

RCF

Covenant Classes

Session 10

Spiritual Authority and Eldership

I. Delegated Authority

- A. All authority belongs to God. Sometimes God administers that authority directly by speaking to His people by the Spirit. On other occasions, He administers that authority indirectly through other people. When God uses other people to administer His authority, it is “delegated authority.” Jesus spoke of the reality of God’s authority being delegated and then administered by those sent by God. Romans 13:1-2.
- B. The parable of the vineyard gives insight into the reality of delegated authority—see Luke 20:9-16, Mark 12:1-9. This parable reveals the foolishness of not obeying God’s authority until He comes personally. They rejected His delegated authority three times. They were rejecting God by rejecting those He sent. They were unwise to wait until He personally came—then it was time for judgment.
- C. Often, there is a distinction made between delegated authority and God’s direct intervening authority, but it is all one authority to God. The rebellious man seeks to separate the two by refusing to obey delegated authority. He does not realize that he rejects God’s authority every time he rejects those with God’s authority—Luke 10:16. God greatly respects the authority He delegates to the vessels of His choosing. All delegated authority represents God’s authority.

II. The Five Spheres of Authority

- A. **The individual** – the first level of authority God grants is the authority each person has in his or her own life under His authority.
 - 1. No person on earth can stop someone else from being under the authority of Jesus in their personal life.
 - 2. Each person not only has the right but also the responsibility to take their God-given individual authority and practice it rightly. Romans 14:12.
 - 3. We cannot righteously say, “*The devil made me do it,*” or, “*My husband/wife made me do it,*” (I Cor. 10:13).
- B. **The Family** – Eph. 5:18-6:4, Col.3:18-22.
 - 1. The wife must see the reality of God’s authority delegated to her husband. To rebel against one’s husband is to directly rebel against God Himself unless the husband

requires unrighteous activity. A woman's decision to marry speaks of her agreement to accept God's authority through that particular man (Eph 5:22-24).

2. The children must see the reality of God's authority being delegated through the parents. To rebel against parents is to rebel against God. God may cut our lives short by premature death because of rebellion against Him manifested by disobedience to parents (Lev. 19:3,32, 20:9; Eph 6:1-4). The understanding and practice of children honoring the authority of parents is primarily the responsibility of the parents.

C. The Place of Employment Eph. 6:5-8, Col. 3:22-25, I Tim. 6:1, Titus 2:9-10.

1. Our employers are representatives of Jesus Christ. We serve Jesus as we serve them whether or not they are saved (Col. 3:22-25, I Pet. 2:13-23).
2. Obedience to our employers must be from the heart in order to please God (Col 3:22).

D. The Civil Government Romans 13:1-7, I Pet. 2:13-17.

1. God has chosen to entrust His authority through weak and imperfect vessels. God has even chosen to use evil rulers to rule society. God alone has the power to make such decisions.
2. All authority is traced back to God personally. We reject God when we reject those to whom He gives authority. Mt. 10:40, Lk. 10:16.
3. God forbids His people to curse rulers in any sphere—Ex.22:28.

E. Church I Cor. 16:15-16, Heb. 13:17-24, I Thes. 5:12.

1. The church has a government structure established by God for the good of His people. Rebellion in the church is one of God's great contentions with the saints.
2. Church authority must be recognized as being Jesus' own authority. People must be able to have confidence that God will correct His leaders.
3. David was fearful of speaking against God's anointed (Saul) even though Saul had entered into unrighteous leadership. Aaron and Miriam murmured against Moses and were punished. We need to take these warnings to heart.
4. Every person who calls themselves by the name of Jesus must be under God's delegated authority in the church (Heb 12:17). This authority is there for the benefit of the individual believer and the church body.

III. Authority in Our Individual Lives

- A. God seeks to develop character in us as we obey His delegated authority by responding to weak and imperfect representatives. This requires humility and patience. It is easy to only obey the strength and perfection of God's direct authority, but God does not give us that option. He requires us to humbly accept His imperfect delegated authority.
- B. God desires to protect us from destructive temptations. Spheres of spiritual authority provide a covering or a protection from unnecessary temptations and harm. God often uses His delegated authorities to keep us from unnecessary temptations too difficult to overcome. Even those unsaved vessels over us are often the vehicle God uses to *"lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."* Matt. 6:11.
 - 1. God directs those over us without them even knowing it—Prov. 16:3, 7-10; 20:24, 21:1.
 - 2. Unsaved parents and employers may be mightily used of God to lead people from unforeseen temptations. This is a blessing inherent in obedience to authority.
 - 3. There are two types of temptation:
 - a. Those we can overcome in the will of God—I Cor. 10:13.
 - b. Those that defeat us because we are out from under spiritual authority and thus without sufficient grace to prevail. We can be delivered from evil by being kept from those unnecessary temptations that result from being outside of our spiritual covering.

IV. Authority in Our Congregational Life: Congregational Unity

- A. We cannot live merely as individuals. God has called each of us to participate with others in a harmonious and unified way. Our corporate life refers to our lives as they relate to our family, job, society, and church. God has instituted His authority in each of these spheres to secure unity. Unity is the direct result of obedience to authority. Authority is always part of the basis of congregational unity.
 - 1. We must see that the purpose of authority is primarily to establish and maintain congregational unity and peace.
 - 2. Authority and unity are two sides of one coin. You cannot have unity without authority even if it is a weak and imperfect authority.
- B. Since unity and authority are inseparable, God has set up specific guidelines in His Word that protect the unity of His people by especially prohibiting slander against His delegated authority. God will protect His authority by eventually judging what opposes it.

1. The people must not speak evil of parents or a ruler of the people (Ex. 22:28, Lev.19:3, 20:9, Acts 23:5. This is a very serious command because of the value God places on the unity of His people.
 2. To sin against a leader is to sin against the unity. To sin against the unity is to sin against God's purpose for that particular group.
- C. God's people are especially forbidden to receive an accusation against an elder in the church except on the basis of two or three witnesses – I Tim. 5:19.
1. This special prohibition is not for the sake of the one in authority as much as for the sake of the unity of those under his authority.
 2. An accusation against a leader undermines his integrity and therefore it undermines his authority. This results in division and turmoil for those under him. Division results in situations where the people lose confidence in their leader's authority and integrity. God wants to spare the people from this turmoil until the accusations are proven true beyond doubt. Undermining words create division—Prov. 26:20-21.
- D. Delegated authority entrusted to imperfect people is God's sovereign plan to aid in securing unity. It is based on God's choice, not on the superiority of the person in authority. God is not bound to always choose the superior and stronger vessels as His delegated authority.
- E. To stubbornly resist His delegated authority is to resist God in terms of the congregational direction and correction of a group of believers (Rom 13:1-2, Heb. 13:17). It is right to humbly challenge or appeal to God's authority structure. That can be wholesome and beneficial for the whole Body if God gives you wisdom for specific issues. Remember, all of God's authority is weak and imperfect, yet they are vital to God's plan to bring unity. God's plan to use imperfect people in positions of authority is an issue of His sovereign choice more than the adequacy of the vessel. There is chaos and division in any sphere of life that lacks authority.

V. Authority and Ministry

- A. Individuals and their ministry work must be under authority to function rightly. Independent ministries may do more harm than good because of the wrong pattern they display to the church. Every ministry needs to seek to understand their particular role in the context of authority.
- B. Paul respected the unregenerate high priest who had Jesus crucified. Paul repented of speaking sharp words to him because the high priest, even in a place of sin and unbelief, represented God's authority—Ex. 22:28, Acts 23:1-5.
- C. Jesus answered this same high priest because of submission to authority while giving Herod no answer—Mt. 26:64, Lk. 23:7-9. Jesus was not under Herod's authority because He did not live in Herod's jurisdiction. Jesus also paid taxes to Caesar as a statement of His submission to authority—Lk. 20:25.

- D. Obedience to authority is more important to God than sacrifice in ministry. Many people misunderstand this reality and thus seek to sacrificially serve God before they settle the issue of being submitted to spiritual authority. Saul did not understand this reality—I Sam. 15:20-30.
1. Sacrifice in ministry can be done in pride, individualism, independence, and rebellion. Obedience to authority helps to subdue these youthful lusts.
 2. Cain, Saul, Nadab, and Abihu offered sacrifices to God without first obeying authority. Their sacrifices were rejected. Disobedience to authority is Satan's principle of life—Gen. 4:1-8, Lev. 9:22, 10:3, I Sam. 13:8-14.
 3. Sacrifice without obedience to authority is a deception that seeks to serve God in Satan's principle of life—rebellion. This rebellion is oftentimes subtle and thus inoffensive to man, yet it is very offensive to God.
- E. The eternal value of our ministry rests partly upon our right relationship to spiritual authority. To minister in a non-submissive way is to build your ministry carelessly (see I Cor. 3:10). All such ministry may be revealed as self-seeking on the Judgment Day (I Cor. 3:11-15). We cannot truly serve God in our ministry while ministering in agreement with Satan's ways of independence and rebellion.
- F. Authority is a central issue in all of life. To subtly reject it is serious. We must always seek out God's authority because of our great respect for God, His authority, and His purposes. Our goal is to be free from all subtle forms of rebellion because of our great love and reverence for our Father and His precious church.
- G. We cannot truly know God in a deep way without possessing a deep revelation of His authority. Submission to authority is a spiritual issue—I Cor. 2:14-16, Eph. 5:20-21. A carnal man can only joyfully obey authority when it is entrusted to mature and adequate vessels that agree with Him. Holy and contrite believers can see God's restraining hand upon them even when it is weak people who possess delegated authority over them. They can see who a weak person is in the Spirit or whom they are in God's sight (see II Cor. 5:16).
- H.** The end times will be characterized by an increase of lawlessness which brings strife and division and causes love to grow cold (Mt. 24:12). In contrast, the glorious Bride of Christ will grow in authority which causes unity and fervent love to abound. This contrast will become greater over time. Congregational unity must have a proper understanding of authority.
- I.** Paul speaks of a church being established "*in God*" (I Thes. 1:2). This partly refers to a church having God's mantle of authority upon it. Does the work we seek to establish have God's mantle of authority on it, or are we moving out prematurely? God's mantle will eventually result in God releasing power as well as manifesting God's commitment to judge rebellion that might rise up against us in that new work.

To build a church without God's manifest authority upon it is to build without a manifestation of grace and judgment. It is impossible to build a strong church that can overcome the attacks of Satan without God's commitment to intervene with grace and judgment.

VI. Recognizing People According to the Spirit II Cor. 5:16

- A. Spiritual men see others as God sees them – II Cor. 5:16. We must look past the man of flesh and see the spiritual authority given to him by God. This is the only way that we are able to receive weak people as God's authority. Only a contrite, God-fearing man can see and respect God's authority in a weak vessel. A rebellious man can never accept this. He has no revelation of this reality (I Cor. 2:14-16).
- B. Moses, David, and Joseph all had older brothers who resisted seeing them according to the Spirit. They all saw their younger brothers according to who they were in the flesh without regard for the authority God sovereignly put on them. Paul was younger in the Spirit than the apostles in Jerusalem. Initially, they struggled with Paul's authority in the Spirit (Acts 9:26-30).
- C. The angels refused to revile Satan even in his fallen condemned state (II Pet. 2:10-11, Jude 9). They have great understanding of spiritual authority.

VII. Examples of Rebellion Against Authority

- A. Noah's Son – Gen. 9:20-27.
 - 1. Ham saw Noah's error and exposed it instead of covering it. This revealed Ham's rebellious heart – I Pet. 5:8. Beware of people who freely criticize God's authority without God's permission.
 - 2. Ham's brothers sought to cover his father's shame. This revealed his heart of submission to authority. There are proper ways to uncover the sin of those in authority.
 - 3. Rebellious spirits look for the weakness of those in authority. They run to tell it instead of seeking to honor the one in authority by covering their weakness. This is especially important in marriage. We need to appeal with patience and prayer according to Matthew 18:15-18.
 - 4. Noah's father tested the heart of those under him. This is God's way to test us as well.
- B. Nadab and Abihu – Lev. 9:22-10:3.
 - 1. Aaron's sons sought to serve God in their own way instead of submitting to God's ways and God's authority revealed in Aaron, the high priest.
 - 2. Many today offer ministry to God which is "strange fire" because it is not grounded in God's ways, authority, and in unity with His people.

C. Miriam – Numbers 12.

1. She confused her familiar natural relationship with the work of God, the mantle of God, and the authority of God.
2. She sought to correct Moses on the basis of a natural relationship, but she ended up touching the authority of God. We must learn to see who people are in the spirit and no longer see them only for who they are in the flesh – II Cor. 5:16.
3. God entrusted His authority to Moses, but she didn't understand that. So many today do not see the reality and holiness of spiritual authority in God's purpose. Authority is holy to God because God's work is holy to Him, and He requires it to be done in unity – I Cor. 3:17.
4. To sin against God's authority is to sin against God – Matt. 10:40. Many are so blinded that they view themselves as fully obedient to God without any regard to their relationship to God's authority and corporate purpose.

D. Korah – Numbers 16, Jude 11.

1. To speak against Moses was to spurn the Lord – Num. 16:3,30. We cannot ignore God's authority and then believe that we fully accept the Lord's way in our lives.
2. This rebellious spirit spread to the people – Num. 16:41-50.
3. A wrong spirit must be removed because it spreads and defiles many – I Cor. 5:11-13, Titus 3:10, Heb. 12:15.
4. It is vain to focus on obeying man – it is God's mantle and authority that we respect. Man's authority is nothing without God's authority. Korah thought he was disobeying Moses, and he found out that he was in reality disobeying God.

E. Absalom – II Sam. 15:18

1. Absalom used David's weakness in administration to rally the people to follow himself instead. A cause that focuses on another leader's weakness is contrary to God's ways.
2. Anytime a legitimate complaint arises against a leader, the right avenue is to pray for wisdom and understanding, and bring righteous appeal to the leader. However, Absalom enticed the people to rebel and caused the needless death of many.

VIII. Eldership

A. Lawlessness – Mt. 24:12, II Thes. 2:7

1. Lawlessness is powerfully at work seeking to bring division, strife, and destruction to every aspect of the church and society. There are overt forms of lawlessness such as murder, war, and theft. There are also subtle forms of lawlessness that undermine God's government in all aspects of the church and society. The overt and subtle forms of lawlessness are both enemies of righteousness.

2. The spirit of independence in the church which claims to be under no authority at all is a subtle expression of this lawlessness. The independent believer does what is right in his own eyes without any reference to God's corporate purpose – Judges 21:25. They claim to be “of Christ” and therefore they have no relationship to a local eldership nor do they have a sense of obligation to cooperate with God's purpose in the church. The independent believers who claim to be “of Christ” gave Paul great resistance and trouble – I Cor. 1:12, II Cor. 10:7-12, 11:12-15.
3. Jesus prophesied that this independent and stubborn spirit would increase in the final generation causing love to grow cold – Mt. 24:12. Lawlessness always produces strife which destroys the love of the brethren (Rev. 12:10, 13:4-7).
4. The church will triumph with a people unified, which results partially from being submitted to authority – Jn. 17:21-22. Therefore, understanding eldership is a vital aspect of this triumph.

B. Plurality of Elders but not Equality

1. New Testament churches were ruled by a group of elders instead of a one-man eldership. This is called “plurality or collegiality,” and it describes a team ministry as God's pattern for eldership.
 - a. The New Testament church was committed to the plurality of elders—Acts 11:30, Acts 14:23, 15:2,4,6; Acts 16:4, 20:17, Acts 21:18, Phil. 1:1.
 - b. Plurality of elders does not imply equality of authority within that eldership. Roles of elders vary in their individual function and responsibility; therefore, they vary in their authority within the eldership. Authority within a local body is based on practical function and responsibility in that local body.
 - c. The consistent pattern of the Old and New Testament reveals that God appoints leaders to function together but not necessarily carry out identical functions or to have the same measure of responsibility and authority.
2. Eldership is created by need rather than by a traditional number required to fill the eldership quota. A man can only have true authority as he fills a genuine need in a local body. To carry the title, “elder” without meeting a genuine need is valueless.
 - a. Why did Moses choose 70 elders? Because 70 men were needed.
 - b. To select all those who qualify as elders without reference to them fulfilling a specific need is unfair to those who qualify. Such an eldership suffers the frustration of having an office/title without a genuine function.

C. The Work of an Overseer

1. To Rule:
 - a. Ruling includes the responsibility and authority to bring direction and correction to the church. Such direction and correction brings resolution to the needy issues of the church. The ability to discern needy areas or needy people who

require new direction or correction is fundamental to the eldership that “brings resolution.”

- b. The elder is called to rule but never to dominate the lives of others. The true elder rules in the tenderness and care of a father – I Thes. 2:7-11, I Tim. 3:5.
 - 1) Rule – Acts 15:22, Rm.12:8, Heb. 13:7,17, 24; I Thes. 5:12-14, I Tim. 3:1-5.
 - 2) Dominate – Mt. 20:25, II Cor. 1:24, 10:8, 13:10, I Pet. 5:3.
- c. The eldership bring “rule” to all spheres of the congregational church life:
 - 1) The ministry spheres: Paul directed Timothy’s movement in ministry –see Acts 17:15, I Tim. 1:3, 18; II Tim. 4:9. The Jerusalem elders determined ministry issues – Acts 15:1-6, 22-23; Acts 16:4.
 - 2) The financial sphere – Acts 4:34, 5:2, 11:29-30.
 - 3) The administrative sphere – to meet practical needs (Acts 6:6).
 - 4) The spiritual spheres – the spiritual diet of the local body. I Tim. 5:17.

2. To Watch over the Souls of the Believers Hebrews 13:17

- a. To develop the weak areas: character weakness, emotional instability, and inability to cope with pressure, immature attitudes.
- b. To adjust the areas of sin: rebellion, wrong attitudes.
- c. To develop the areas of strength: calling and gifting.
- d. To provide oversight for the blind spots in one’s perspective of their life. The eldership is available to provide counsel and confirmation for personal direction.
- e. To “take care of” the needs of the church – I Tim. 3:5.
- f. To oversee and feed (shepherd) the church – Acts 20:28.
- g. To watch for wolves – John 10:12, Acts 20:29-31.
- h. To help the weak – Acts 20:35, I Thes. 5:14.
- i. To minister to the sick – James 5:14-15.
- j. To bring correction when the believer is wandering off the right path – I Cor. 5:5, II Cor. 13:2, Titus 3:10.

3. To Teach

- a. The eldership is responsible to provide a proper foundation in the Word to equip the Body to fulfill God’s congregational purposes and to nourish the individual believer in faith, hope, and love. A balanced spiritual diet includes some food that tastes good as well as some food that does not taste good. This involves individual and congregational instruction in the Word.
- b. The elder must be able to teach at least at the individual level – Heb. 13:7, I Tim. 3:2, II Tim. 2:2, Titus 1:7-9.
- c. The elder admonishes and counsels the individual believer – Acts 20:31, I. Thes. 5:13-17.

D. The Proper Response to Eldership

1. Obedience to the Eldership Hebrews 13:17

This obedience is required by God in terms of the congregational direction of the local body. We all have opinions on congregational issues, but God sets in His authority (elders) as His way to bring decisiveness and unity in congregational direction.

- a. Administrative Direction (i.e., decisions about allocations of church resources, social gatherings, general organization).
- b. Financial direction (i.e., building issues, distribution of finances, adding staff members).
- c. Ministerial direction (i.e., leadership training, outreach ministries, fellowship groups, ministry groups, home groups, sending out ministry groups, judging spiritual gifts, church discipline).
- d. Spiritual direction (i.e., corporate direction of the Word, the present “burden of the Lord” for the fellowship).

2. Submit to the Eldership Hebrews 13:17

- a. This does not involve elders directing or dominating the lives of individual believers. When someone has an allegation or areas of concern about church issues, the elder is the place of appeal.
- b. This refers to a teachable spirit toward the eldership to receive correction and adjustment in one’s individual life.
- c. The individual saints must respond to the elders with obedience and submission knowing that God will require accountability from that eldership. Such cooperation makes the elder’s task joyful instead of burdensome. Critical and divisive saints fill the elders with grief and turmoil – Hebrews 13:17.
- d. Honor the eldership – I Timothy 5:17-19.

- 1) The first honor is in reference to refusing to gossip and accuse (vs.19). The people must refuse to receive accusation against an elder except on the basis of two witnesses because of his position of spiritual authority that is foundational to unity.
- 2) The second honor is in reference to finances (vs. 18). God requires financial support to those who labor full-time in the Gospel (I Cor. 9:11-14, II Cor. 11:7-9, Galations 6:6). The tithe is the first fruits of our income which God requires from each believer in order to finance leadership in the expanding of His kingdom.

e. Prayer support for the eldership – II Cor. 1:11, Phil. 1:19

- 1) Paul requested prayer to counter Satanic attacks against him to release God’s Word through him – Eph. 6:18, Phil 1:19.
- 2) Satan desires to smite the shepherds to scatter the flock. Prayer must be a priority (Mk 14:27). Ask God to deliver leaders from evil men; II Thes. 3:2.

f. To know the eldership – I Thes. 5:12-13

1) God requires the saints to take initiative to know the leadership. Each saint should seek to personally know at least one of the established leaders.

2) The word, “*know*,” is translated *appreciate* and *respect* in other versions. The idea is to appreciate or respect by having a personal knowledge of someone in the eldership.

E. A Senior Authority

1. We believe in **plurality of the eldership**, but we do not believe that every elder’s sphere of authority is equal. Authority is based on specific function and responsibility. As each man’s specific function and responsibility is different, so is each man’s measure of authority. Each elder has specific boundaries for his authority. There are responsibilities allotted specifically to the charge of each elder. Romans 12:8, I Corinthians 12.
2. Moses prayed and asked God to set one man over the congregation that they might not be as sheep without a shepherd – Numbers 27:16-17.
 - a. Feeding and shepherding in this bigger sense of the word is much more than anointed teaching. David’s official position was king of Israel, yet his work is described as feeding Israel – II Sam. 5:2, Psalm 78:71-72.
 - b. This feeder was a military leader who gave the corporate vision and direction for the entire army. The judges had a similar mission. They were also called to shepherd and feed Israel – I Chronicles 17:6.
 - c. The priesthood taught the Word to Israel. The kings and judges gave the general oversight to the flock by using their unique position of senior authority to execute congregational direction and judgment for the good of the people.
3. The normal expression of God’s government at any given level of administration is for one person to exercise the final responsibility for direction (Deut. 17:14-20). Give special warning to this person with senior authority.
4. Such terms as “elders,” “feeding,” “pastoring,” and “shepherding,” do not originate in the New Testament. These concepts originated in the Old Testament with Israel, and they were carried over into New Testament times.
5. Israel’s first form of government was with one senior authority named Moses who was both the civil and religious leader of the entire nation. After the exodus, the government was divided into two parts: Civil and religious. Moses was the civil leader, and Aaron was the religious leader.
6. Joshua replaced Moses as the senior authority for the nation. Joshua was a military leader who worked in close relationship with the high priest – Numbers 27:21.

7. After Joshua, the next form of civil government was that of judges. When God raised up a judge, then the Lord was with him and delivered Israel. When the judge died, Israel sinned and then judgment came again – Judges 2:16-18.
8. The next period of civil government was through kings. Saul was the first. This continued until the Babylonian captivity. Saul might have been a good judge, but the temptations of the king's office were too great for him.
9. After the captivity, civil government took another change. The head man of the new order was known as a "governor."
10. Whether Moses, Joshua, judges, kings, governors, or high priests, the basic principle remains constant – there is always one with the final, overall authority. This basic principle stood through every change of government throughout Israel's history.
11. Kings and judges were both identified as those who "fed" Israel and were referred to as the "shepherd" of the nation. Joshua fulfilled Moses' prayer for a shepherd over Israel in Numbers 27:16-23.
12. There were elders who aided the main shepherd, and they were also referred to as shepherds – Ezek. 34. But there was always one man who bore the overall rule of the government over these shepherds.
13. James was continually distinguished from the other elders in Jerusalem as a reference to his position as senior authority in the church of Jerusalem – Acts 12:17, Acts 15:4-7, 12,13,22,28; Acts 21:18, Galatians 2:12.
14. Peter stood in that special place in Jerusalem before James replaced him – Acts 2:14, Acts 4:13, Gal. 2:9. A man in this position must voluntarily submit to the peer level elders joined to him.
15. Titus was in the position of senior authority over all the churches in Crete – Titus 1:5. Titus could not have set elders in the churches without this senior authority.
16. Timothy was responsible in a unique way to instruct and oversee the Ephesian church – I Tim. 1:3, 4:6,11-12, 5:17; 6:17, 20.
17. Paul was the father and senior apostolic authority over the whole church of Corinth (I Cor. 4:15-17, 9:1-2). Paul held this position over every church that he started. He had authority to correct, direct, and establish doctrines for each of those city churches (I Cor. 4:17, 7:17, 11:34, 16:1).
18. Paul set a man in Philippi who expressed his apostolic authority to the city (Phil.4:3). This was a similar role to Titus' and Timothy's (Titus 1:5, T Tim. 1:3).

19. The home is an example of plurality of leadership, the husband and wife, with varying authority, the husband having authority over his wife (I Cor. 11:3, Eph.5:22-24).
20. The Trinity is a perfect example of plurality without equality of function or authority (John 5:27,30; 10:29, 14:28, I Cor. 11:13).
21. The animal kingdom manifests this principle continually by allowing one to lead the rest of the flock, herd, pack, etc.
22. At any level of administration, the normal expression of God's government is for there to be one upon whom the Chief Shepherd places the anointing for the overall leadership of the group. Confusion has arisen concerning who this "one" is in the local church setting. It centers around the concept of "pastor." Technically, "pastor" is the term for a type of gift in the Word, not a position of authority. It describes a particular anointing for delivering the Word, not a measure of rule over a flock of God, which is developed only through involvement with the sheep. The one with senior authority is not necessarily a pastor. Example: Peter was senior authority, and then later it was James. Both were apostles. In practice, the pastor is usually also the senior elder of a local fellowship.
23. Conclusion: The principle of headship is expressed in the Trinity, the animal kingdom, the home, the church, the angelic, and the demonic kingdom. There is a senior leader in every administration of ministry and government, both in the natural and in the spiritual dimensions of God's Kingdom.

F. How Elders are Chosen

1. Elders are raised up by God and then recognized by those currently in authority (Acts 14:23, 20:28). Elders at RC Fellowship are first required to participate in eldership training to be certain of their gifting and call and to test the Biblical requirements of scripture.
2. The term of an elder is as long as they faithfully function as an elder. Eldership is not a term office. They function as long as they meet genuine needs.

Women in Ministry

I. Introduction

- A. It is important to acknowledge the role of women in church ministry and to express value and consideration toward the service of women in church ministry. The church must make an effort to encourage women in ministry through training, support, and release.
- B. It is equally important to recognize and establish what the biblical parameters are for women involved in church-related ministry. The opinions of various religious leaders or the social movements of the day are not to dictate the beliefs and practices of the church. God's ways as established in the Bible are to be the standards used to guide and support the understanding and release of women in church-related ministry.

II. Equality and Egalitarianism

A. Definitions

- 1. Ontological** – refers to the metaphysical condition of reality in relationships or state of being in a metaphysical existence. This is a state of relational position in the metaphysical existence of the Kingdom of God.
- 2. Economical** – the management of income, expenditures of a household, private business, community, or government. This refers to the administration of the material and natural world.
- 3. Egalitarian** – the state or instance of being equal; especially the state of being equal in political, economical, and social rights. In this discussion; equality in regard to role and function in the ministries of the church.
- 4. Complimentary** – the joining of efforts and gifts to become a stronger whole than the sum of the parts. To add to the value of another by contributing something different and beneficial.

B. Ontological Equality

1. In eternal value and position with God, men and women are perfectly equal. God shows no favoritism toward men or women ontologically. Without Christ, both men and women are sinners, condemned to hell. With Christ, both men and women are redeemed and will spend eternity with Jesus in Heaven.
2. Men and women together are joint heirs with Christ (I Pet. 3:7). In Christ's eternal Kingdom, He will not position people based on their gender. Jesus is the Supreme King of His Kingdom and He will embrace men and women who have put their faith and trust in Him.

3. In an eternal and spiritual value, men and women have no difference in the eyes of God. No distinction can be made between the genders as related to God's value of men and women.

C. Economically Different

1. God created both men and women in His image and likeness. However, men and women were created differently. They have different roles and functions in life. This is even true of the three persons of the Trinity Godhead. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are perfectly equal in value and purpose but function in very different roles. The Father is the will, the Son is the physical representation of God, and the Holy Spirit is the life-giver and communicator for God (Genesis 1:27).
2. Men and women are given different roles so that together they are able to express the image in the likeness of God. In marriage, men and women act together to bring about godly role models and character for their children. Men are generally physically stronger, more aggressive, more visually oriented, and more protective. Women are generally more relationally oriented, more verbal, more passive, and more nurturing. Men and women together have a great ability to express the full image and likeness of God. This joining together of different roles and functions for the benefit of both is called complementarianism.
3. Egalitarianism is the false concept that men and women were not only created ontologically equal, but they were also created economically (functionally) equal. This means that the roles of men and women are interchangeable. When implemented, this ideology will produce harm to the people involved and loss in the plan of God for the function of the genders. Egalitarianism fails to recognize the uniqueness of the genders and the need to compliment each other for completion in terms of the divine characteristics of God and the temporal function of humans. For example, it is obvious that men are physically stronger than women on the average—an average woman has 60% of the physical strength of the average man. It is clear that women are able to conceive and bear children while men do not have that capacity. The complimentary nature of the genders is not simply physical; the Bible goes to some length to describe the differing and complimentary roles of men and women in many areas. The church ignores this design of God to its own peril and harm.
4. There is an increasingly dominant view in the culture and in the church that different roles mean different values. This view highlights the natural roles of men as being more valuable than the natural roles of women. Women are encouraged to fill the natural roles of men so that they can have as much value as men. In reality, this view despises the feminine identity and accompanying roles in the way God made females. It is a devaluing of women and their feminine attributes. Women can only be of equal value if they are put in the same economical roles as men, in this view. This means that women's natural roles are devalued so that any woman who practices female identity roles is viewed as a failure and is of little value. This view is an insult to creation and to God Himself since He has within Himself the characteristics and attributes of both the male and the female identities.

III. Biblical Instruction

A. Ontologically

1. As “sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” there is neither male nor female. We are to treat one another in a holy and respectful way as image bearers of God. Ontologically, men do not rule over women, and women do not rule over men (Galatians 3:28).
2. Ontologically, we are to submit to one another in order to serve Christ and advance His Kingdom in the most effective way possible. Ontologically, we are not to make distinctions between men and women (Ephesians 5:21).

B. Economically

1. Economically, men and women have different roles. In that sense, they may be considered not to be equal. This is the case if equal means sameness. In God’s view, role does not determine value or equality. Role is a temporary and temporal function that is expressed through a physical gender. God has determined who will be male and female and therefore has assigned roles to them based on the gender He has assigned.
2. It is not the responsibility of the church to redefine the roles according to modernity or any other standards. Role definitions and identities are expressed in the Scripture. For man to make an effort to define roles of men and women outside of the clear commands of the Scripture is to damage the ability to express the image and likeness of God through the complementarianism that God designed. Further, a redesign of gender roles will bring about harmful effects for both men and women. It is incumbent upon believers to discover, not define, the economical roles of men and women as enumerated in the Scriptures.
3. Eve was the first person to have eaten the forbidden fruit and commit sin (see Genesis 3:6). However, Adam was charged with the first sin and the entering of sin into the human race for all time (Romans 5:12). This reality of imputation of sin was not based on the timing of sin; rather, it was based upon an economical order that had been established by God. That order was that Adam was created first and charged with being the covenantal leaders of those who would descend from him – the entire human race. Eve was created by taking from Adam’s flesh, and the two became one flesh again (Genesis 2:24). Adam was also the covenantal head of the newly established relationship called marriage. As the covenantal head of the human race and of marriage, Adam was responsible for what invaded those covenanted conditions. Adam was at fault for the harm and death sin brought because he was in the economical position of being the head even though Eve was deceived and ate the fruit first. Even from the first man and woman, God revealed a different economical role for man and woman.
4. The Israelite judge Deborah is often cited as evidence that there is no distinction between the role of men and women; however, two important points must be seen in the matter of Deborah. First, Deborah was a leader of the civil government, not of the church or the family. Second, there was inherent disgrace imputed to the

male leaders because they relied upon the leadership of a woman in the matters that are to be led by men. Deborah specifically told Barak that because of his cowardice, a woman would receive the credit for conquering the enemy (Judges 4:8-9). Because of these mitigating factors, Deborah should not be compared to being a leader in the church or the family. She was a civil leader with disgraceful and cowardly men under her.

- 5.** The sins of the fathers are passed onto the children (Ex. 20:5; 34:7; Num. 14:18; Dt. 5:9) indicating that the father is the one who passes down the nature of sin to the children. In Adam, the entire human race has been passed into sin and received a sin nature (Romans 5:12-14; 8:3). That is why Jesus could not have a human father. If he would have had a human father, he would have been covenantally passed into the sin of the human race. Jesus could not rightly have been declared free of sin. This role of the father being the one to pass on the immaterial sin nature to his descendants through Adam and all fathers, thereafter, reveals the distinct role of a husband/father in the covenantal position as the head of the family and the progenitor of the human race covenantally. There is a distinction between the economical role of men and women in both headship and the passing on of the sin nature.
- 6.** I Corinthians 11:3 declares that the *“head of the woman is the man.”* In I Corinthians 11:7, it declares that, *“the woman is the glory of man.”* These two passages indicate that there is a different economical and positional role for men and women based on their gender and their covenantal marriage relationship. Men are in the position of headship – not because they have earned it, but because God has declared it. Woman is to be reflective of man in the marriage relationship as man is reflective of Christ. These role variations are reinforced in I Corinthians 11:2-16 as it describes the way God made men and women differently with a purpose, specifically giving women long hair as a sign of a covering so as to honor their head, their husband.
- 7.** I Corinthians 14:33-36 commands women to *“remain silent”* in the church. The context is important in that this passage of Scripture is referring to potentially controversial matters that need to be judged. In this case, the wife is instructed to discuss the matter at home with her husband. This passage must be taken alongside other passages that do allow women to prophecy and pray publicly (see Acts 21:9, I Cor. 11:5). The forbidding of women speaking in the church here is limited to disputable matters where authority becomes an issue. In other words, women are not to speak authoritatively in the church. By extension, women may not hold authoritative roles in the church that would cause them to be in a position to correct and discipline men.
- 8.** Ephesians 5:23 declares, *“The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church...”* Other verses support this concept of the headship of the husband within the context of the family. By extension, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for the husband to be the head of the wife in the marriage covenant but for the wife to be the head of the husband in the church community. What would happen if the wife needed to discipline the husband within the context of the church, but he rebuked her for her actions within the context of the

family? Putting a woman over her husband, or other husbands in the church, does not agree with this passage in Ephesians.

9. I Timothy 2:11-15 provides additional insight into the economical roles that women are not to hold in the church. I Timothy 2:12 says, “*I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man...*” The verses that follow vs. 12 identify the reasons for this – having to do with the order of creation and Eve being deceived. We can see that women are able to serve in many roles in the church, but teaching men authoritatively or having other roles of authority over men is forbidden. These verses are a means of protection for women so that they are not exposed to deception beyond what they can bear and so they are not put into positions where they would have to correct men. Women are ill equipped to discipline rebellious men, and most men will not accept such discipline from a woman. To violate these verses exposes women unrighteously and refutes the clear teaching of the Scriptures.
10. The passages in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 give the requirements for someone to serve as an elder in a church. These roles are identified for men only. There are specific male references, such as the “*husband of one wife,*” “*a man whose children believe...*” and a good manager of “*his*” household. I Tim. 3:11 goes on to give requirements for the wife of an elder that are separate from those of the elder. It is important to note that these requirements for eldership are gender specific. There is a presumed mandate that an elder be a man, not a woman. These verses should be considered in light of other verses that also reveal it is the exclusive role of a man to have authority over other men and to speak for his family in the matter of disputed issues within the church context.
11. I Peter 3:7 addresses both the ontological relationship between husbands and wives and the economical relationship between men and women. Both husbands and wives are identified as being heirs of the gift of life. Wives are called the “*weaker partner*” in this passage. Husbands are to treat their wives with special respect as the weaker partner. This passage reveals that women are in a weak position in regard to men. This might be viewed from the aspect of physical strength, which is generally true. It may also be viewed from the aspect of women being positionally weaker. In either case, the burden is put on the man to treat women in a special way because of their weakness. It is irreconcilable to presume that the weakness of women would allow them to successfully govern men in the church setting when the Scripture charges men to be especially conscious of this fact.

IV. Conclusions

A. Where Women Can Serve in Ministry

1. Ministry to children.
2. Ministry to women.
3. Specialized ministries (compassion, benevolence, missions, music, worship, etc.)
4. Pastoral ministry that does not have authority over men.

B. Where Women are Not to Serve in Ministry

1. Eldership
2. Senior Pastor
3. Any position with authority over men
4. Teach men authoritatively

C. Practical Aspects of Biblical Roles and Complimentarianism

1. As the church becomes more female friendly, with female leaders over men, there will be a natural feminizing of the church. This means that the characteristics of the church will be more conducive to the female identity than to the male identity. Strong men will not come to these churches. Strong women and weak men will populate these churches.
2. Strong men will never willingly submit to women's authority in the church. It is counter-intuitive for men to look to women for strength and leadership. Strong men must see a God with strength – a God who is stronger than they are. A woman as a leader does not personify a God of strength – she personifies a God of relationship and sensitivity, a God who is soft.
3. Women are not equipped to discipline rebellious men. Rebellious men will not accept the discipline of women; therefore, women will be exposed to men's harsh rebellion in ways that they are not equipped to handle. Women will be harmed by this foolish experiment. It is the biblical role of men to protect women not to be disciplined by them.
4. Women are more likely to be deceived because they are more motivated by relationship and emotion. Because of this, women in leadership roles over men are more likely to fall into doctrinal error.
5. Men are called to be leaders, so God has made men to be aggressive. Because of the way that God has created men, they are naturally given to leading women. Most women have little problem following men. Most women have little problem identifying God in a masculine gender; whereas, most men would have a difficult time accepting a God with a feminine gender. These realities must be seen as reflective of creation – not of socialization – since they are constant throughout time, ethnicity, culture, and geography.
6. The church is weakened in the eyes of the world when it is led by women. While there has been some change in the view of women in leadership from a social perspective, the church will never be accepted in an authoritative way by other spheres of authority if women lead it.