assumes that women will be involved in the ministry of the church.

## **Implications of Our Belief**

Based on the conclusions drawn from Scripture, we believe that both men and women have been created in the image of God and are entitled to the privileges and held accountable to the responsibilities that come with reflecting our Creator. We believe that all men and women have been created in the image of God, whether single or married. We believe that both men and women are valuable and necessary for the health and thriving of the church. Godly men and women should be visible partners in the corporate life of the church, deploying their diverse gifts for the good of the body. All Christians contribute to the ministry of the church. We believe that the roles of elder, lead pastor, and pastor are reserved for qualified men. Elders are distinctly responsible for overseeing the church and teaching the Word. We believe that all members of the church should be in glad submission to the elders, and that all should be in glad and sacrificial submission to Jesus Christ, the Head of the church. We believe that complementarianism, rightly practiced, will lead to the recognizable flourishing of both sexes. We believe there is intrinsic beauty in the divine design and the complementary roles of men and women (Gen. 1:26-27, Eph. 4:11-16, 1 Cor. 12:4-31).

Based on the conclusions drawn from Scripture, we reject the belief that either gender has been given or is entitled to greater dignity in society, the home, the church, or the kingdom of God. We reject the belief that single men and women must be married to be meaningful participants in the life of the church. We deny that single men possess any authority over single women. The way that they love and serve their sisters should not patronize, victimize or show force, but rather should be the fruit of brotherly love, and vice versa. We reject the belief that the church can flourish without brotherly/sisterly partnership. We reject the idea that a church can exist in which the men flourish and the women do not, or vice versa. We reject the belief that the role of elder being withheld from women diminishes their importance in the church. We reject any version of complementarianism or other theological position that leads to the subjugation, abuse, or neglect of any man or woman. We strongly denounce any distorted view of Scripture that contributes to the belief that Biblical manhood or womanhood includes or permits practices such as marginalization, subjugation, intimidation, neglect or any form of abuse. (Rom. 8:14-17, Gal. 3:19, 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:7).

## **Ministry at Woodcreek Church**

### **Organizational**

The elders have designated the roles of lead pastor and pastor as reserved for qualified men. The elders vet men for these positions using a formal process. We seek to hire both men and women for other roles, for the health of the church, within the framework outlined below. This gives both men and women opportunities to advance and grow in leadership and includes women participating in every level of the organization with the exception of elder, lead pastor, and pastor. Women can and do faithfully serve as ministers, volunteer leaders, directors of ministries, team leaders, and department heads.

### **Sunday Morning Worship**

Every member of the church body actively participates in our Sunday worship services, not just those who are on the platform. Every role is open to both men and women, including leading worship, except the roles of preaching the Word of God and officiating the ordinances (baptism/the Lord's Supper). Every member is invited to baptize and distribute the elements of communion, but the roles of preaching and officiating the ordinances are reserved for elders/pastors/qualified men.

### **Adult Teaching Environment**

Mixed-gender teaching environments are overseen by elders and will be led by qualified leaders. These leaders should seek out, equip and utilize gifted men and women to help lead, teach and shape these ministries. Gender-specific teaching environments are primarily taught by a leader of the same gender.

### **Community & Other Adult Ministry Groups**

Gender-specific groups are primarily led by a leader of the same gender. Men lead men's groups, and women lead women's groups. Mixed-gender groups are primarily led by both a man and woman. In mixed-gender group leadership we expect for there to be a co-leadership relationship between the man and the woman.

### **Youth and Children's Ministry**

Gifted men or women can lead and instruct youth and children's ministries. Gender-specific groups within those ministries should primarily be led and taught by the same gender.

## **Conclusion**

Woodcreek Church exists to glorify God by encouraging and helping people become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. We emphatically affirm that all believers should use their God-given gifts to the utmost of their abilities. Specifically, when it comes to the consideration of women in the church, our heart is to be faithful to the Bible, empower and celebrate their spiritual gifts while providing opportunities for women to flourish in ministry at Woodcreek Church.

The role of women in the church can be a difficult and sensitive subject. Our desire is to do everything possible to interpret and apply Scripture accurately and clearly. Ultimately, it is about being true and obedient to God's Word, advancing His gospel, and bringing glory to Him. It is for these reasons, and in pursuit of clarity and unity, that we have written this position statement. Our goal is to provide general guidance concerning these issues in order to enable the flourishing of all believers.

We encourage you to be as the Bereans and study this subject for yourself. *"...they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."* Acts 17:11b

We encourage you to show *"...tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* Eph. 4:1-3

## **Bibliography**

ESV Study Bible. English Standard Version, Crossway

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<https://woodcreekchurch.com/welcome/about/mission-values/>

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