

Dear Blackhawk Friend,

Over the past year, our Elder Board has been praying over a very important question: Should Blackhawk Church include women on the Elder Board? If you've been around Blackhawk for any amount of time, you know this is not a new question, but one that has been asked frequently over the years.

The current Elder Board unanimously believes the answer to that question is "Yes," but it is not our decision to make. That decision can only be made by the members of the church at a future congregational meeting. And therein lies the reason we have created the following documents.

Answering this question may seem straightforward, but it is not. Broadly speaking, there are two different views on how to answer it. Complementarians (people who believe that the Bible restricts women from having authority over men) would say "No." Egalitarians (people who believe that the Bible *does not* restrict women from having authority over men) would say "Yes." It is more complicated than that, as you will see if you keep on reading.

When I became the Senior Pastor of Blackhawk in 1994, I knew that those two views were already present. And since that time, I have had more conversations and exchanged more emails on the role of women in the church than any other theological subject (by a long shot). Hopefully, these pages will convince you that a reasonable biblical argument can be made by both sides.

In the past, the Boards' position has been one of compromise. We had (historically and currently) women pastors and leaders, but not elders. This compromise position has frustrated people on both sides of the argument. Some egalitarians who discover that we don't have women elders either stop attending or decline to join as members. Likewise, some complementarians who discover that we have women pastors and preachers either stop attending or decline to join as members.

The recommendation that we are making to the members in these documents marks a change. To some complementarians it will feel like a loss; it will feel like we are not compromising anymore. And that doesn't feel good. To some egalitarians it will feel like a win; finally, we can have women elders. This win/lose or us/them mentality grieves us as an Elder Board. We are praying for unity, and we are not going to argue that either view is superior to the other. Therefore, our approach to this topic is a bit unique. We are not out to change anyone's view.

To my complementarian friends: Thank you for staying and serving at Blackhawk even though you may have felt uneasy about having women pastors and women preaching on Sunday. I hope that you will be able to see that there are sound biblical justifications for the egalitarian position and that our desire to change is compelled by our strategic sense of mission.

It makes no sense to our unchurched Madisonian friends that we would have no women on our governing board. By excluding women from our top board, we believe we are putting up an unnecessary barrier as unchurched Madisonians consider attending Blackhawk or becoming a Christ-follower. We also believe that this change will strengthen our board. In my own home, I never make a major decision without sharing that process with my wife. In my job at church, I never make major decisions without sharing that process with key women in our organization. My leadership has only been strengthened by sharing the decision-making

process in my home and at church with women. Men and women often see and experience things differently. We complement each other best when we share leadership and authority. Shared leadership and authority makes Blackhawk stronger. We want to continue in that direction by inviting women to join the Elder Board.

To my egalitarian friends: Thank you for staying and serving at Blackhawk even though you have had a substantial disagreement with our past practice. I hope that by reading this paper you will be able to see that there are sound biblical justifications for the complementarian position. If this recommendation is passed by the members, we implore you to listen to those who disagree with you and work with them to achieve church unity. They will be stepping into the "disagree" shoes that you have worn and will be serving in a church in which they are disappointed. Please sympathize with them.

To all of us: Unity is the big win! Reasonable, Bible-believing Christ-followers regularly disagree on various subjects. Sadly, some migrate to churches that agree with their views. Uniformity is the norm. Everyone votes the same, looks the same, and acts the same. Rarely do people who hold opposing views agree to disagree agreeably and stay in the same church. We are praying that we will be that rare church where people who disagree about a substantive issue can learn to love and serve one another in unity. Let's dialogue but not divide. This has already happened at Blackhawk in many areas, and we pray it will continue. Uniformity is simple. Unity is messy business. Uniformity is natural. Unity is supernatural.

So, please grab a Bible and continue to read the following two documents.

Because of His Grace,

Chris

Women on the Elder Board at Blackhawk Church
A Recommendation

Since our founding in 1965, some things about Blackhawk Church have changed, and others have not. We have naturally and necessarily adjusted, adapted, and refined our ways of doing ministry, but we have not and will not change our commitment to Jesus Christ, the inerrancy of Scripture, and God's plan of salvation through faith alone in Christ alone. Consistent with this framework of permanence and change, the Elder Board recommends to the members that our church Bylaws be changed so that women can serve on the Elder Board.

What is the Issue?

To further accomplish Blackhawk's mission of reaching our community and to encourage women in our congregation to more freely use their gifts of leadership, the Elder Board asks the members to amend the Bylaws to include women to serve on the Elder Board.

The elders are recommending that we add two words to our current Bylaws (Article II; Section 1; A). These two words are underlined below.¹

"The spiritual leadership of the church, under the headship of Christ, shall be provided by the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders shall consist of four to eight lay church members elected by the members of the church. The number shall be determined by need and available qualified men and women. The Senior Pastor shall also be a member of the Board of Elders."

Four Commitments

In making this recommendation, we want to clearly communicate our commitment to the following:

1. We affirm the inerrancy of Scripture, which is part of the statement of faith of our denomination (Evangelical Free Church of America – EFCA) and is reflected in our emphasis on the Bible in our teaching and preaching.
2. We recognize both complementarian and egalitarian views as legitimate biblical positions. When it comes to church leadership, there are two opposing views:
 - Complementarian View: In the church, women should be restricted from certain roles that involve authority over men (e.g., elder, senior pastor, teacher, etc.).
 - Egalitarian View: In the church, there should be no restrictions on how women serve.

Our position is that both are plausible and can be supported by a faithful reading of the Bible. Not surprisingly, mature Christ-followers disagree on this issue, including seasoned faculty members at our own denomination's seminary who, having advanced degrees in biblical studies, come to different conclusions on this topic.

3. We believe that women as elders is a non-essential issue. Essential issues include the topic of the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the authority of Scripture, etc. Women as elders is an issue of church governance. The Bible does not speak clearly about how a local church should be governed. Much of what we have in the New Testament is descriptive of what the early Christ-followers were doing in the first days of the church and not prescriptive for all churches for all time.

¹ We will also change all gender-specific nouns and pronouns related to the volunteer elders to reflect our recommendation to invite women to the Elder Board.

4. We will not change our position on the issue of same-sex marriage. The reason that we say this is because some people believe that once we include women on the Elder Board we are heading down a slippery slope and soon we will also change our view on same-sex marriage. We respond by saying that we believe the two issues are completely different. If you want to learn more about why we think the two issues are different, please go to the FAQ section at the end of this document.

How Did We Get Here?

Today, Blackhawk has women pastors, ministry directors, preachers, and women serving in key leadership roles. Godly women using their leadership gifts have had a huge impact on our church. None of this is new. But we have never had a woman serve on our governing board (“Elder Board”). The Elder Board is comprised of men elected by the members who serve three-year terms. Since we minister in Madison where there are no restrictions placed on women in terms of leadership, we feel that our current practice makes no sense to the secular culture we are trying to reach. When we teach what the Bible says about men and women being created in the image of God and being completely equal (Gen. 1:27), it doesn’t make sense to unchurched Madisonians that we would have only men on our top governing board. That seems hypocritical to them.

Thus, one reason for recommending a change is strategic and missional. We want to do what is most loving and puts us in a place to reach the most people who are lost without Christ – without compromising our commitment to the Bible or the gospel. We believe that restricting women from the Elder Board creates an unnecessary barrier to reaching people who are lost without Christ.

We also believe having a more diverse board will help us become a stronger board. Over half of our congregation is female. Godly women comprise a large and vital part of our leadership community. Just as our church is better off having women in key leadership positions, we believe that our Elder Board will also benefit from having women serve at that level.

Now What?

1. We encourage you to learn more. The next document is a great place to start. It’s divided into three parts. Part I recapitulates everything we talked about in this document but in greater detail. Part II gets into what the Bible says on this issue. Part III answers many frequently asked questions.
2. On the evenings of Tuesday, June 5 and Thursday, June 14 at 7 pm. Chris and Charles will have an extended time of teaching about this issue where we welcome questions and discussion about the Board’s recommendation. They will do the same teaching on both evenings.
3. Some time before the vote, we will ask members to go through a period of prayer and fasting.
4. Then we will have a congregational meeting on the evening of Sunday, October 21 to vote on the proposed change to the Bylaws mentioned on Page 1 of this document. Everyone who calls Blackhawk their church home in Madison will be welcome to attend the meeting, but the decision to change the Bylaws can only be made by the members of the church.

We ask all members to read the next document and attend one of the teaching sessions (regular attendees are also invited to attend). As a voting member, you have a responsibility to understand fully this recommendation and be in prayer for discernment about your vote. Thank you in advance for fulfilling that responsibility.

John Smalley, Chair

Chris Dolson, Senior Pastor

Tom Crenshaw

Jon Dahl

Matt Dobereiner

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Women on the Elder Board at Blackhawk Church:
An In-Depth Discussion

Written by Chris Dolson and Charles Yu, on behalf of the Elder Board

The Mission of Blackhawk Church:
Building a loving community that follows Christ
in order to reach a community that is lost without Him.

PART I. A CLOSER LOOK AT THE ELDER RECOMMENDATION

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PART I. A CLOSER LOOK AT THE ELDER RECOMMENDATION

A. WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

In the history of our church, men and women have been free to use their spiritual gifts at every level of leadership except within the Elder Board; we have had women pastors since 2001. At present, the church Bylaws state that the Elder Board is the top governing board of Blackhawk Church, and it provides spiritual oversight to the congregation. The Board is comprised of the Senior Pastor and four to eight lay church members, all of whom are men.

The Elder Board is now recommending a change that we feel will help us better accomplish our mission of building a loving community that follows Christ to order to reach a community that is lost without Him. We are recommending to the voting members of Blackhawk that our Bylaws be changed so that women can serve on our Elder Board. Changing the Bylaws is not something we take lightly, and it is not something that the elders or pastoral staff can do on their own. These Bylaws may be amended by a three-quarters majority vote of the members voting at any regular or special business meeting of the church, if notice has been given as required in these Bylaws.

The elders are recommending that we add two words to our current Bylaws (Article II; Section 1; A). These two words are highlighted below.²

“The spiritual leadership of the church, under the headship of Christ, shall be provided by the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders shall consist of four to eight lay church members elected by the members of the church. The number shall be determined by need and available qualified men and women. The Senior Pastor shall also be a member of the Board of Elders.”

Currently anyone serving on the Elder Board must go through an elder training process. Entering that process does not guarantee that an individual will serve on the Board. An Elder Candidate Election Committee (ECEC) helps the Elder Board select potential candidates who have completed the training process. The members then

² We will also change all gender-specific nouns and pronouns related to the volunteer elders to reflect our recommendation to invite women to the Elder Board.

elect those candidates in the May annual congregational meeting to serve on the Board for a three-year term. Currently only men can go through that process. We are recommending that women should also be able to go through the same process, and if qualified, be invited to serve on our Elder Board.

B. HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Women already serve in almost every level of leadership at Blackhawk, both as volunteers and as paid staff. Tracing back two decades, we have had women pastors and women preaching from the Sunday platform. None of this is new, and none of it will be affected by this recommendation.

At the same time, the issue of women as elders has come up regularly before the Elder Board. In the spring of 2013, the men who were on the Board drafted a paper after much study. This paper was not widely disseminated but was available for people who asked questions about the topic. The paper is helpful to the pastoral staff because it communicates to people that we are aware of how controversial and complex the issue is.³ That Board concluded at that time that the issue was complex, and the Board didn't believe there was a compelling reason to change our position of having a male-only Elder Board.

Every May, following the annual congregational meeting (the 3rd Sunday in May), there is the potential for turnover on our Elder Board. New men join the Board, and those whose terms have expired leave the Board.⁴ For the last several years, we have asked the new Board to think about topics that they would like to discuss and discern in the year ahead.⁵ The first Elder Board meeting of every June is a time for the new Board to choose those topics. In June of 2017, the current Board decided that it would like to revisit the issue of women on the Elder Board. After a season of prayer and discernment, this Board decided to make this recommendation to the membership.

We are not recommending a change because we are being pressured by any individuals or groups at Blackhawk. Over the years, many people who feel strongly about having women on the Elder Board have decided to stay at Blackhawk and get involved. Some have been elders, some have been on our staff, and many have served in all kinds of roles in our church. We thank them for their patience and willingness to serve in a church where they have a substantial disagreement. They should be an example to all of us. Although we know we have members and non-members who would like us to pursue a change in the Bylaws, we are not recommending this change because of any pressure from them.

So why make this change? The answer is that it helps us reach the community around us and benefits our church community.

We are recommending a change now because we believe it will better help us accomplish our mission of reaching people who are lost without Christ. We are not caving in to cultural pressure; we are taking a lesson from the early church when Christ-followers were faced with the tension of remaining faithful to Scripture while at the same time reaching people who were not familiar with scripture. James, speaking for the other leaders of the church, said:

³ This paper is entitled: *"The Role of Women in the Ministry of Blackhawk Church"* (April 2013) and is available on request at the various Information Desks at our sites.

⁴ The Senior Pastor is the only permanent member of the Elder Board.

⁵ This reflects the way that we function as a Board. All our meetings are not "business" meetings. In some meetings, we discuss and discern various topics. We will often read a book or bring in an outside expert to help us better understand an issue. Past topics include prayer, race in Madison, homelessness in Madison, and immigration issues. The Board is a praying and learning community where we seek God's direction for Blackhawk on many different issues.

“It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God (Acts 15:19).”

The current Elder Board is asking this question: Are we making it unnecessarily difficult for an unchurched Madisonian to turn to God when they learn that only men can serve on our top governing board? We believe the answer to that is yes.

Operating in the secular Madison culture, institutions generally do not have policies that restrict women from leadership. When we teach what the Bible says about men and women being created in the image of God and being completely equal (Gen. 1:27), it doesn't make sense to unchurched Madisonians that we would have only men on our top governing board. That seems hypocritical to them.

Therefore, the first reason for recommending a change is strategic and missional. We want to do what is most loving and puts us in a place to reach the most people who are lost without Christ – without compromising our commitment to the Bible or the gospel. We believe that restricting women from the Elder Board creates an unnecessary barrier to reaching people who are lost without Christ.

At the same time, we believe this change will be good for both women in our community and our church as a whole. God has gifted women for leadership; our church should be a place where women feel free and encouraged to exercise their gifts. We have already benefited from women in leadership at every level except the Elder Board, and it just makes sense for us to have that benefit in the Elder Board as well.

C. FOUR COMMITMENTS

In arriving at this position, we affirm the following principles:

1. We affirm the inerrancy of Scripture, which is a part of the statement of faith of our denomination (Evangelical Free Church of America). Our affirmation is reflected in the way we emphasize Scripture in our teaching. Inerrancy means that “the Bible is without error in all that the writers intend to affirm as true,”⁶ and it is the ultimate authority in every area of our lives, individually and as a church.
2. Complementarian and egalitarian views are both legitimate biblical positions. The Bible is our authority, but on this topic, there are a lot of Christ-followers researching and writing, and they disagree with each other in all kinds of ways. Their viewpoints can be loosely categorized into two broad camps: complementarian and egalitarian.⁷ In the area of church leadership, we might say that they differ in this one key aspect:

- Complementarian View: In the church, women should be restricted from certain roles that involve authority over men (e.g., elder, senior pastor, teacher, etc.).
- Egalitarian View: In the church, there should be no restrictions on how women serve.

We believe that both complementarian and egalitarian views are biblically sound. Faithful, wise Christ-followers reading the Bible using accredited methods of interpretation can and do arrive at both views.

⁶ *Evangelical Convictions: A Theological Exposition of the Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Free Church of America*, (Minneapolis, Free Church Publications, 2011), 59.

⁷ Two evangelical organizations have formed that represent the two views, and both have excellent websites and publications that are biblically based. Christians for Biblical Equality (<https://www.cbeinternational.org>) promotes the egalitarian position, and The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (<https://cbmw.org>) promotes the complementarian position.

Holding this position does not mean we are neutral between the two views; rather, it means that we can individually hold to one view as superior while acknowledging the biblical legitimacy of the other. In taking the position, we are far from alone⁸—seasoned faculty members at our own denomination’s seminary with advanced degrees in biblical studies come to different conclusions on this topic.⁹

In Part II of this document, “What the Bible Says,” we will survey the arguments from both sides. Our hope is not to change your position, but to change how you think about the other position. So, complementarians, we don’t want to talk you into becoming egalitarians; rather, we hope to convince you that the egalitarian position is solidly biblical and those who hold to it are faithful, wise readers of Scripture who are not bowing to the winds of culture but are seeking to read the Bible well. Similarly, egalitarians, we don’t want to talk you into becoming complementarians; rather, we hope to convince you that the complementarian position is solidly biblical and those who hold to it are not misogynistic or patriarchal, but faithful, wise readers of Scripture who seek to read it well.

3. We believe that women as elders is a non-essential issue. While generating controversy, this issue is not an essential issue of faith.

Immediately someone will ask, “What are the essential issues of faith?” We believe that a list of essentials can be found in the historic creeds of the church.¹⁰ This is a short list: things like the authority of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the Trinity, and God’s plan of salvation through Christ alone. Some examples of non-essential issues include topics such as the timeline surrounding Christ’s return, the use of some spiritual gifts, and various modes of baptism. It’s important to realize that issues of “church polity” (i.e., how churches are organized and led) are never included as essentials of the faith in the historic creeds of the church.

Have you noticed that various evangelical Bible-believing churches govern themselves differently? Why is that? Do some churches believe in the Bible and others do not? No. The reason for so many differences is that the Bible does not speak clearly about how a local church should be governed (polity). Much of what we have in the New Testament is descriptive of what the early Christ-followers were doing in the first days of the church and not prescriptive for all churches for all time.

For example, the New Testament never describes or prescribes the kind of professional clergy structure that most Christians today take for granted. Today we have pastors and associate pastors, directors of this and directors of that. There is no “office” of “pastor” in the New Testament. Even using the word “office” is problematic. The first local churches described in the New Testament didn’t think in those terms. They had no church buildings and had no professional clergy like we have today.

But those churches did organize. As far as we know, most of the early churches were small and met in homes. One community might have had one church that met in several homes. So, the church in Rome might have consisted of several house groups that met in different locations. In the very beginning, Paul and Barnabas went around appointing elders for every church (Acts 14:23). Did that mean that each city had several elders or that each house group had several elders? We don’t really know. And we don’t see anything like a democratic system of voting for these leaders. Paul just appointed them. Paul called these leaders by two

⁸ Craig Blomberg, Professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary and a complementarian, writes, “I have appreciated teaching at Denver Seminary for the past eighteen years for many reasons, one of which is that it deliberately does *not* [italics his] take a stand on this issue, believing it to be a debate with respect to which Christians should learn to model agreeing to disagree in love.” Craig Blomberg, “Women in Ministry: A Complementarian Perspective” in *Two Views of Women in Ministry*, ed. James R. Beck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 124.

⁹ The faculty at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS), our denominational seminary, includes scholars in both camps.

¹⁰ To find some of these, google: Nicene Creed (325 A.D.), Chalcedonian Creed (451 A.D.), the Apostles’ Creed.

different names, elders and overseers (cf. Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7). In establishing these titles and roles, was Paul seeking to prescribe what all churches should do for all time? If so, then why do we vote for elders when they did not? Why do we have professional clergy when they did not? The New Testament is not clear about many things that deal with the forms of church governance that we have today.

Our own denomination, the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA), believes that each congregation is free to decide on the issue of women in leadership. It recognizes the local church as the final arbiter in this matter: "...it must be stated that because of our congregational form of church government, the local church is free to make its own decision on this matter (www.efca.org)." Clearly, our denomination does not consider this an essential issue.

4. We will not change our position on the issue of same-sex marriage. We bring this up here because many people believe that a church's view on women in leadership is somehow linked to its view on same-sex marriage. To them, we respond by saying, we respectfully disagree. The two issues are not linked; they are not comparable. For a more detailed discussion, please see the FAQ.

D. CONCLUSION

Historically our denomination is known to have this key distinctive: "In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, charity. In all things, Jesus Christ."

In that spirit we are recommending to the members of Blackhawk Church that they agree to amend our Bylaws so that women are eligible to serve on the Elder Board.

We believe that including women on the Elder Board:

- Is a much-debated issue. Godly faculty members at the same evangelical seminaries debate this issue without reaching a common conclusion. There are sound reasonable arguments on both sides of this issue.
- Is a non-essential issue. This is about how a church is governed, not about a core doctrine of orthodox historic Christianity (e.g., The Trinity, Deity of Christ, Salvation by faith, etc.).
- Eliminates an unnecessary barrier. Telling a woman that she cannot serve on a leadership board because she is a woman makes no sense in the secular culture we are called to reach. Our mission is to reach that culture with the gospel of Christ. There are moral issues about which we as a community of Christ-followers need to draw clear lines reflecting clear biblical teaching (e.g. our stance on same-sex marriage). Is the issue of women on the Elder Board really one of those moral issues? We don't believe so.
- Creates a stronger Board. Shared leadership and authority is just, powerful, and effective. Women will strengthen our Board as they have in all other areas of our ministry.

We prayerfully recommend that the members of our congregation affirm our proposal to change the Bylaws and invite women to serve on our Elder Board.

If you are interested in reading more on this issue, we recommend the following as a good place to start.

Bibliography

1. Beck, James, R. *Two Views on Women in Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005. (Our first choice) 359 pages.

2. Lee-Barnewell, Michelle. *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate*. Baker Academic, 2016. 221 pages.
3. Pierce, R.W., R. M. Groothuis, and G. D. Fee. *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005. 520 pages.
4. Piper, J., and W. Grudem. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006. 576 pages.
5. Webb, William J. *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*. InterVarsity Press, 2001. 301 Pages.

PART II. WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

The goal for this section is to discuss the question, “What does the Bible say about restrictions on how women serve in church?” Volumes have been written on this topic, so we cannot hope to be comprehensive in this document. What we hope to do is to get the conversation started, establish our basic approach (so you understand how we are reading the Bible), and then briefly survey the contours of this discussion. This is also a great opportunity to learn more about some of the complexities involved in interpreting the Bible and in the theological discussion of men and women in ministry.

As mentioned earlier, we can categorize the scholarly opinions into two broad views: complementarian and egalitarian. Specific to our discussion of church leadership, the two views can be defined this way:

- **Complementarian View:** In the church, women should be restricted from certain roles that involve authority over men (e.g., elder, senior pastor, teacher, etc.).
- **Egalitarian View:** In the church, there should be no restrictions on how women serve.

Our position is that both complementarian and egalitarian are sound biblical views, and we hope to show that both views are plausible. The temptation here is to jump straight into the relevant texts, but we think a better place to start is to talk about how we approach the Bible when it comes to ethical issues.

A. HOW DO WE READ THE BIBLE?

When it comes to ethical issues, we follow these four principles for reading the Bible:

1. There are two types of texts in the Bible: *Ideal* texts are foundational narratives or statements of principle that reveal God’s intention on an ethical issue. For example, Genesis 1:27 (“So God created mankind in his own image”) is one of the most important *ideal* texts; it establishes the principle of individual human worth and dignity. *Culturally-bound* texts are commands to people in a particular culture or descriptions of the implementations of the ideal in a particular culture. For example, Exodus 21:12–13 commands the protection of the individual as God’s image, but in a way that is specific to the culture of ancient Israel: “Anyone who strikes a person with a fatal blow is to be put to death. However, if it is not done intentionally, but God lets it happen, they are to flee to a place I will designate.”
2. Distinguishing the two types of texts is critical. Failure to do so may lead the people of God to maintain practices that were intended to accommodate a sinful human culture of an earlier age. This can result in tragedy and/or damage to the mission of the church.
3. Nearly all commands in the Bible are given to people who lived in a particular culture. To figure out how any such command is relevant for us today, we always begin by identifying the timeless principle(s) that underlies the culturally-bound command.
4. In every cultural context, Christ-followers should be moving toward establishing God’s ideal in His community and in our world. This is true especially in times of significant social change where the people of God must respond by carefully reflecting on Scripture and using the space created by social change to move closer to God’s ideal.

Why these principles?

We all know that interpreting the Bible isn't a simple matter of just reading a verse and applying it. For example, the New Testament repeatedly commands God's people to kiss each other during our time of communal worship (Rom. 16:16, 1 Cor. 16:20, 2 Cor. 13:12, 1 Thess. 5:26, 1 Pet. 5:14) – and we regularly ignore this command. This is far from an exception; we violate clear biblical commands all the time. We have pastors with tattoos (Lev. 19:28); we eat shellfish (Lev. 11:9-12); we allow guys to have long hair and even let them lead worship (1 Cor. 11:14); women pray without hats during our worship (1 Cor. 11:5). This list can go on and on. Yet, there are other commands that we hold dear, and we would fire staff and ask volunteers to stop serving if they were to violate these commands (e.g., murder, adultery, etc.).

This idea of distinguishing between *ideal* and *culturally-bound* texts is inherent to the Bible. Jesus makes this distinction when He teaches about divorce in Matthew 19:3-12. He first quotes Genesis 2:24 ("For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.") and then says, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives (Deut. 24:1) because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning." In teaching this, Jesus draws a distinction between texts that are accommodations to culture ("hardness of heart") and texts that explains how things should be "from the beginning."

We realize that we are pointing out something rather obvious, but we need to be reminded why we embrace these four principles when we start talking about ethical issues. A couple more examples demonstrate the importance of separating the *ideal* from the *culturally-bound* texts and how wrong things can go when people don't do it well.

- a. Polygamy. Genesis 2:24 is an *ideal* text ("That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh."); it clarifies that marriage is between two people. The problem, of course, is that in the biblical world, polygamy (more specifically, polygyny—a man having more than one wife¹¹) was not only rampant but economically necessary. So, in the Old Testament, God seems to accept polygamy ("If a man has two wives, and he loves one but not the other... [Deut. 21:15]").¹² In the New Testament, Jesus cites Genesis 2:24 to rebuke divorce, but does not speak out against polygamy. The only place in the Bible where polygamy is directly censured is in Paul's requirement for church leadership—the person must be a "one-woman man" (1 Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6).

The problem comes when we fail to distinguish *ideal* and *culturally-bound* verses; it leads people to the mistaken notion that God approves of polygamy. After the early church gradually rejected polygamy and embraced the Genesis 2:24 ideal, there were instances of this type of mistake. In the 16th century, Martin Luther reluctantly approved a man marrying a second wife; this decision created an infamous scandal for the fledgling reformation community.

¹¹ Polyandry, a woman having more than one husband, is almost unheard-of in the ancient world.

¹² The Old Testament describes numerous polygamous marriages without explicit rebuke: Abraham with Hagar (Gen. 16); Jacob with Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29:15-30); Esau with three wives (Gen. 26:34; 36:2; 28:9); Gideon with many wives (Judg. 8:30); Elkanah with Hannah and Penninah (1 Sam. 1:2); David with seven named wives (1 Sam. 18:17-30; 25:38-43; 2 Sam. 3:2-5); Solomon and his harem (1 Kings 11:3); and Rehoboam with 18 wives (2 Chron. 11:21). The law code assumes polygamy and commands fair treatment for the wives (Deut. 21:15-17). It does encourage the king to not multiply wives (Deut. 17:17), not as a rebuke of polygamy, but a discouragement of excessive foreign diplomatic entanglements.

Today, despite the absence of direct biblical prohibition, no legitimate Christian community approves of polygamy, because we understand that certain verses are *ideal* texts, and not others, and we move toward the ideal whenever possible.

- b. Slavery. The *ideal* texts declare all humanity to be created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28) and erases the distinction between the free and the slave (Gal. 3:28). Yet, the biblical world was a place where the economic system was built on slavery. So, as in the case of polygamy, there are no passages in the Bible that directly prohibit slavery. Instead, the Old Testament describes slavery without rebuke and tells the people of God how to properly treat slaves.¹³ Neither Jesus nor Paul speak out directly against slavery, though Paul does condemn slave traders (1 Tim. 1:10), encourage slaves to pursue emancipation (1 Cor. 7:21-24), appeal to the oneness of the people of God in commanding Christian masters to treat slaves justly and fairly (Col. 4:1; Eph. 6:9), and implicitly command the emancipation of a particular slave in his letter to Philemon.

Again, the problem comes when God's people fail to distinguish between the two types of texts. Many church leaders in the antebellum South used *culturally-bound* texts to argue strenuously that God intended slavery. Their arguments played a role in the outbreak of the American Civil War and the splintering of numerous American Christian institutions. Today, we still live in the tragic aftermath of their mistake.¹⁴

These two examples demonstrate the importance of distinguishing the two types of text and understanding the principle that underlies any biblical command. But of course, some will ask, how do we know which texts are *ideal* and which are *culturally-bound*? That is a great question, but it rightly belongs in a textbook on hermeneutics. For our discussion, we now turn to the *ideal* texts that deal with women in church leadership.

B. THE IDEAL TEXTS

The last section tells us that the *ideal* texts are the critical ones. But unlike the examples of polygamy and slavery, there are disagreements over which are the *ideal* texts and what they say about the role of women in the church, and it is not clear-cut who has the better argument. Below is a brief survey of the typical arguments advanced by both sides as they relate to their main *ideal* texts. We think the arguments from both sides are sound and reflect thoughtful biblical reading. It would be helpful to read this section with a Bible in hand.

1. Biblical texts that are the basis for the egalitarian understanding of God's ideal

Genesis 1:26-28 – "Male and female he created them"

- Egalitarian View: This text teaches that both male and female are created in the image of God and gives both men and women authority over creation. The text emphasizes the equality between men and women and reveals God's non-hierarchical ideal for His people.

¹³ Genesis describes, without direct rebuke, Sarah giving her slave Hagar to Abraham as a surrogate mother. The law codes assume slavery and prescribes how the slaves are to be treated (Exod. 20:10, 17; 21:2-11; Lev. 25:44-55; Deut. 15:12-18, etc.).

¹⁴ In 1995, The Southern Baptist Convention apologized for their support for slavery and subsequent racism (<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/899/resolution-on-racial-reconciliation-on-the-150th-anniversary-of-the-southern-baptist-convention>).

- Complementarian Response: While God intends a general equality between the sexes, this text does not rule out a loving hierarchy between men and women.

Genesis 3:16 – “Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you”

- Egalitarian View: This verse links male domination with God’s curse. It is a clear statement that male leadership reflects the consequence of the Fall. When possible, the people of God should move away from the situation described in this verse.
- Complementarian View: Complementarians disagree on how to read this verse. Some read it as a punishment for the woman—loving male leadership becomes twisted into mutual struggle for dominion where the man wins by force. Others read it as a re-statement of God’s intended hierarchy of male leadership.

Joel 2:28-29 – “Your sons and daughters will prophesy”

- Egalitarian View: This prophecy anticipates the new age and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This verse establishes equality between men and women in gifting and leadership, as prophets are spiritual leaders among God’s people.
- Complementarian Response: This prophecy does indeed proclaim equal gifting between men and women as well as women’s role as prophets; however, we need to make a distinction between prophesying and teaching.

Galatians 3:26-28 – “Nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”

- Egalitarian View: This verse states that in this new age, Jesus erases the culturally-bound role distinction between men and women and re-establishes the ideal of equality.
- Complementarian Response: Like Genesis 1:26-28, this verse reinforces a general equality between the sexes, but it does not preclude a specific role complementarity between men and women.

2. Biblical texts that are the basis for the complementarian understanding of God’s ideal

Genesis 2:7 – Adam is created first

- Complementarian View: The order of creation invokes the ancient Near Eastern practice of primogeniture, the practice of giving authority to the first-born male. In telling a story where man is created first, the author signals male authority. Most significantly, Paul makes this argument explicitly in 1 Timothy 2:12-13 (See the discussion below and in the FAQ).
- Egalitarian Response: The order of creation says nothing about role distinction between men and women. In Genesis 1, humans are created last, yet humans are commanded to rule over creation. The narrative in Genesis is replete with stories of the younger sibling taking the mantle of leadership, showing that God delights in violating primogeniture. And Jesus repeats the phrase, “The last shall be first (cf. Matt. 20:16; Mark 9:35, 10:31).”

Genesis 2:18, 20 – “A helper suitable for him”

- Complementarian View: The word *‘ezer* (“helper”) suggests a subordinate role. Furthermore, the word designates the woman as one who comes to the aid of someone else who bears the primary responsibility for an activity. As the man has the primary role, thus, he has leadership.

- Egalitarian Response: The word *‘ezer* (“helper”) is most often used of God in the Old Testament, so the word cannot by itself connote a subordinate role. Furthermore, coming to the aid of someone else does not imply a subordinate role. A teacher who helps a student with a math problem would not consider themselves subordinate to the student.

Genesis 2:23; 3:20 – “She shall be called ‘woman’”

- Complementarian View: In the biblical world, the act of naming is an exercise of authority. God names His creation in Genesis 1 to demonstrate His authority over the created order. He allows Adam to name the animals to signal God’s handing of authority to him. Foreign emperors rename Israelite kings to signal their dominion.

Adam first names the female as “woman” in 2:23 and then specifically as “Eve” in 3:20. Both acts communicate male leadership.

- Egalitarian Response: While some acts of naming are exercises of power, many are not; rather, naming discerns an essential quality of the thing named. Thus, Hagar names God as “You are the God who sees me (Gen. 16:13)”; Jacob names Luz as Bethel (Gen. 28:19) because of his vision. Obviously, Hagar does not claim authority over God in her act of naming; similarly, in the narrative, Jacob has no authority over Luz, and he makes no such claim.

Adam’s naming of “woman” in 2:23 is an act of discernment, noting the equality and intimacy between the woman and himself (“bone of my bones”); there is no claim of authority. Similarly, the naming in 3:20 is an act of faith that hope will come from Eve as “the mother of all the living.”

1 Corinthians 11:2-16 – “The head of the woman is man”

- Complementarian View: The Greek word for “head” means authority.
- Egalitarian Response: The Greek word for “head” in this verse means source, not authority.

1 Timothy 2:11-15 – “I do not permit a woman to teach”

This is a particularly key text in the discussion, and there are wide disagreements over how to interpret every verse. Below is a brief summary; for a more detailed discussion, please see the FAQ.

- Complementarian View: This is an *ideal* text where Paul gives the definitive interpretation of Genesis 1 – 3. He highlights the order of creation (man first) and places the onus of being deceived on the woman. For Paul, the Genesis story reveals God’s ideal of male leadership and the prohibition of women from a church-recognized role of authoritative teaching over men.
- Egalitarian Response: This is not an *ideal* text for our discussion. One possibility is that Paul is addressing the relationship between husbands and wives. Another possibility is that Paul is dealing with a specific situation in the church at Ephesus where women influenced by the Artemis cult have significant influence and power. Based in Ephesus, the Artemis cult teaches female domination over men by female virgin priests. The influx of these women into the church forces Paul to rebuke them and prohibit them from teaching false doctrine.

There’s a lot more to the discussion on all these texts with people going back and forth on incredibly minute issues, but we hope you get a glimpse of the kinds of arguments being made. They are not the kinds of argument made by people who are intentionally misinterpreting Scripture; rather, they reflect efforts of earnest people seeking to be faithful to the Bible and to God’s ideal.

In light of our discussion, here is our summary of the two views:

- The Complementarian View: Men and women are created in the image of God, equal in honor, status, and gifting, and they are created to complement each other. Specifically, the *ideal* texts in the Bible teach that God intends to restrict women from having authority over men in certain aspects as part of his ideal of complementarity between men and women. Thus, though we celebrate the passing away of a sinful patriarchy (and many of the associated *culturally-bound* texts), we need to be careful about over-correction.
- The Egalitarian View: Men and women are created in the image of God, equal in honor, status, and gifting, and they are created to complement each other. However, the ways men and women complement each other do not involve functions related to having authority. The *ideal* texts in the Bible do not put limits or restrictions on women serving in the Church. Because the world during biblical times was dominated by a sinful patriarchy, many of the descriptions and commands in the Bible about women are *culturally-bound* texts that reflect this patriarchy. The people of God are called to move toward the ideal all in cultural contexts, and as our society has shifted away from patriarchy, it becomes imperative for the people of God to embrace His ideal of non-hierarchical complementarity.

C. THE CULTURALLY-BOUND TEXTS

Once we have a handle on the *ideal* texts, we move to the numerous descriptions and commands in the Bible that relate to the role of women in the history of God's people. These texts don't espouse a clear transcultural principle, but they help us corroborate our understanding of God's ideal. These texts fall into three different categories: 1) texts that contradict God's ideal; 2) texts that seem to confirm the egalitarian understanding of God's ideal; and 3) texts that seem to confirm the complementarian understanding of God's ideal. We briefly summarize how both sides handle these texts, and again, our hope is that you will see that all the arguments reflect sound reasoning and a desire to be faithful to the Word of God.

1. Biblical texts that contradict God's ideal for women

There are many texts in the Bible that blatantly contradict God's ideal for how women are to be viewed and treated. Below are a few examples:

- Women as property (Exod. 20:17; cf. Deut. 5:21; Judg. 5:30)
- Husband as "new father"; Wife as "child" (Num. 30:1-16)
- No property inheritance for women (Deut. 21:16-17, cf. Num. 27:5-8; 31:1-9)
- Law requiring a rapist to pay the victim's father and the female victim to marry the rapist (Deut. 22:28-29)
- Adultery laws that scrutinize the women involved, not the men (Num. 5:11-31; Deut. 22:22-27; Exod. 22:16-17)

The reason we reject these texts and others is because they are utterly out of step with God's ideal reflected in both complementarian and egalitarian readings. Since they are accommodations to the sinful patriarchy of the Old Testament times, they should not play a role in this discussion, except as a further reminder that we cannot adopt a simplistic "The-Bible-says-it" approach.

2. Biblical texts that seem to confirm the egalitarian understanding

A large number of texts in the Bible describe women in leadership and/or command women to lead. Women lead or are called to lead in different spheres of life.

Family

- a. The Bible portrays children obeying both their mothers and fathers and commands them to do so. God desires both parents to receive honor from their children (Gen. 28:7; Exod. 20:12; Lev. 19:3; Deut. 5:16, 21:18-21; Prov. 30:17; Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20).
- b. Women are lauded for taking significant responsibility over their families (Prov. 31:10-28).
- c. The Bible portrays Jesus as obeying his father and mother (Luke 2:48-51).

Workplace

- a. The Bible portrays male employees submitting to their female employers (1 Sam. 25:18-19; 2 Kings 4:8,24; Esther 4:5). Of particular note is Sheerah, whom the Bible memorializes as the woman responsible for a massive construction project; it is virtually certain that she exercised authority over male workers (1 Chron. 7:24).
- b. The New Testament commands servants to obey their masters, which include both men and women (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22; 1 Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:18).
- c. The Bible also mentions prominent women who were likely leaders over their households (Luke 8:3; Acts 13:50; 16:14-15, 40; 17:4,12; 1 Cor. 1:11).

State

The Bible portrays women exercising political power as royalty or magistrates (1 Kings 10:1-13; 11:19; 15:13).

Spiritual Authority

- a. The Bible names women as prophets: A prophet is God's spokesperson and a spiritual leader of his people:
 - Miriam (Exod. 15:20; Mic. 6:4)
 - Deborah (Judg. 4:4)
 - Huldah (2 Kings 22:14)
 - Noadiah (Neh. 6:14)
 - Isaiah's wife (Isa. 8:3)
 - Anna (Luke 2:36)
 - Four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9)
- b. Women served as leaders in the early church:
 - Phoebe — "a deacon of the church in Cenchreae" (Rom. 16:1)
 - Priscilla — Paul's "co-worker" (Rom 16:3); a church meets at their house (Rom. 16:4)
 - Junia — "outstanding among the apostles" (Rom. 16:7)
 - Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis — "hard workers" (Rom. 16:6, 12)
- c. Women issued authoritative prophetic orders with national implications:
 - Deborah (Judg. 4:6, 14)
 - Huldah (2 Kings 22:15)

d. God gave women institutional authority to rule over the people of God:

Judg. 4:4 "Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time."

• Egalitarian View: Set in patriarchal times, these texts are astounding in their counter-cultural affirmation of women in leadership and having authority over both men and women in all different spheres of life. Three categories of women are particularly worth highlighting for this discussion:

1. The Prophet. The prophets speak for God; they demand obedience even from the king. The story of King Josiah and Huldah (2 Ki. 22-23) tells how the King of Judah undertakes drastic spiritual reformation of the entire nation in submission to the authority of a prophet—a woman prophet.
2. The Apostle. The Bible reveals apostles as ancient church-planters; they are foundational to the establishment and growth of churches. Paul as an apostle claims authority over a number of churches. In Romans 16:7, Paul names Junia, a woman, as an outstanding apostle. This is clear evidence of the kind of authority women had in the early decades of the church.
3. The Judge. "Judge" is a mistranslation; it does not refer to a person who sits in a courtroom and decides cases. To "judge (*sh-p-t*)" is to govern. Thus NIV 2011 rightly translates Judges 4:4 as Deborah "leading (*sh-p-t*) Israel at that time." Judges 4-5 portrays Deborah as both the spiritual and political leader during this period in pre-monarchic Israel. There is absolutely no doubt that she exercised authority over all the men, including Barak, the man in charge of the army.

These three categories of women combined with the others paint a wholistic picture of God's encouraging and blessing women to engage in leadership in all levels and spheres of life. This picture confirms God's ideal of non-hierarchical complementarity.

• Complementarian Response: Most of the texts in this section cohere with the view that God intends general equality between men and women with a hierarchical complementarity narrowly-focused on teaching and governance. There is equality in parenting and equality in gifting; thus, women have authority over their children; they speak for God in writing Scripture and as prophets. Likewise, women have equal standing before God in prayer and worship.

The issue here is direct authority over men within the community of God's people. As such, we need to address the three categories of prophet, apostle, and judge:

1. The Prophet. While the prophet has authority, the authority is not given to the person, but to the divine message. Generally speaking, prophets are consulted, they give pronouncements, but they're not involved in the day-to-day administration of God's people and the leading of public worship. As such, a prophet is not comparable to the office of pastor or elder in the New Testament church. A better parallel would be the Old Testament priest who is responsible for regular teaching and leading public worship. In the Old Testament, women are precluded from priesthood* – clear evidence that while God intends a general equality, certain offices are prohibited, reflecting a narrowly-focused hierarchical complementarity.

*Egalitarian response: Exclusion from priesthood is not based on sex, but on the issue of ritual purity. In the ancient Near East, blood symbolizes the energy for life; thus, to discharge blood is a symbol for death and a source of ritual uncleanness. A woman priest with regular menstruation would be unable to serve in the temple for significant amount of time (Lev. 15:19).

2. The Apostle. Junia most likely refers to a woman; however, the phrase "outstanding among the apostles" could be read as "noteworthy in the eyes of the apostles." In any case, even if Junia were a female apostle, the word "apostle" does not assign Junia a place among The Twelve, but is more

likely a generic term referring to an itinerant evangelist or missionary. As such, an apostle who is an evangelist/missionary would not have authority over churches.

3. The Judge. While it's indisputable that Deborah exercised authority over men, the story of Judges 4-5 is designed to shame men for their fear of assuming leadership. The recounting of Barak's fears and the handing over of Sisera to a woman shows that this entire narrative serves to reprove unfaithful men, not to establish an alternative norm to male governance.

3. Texts that seem to confirm the complementarian understanding

1 Corinthians 14:34-35

- Complementarian View: This passage does not ban women from all speaking.¹⁵ Within the context of Paul's overall argument, this passage prohibits women from the very specific role of evaluating prophecies (1 Cor. 14:29-32). Evaluating prophecies falls under the larger magisterial function of authoritative teaching. Thus, this passage supports the ideal found in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 which prohibits women from having a church-recognized teaching authority over men.
- Egalitarian Response: This text is not about authority for teaching; rather, Paul's main concern in this section is with order and intelligibility in worship (1 Cor. 14:7-9, 16, 23, 28, 30-31, 33). In this context, this passage is dealing with disruptions by married women who interrupt the service with questions. It is likely that the Roman cultural practice of women generally learning at home (instead of in public) has produced among them a style of learning through questions and conversation rather than learning in silence.

1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6

- Complementarian View: These passages distinguish elders/overseers from deacons. Elders/overseers are responsible for leadership and teaching (1 Tim. 3:2 "able to teach") whereas deacons do not have these functions. 1 Timothy 3:11 likely refers to women deacons, but the elder/overseer office is reserved for men, in line with the ideal established in 1 Timothy 2:11-15.
- Egalitarian response: The requirement for an elder to be male resides only in the phrase "husband of one wife," translated in NIV 2011 as "faithful to his wife." The phrase does not exclude women; rather it is focused on the problem of polygamy. Paul wants to prevent polygamous men from eldership, and Paul doesn't address women because women do not have multiple husbands in the Greco-Roman world. If we think this phrase precludes women, then we must also prevent single men (people like Paul and Jesus) from becoming elders. Furthermore, the same phrase shows up as a requirement for deacons (1 Tim. 3:12), yet we have clear evidence that women served as deacons in the First Century church (Rom. 16:1, cf. 1 Tim. 3:11).

¹⁵ Prominent complementarian scholars generally share this view: Craig Blomberg writes, "Unless we assume Paul gratuitously contradicted himself in the space of three chapters, however we account for this passage, we cannot take it to mean Paul was telling women never to utter a word in church!" Blomberg, "Women in Ministry: A Complementarian Perspective," 161.

Thomas Schreiner writes, "...for however it is interpreted, Paul cannot be forbidding women from speaking at all. This would clearly contradict the encouragement in 1 Corinthians 11:5 and many other texts of Scripture that allow women to prophesy." Thomas Schreiner, "A Response to Craig Blomberg" in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. James Beck, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 192.

D. A. Carson draws the same conclusion: "Some continue to see the demand for silence as an absolute rule.... This interpretation does not seem very likely..." D. A. Carson, "Silent in the Churches: On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36" in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Pier and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991), 145.

Colossians 3:18-19, Ephesians 5:21-33, and 1 Peter 3:1-7

- **Complementarian View:** While focused on the relationship between husband and wives, the headship of the husband corroborates the pattern established in the *ideal* texts for male leadership.
- **Egalitarian View:** These texts are not relevant for the discussion of the role of women in the church. It is entirely possible to hold to a complementarian view of marriage while affirming an egalitarian view for the church; indeed, many scholars do so.

PART III. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Section 1. Questions Specific to Blackhawk Church

1. *I don't understand the difference between an elder and a pastor at Blackhawk. Please explain.*

The terms “elder” and “pastor” can be confusing because different churches use the terms differently. Some churches equate the two terms and some, like Blackhawk, do not. The authors of the New Testament used the nouns *presbyteros* (“elder”) and *episkopē* (“overseer/bishop”) to refer to the same person (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7). They were to *poimaino* (shepherd/pastor) God’s flock (Acts 20:28). The noun *poimēn* (“pastor” or “shepherd”) is used only one time in the New Testament to refer to a church leader (Eph. 4:11), and it is not explicitly linked to the elder or overseer in that passage. In short, the term “pastor” is used so infrequently that it is hard to build a case that supports the way we use the term as a title today. The rise of a group of persons who we would refer to as “clergy” comes much later in history. When Christianity was legalized in 313 A.D. and moved into public spaces, everything changed. The terms “elder,” “deacon,” and “bishop” soon became titles that were far different from Paul’s use of the terms in the New Testament.

At Blackhawk Church, elders are volunteers who oversee the church by providing accountability for the management in accomplishing the vision, mission, and core values of Blackhawk. They are accountable to Jesus Christ for Blackhawk Church (the buck stops with the elders). The Elder Board consists of lay volunteers who are elected by the members to serve three-year terms. The Senior Pastor is the only permanent member of the Elder Board and the only member of the pastoral staff that is on the Board. The elders function like wise mature sailors who are in the “crow’s nest” on top of the center mast of a ship. They are looking towards the horizon and are making sure that the ship is going in the right direction. But they don’t hoist the sails of the ship.

The pastors are the paid staff who lead, equip, and support all the ministries of the church in keeping with the long-term direction that the elders have set. The pastoral staff are the “managers” of the church. They function like the officers of a ship. They direct the “crew of the ship” (the congregation) to hoist the sails and make sure that the ship is going in the right direction. It takes a large crew to make the ship function, and they know, love, and help those people. Many of these “officers” have advanced degrees in biblical and theological studies and have lots of experience in a variety of ministry settings. They know the crew, and the crew knows and trusts them.

In one way or another all the pastoral staff are accountable to the Senior Pastor, who is accountable to the Elder Board. No one elder has any authority by himself. The elders’ authority exists as a governing board. They function over the management of the pastoral staff by giving the Senior Pastor clear written expectations and limitations about where the ship should go.

2. *What is the history of women serving as leaders at Blackhawk Church?*

Blackhawk Church would not be Blackhawk Church without the significant contribution of many women who have been essential to the leadership and ministry of this church since its inception in 1965. We have never believed that Scripture in a timeless way restricts women from teaching or having authority over men in the church setting. Blackhawk has had women who are pastors, directors, speakers, and leaders of a variety of ministries that involve the whole church – men, women, and children.

Over the years several women have preached on Sundays at Blackhawk. They include: Jill Briscoe (Elmbrook Church), Alice Mathews (Gordon-Conwell), Lisa Espineli Chinn (InterVarsity and former member of Blackhawk), Carol Fricke (Director of Children's Ministry at Blackhawk), and most recently Kayla March (Pastor on Blackhawk's Downtown Team). Kayla is now part of our teaching team.

In the late 90s and early 2000s the church started to grow rapidly, and the question of whether a woman could have the title "pastor" was presented by the elders to the members. On January 16, 2001 the members discussed the matter and voted to extend a "call" to Stephanie Seefeldt as our first woman pastor. Her title was "Pastor of Worship Arts Ministry." Since then we have had several women who have had "pastor" in their job title.

In calling people to lead at Blackhawk, the first question we ask is whether people are gifted and equipped to do such and such a ministry, not whether they are men or women. Blackhawk is a church where gifted women are encouraged and empowered to use those gifts.

Today, if you look at the staff page on our website, you will see many women who function in a variety of leadership roles.

3. Does this bylaw change allow a woman to become the Senior Pastor?

This bylaw change does not affect the eligibility requirement for the Senior Pastor; it changes only the eligibility of the volunteer elders, creating the potential for women to serve on the Board. If the members of Blackhawk Church want to hire a woman Senior Pastor, the members will have to approve an additional bylaw change. To hire any Senior Pastor requires a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote of the members voting. This is the only staff position that is directly voted on by the members.

4. What if the recommendation does not pass? Will the Elder Board push for another vote at a later date?

Hypothetical questions are difficult to answer because we don't know all the facts. If the vote fails by a small margin, that says one thing. If the vote fails by an overwhelming margin, that says something else. The Board will have to face the future with wisdom and prayer in the same way that we try to face all the other matters that come to us. We pray that we will be sensitive enough to listen to the Spirit of God and the congregation at the same time so that our decisions reflect what we believe is the best for the health and wellbeing of the church as a whole.

5. If this bylaw change passes, how soon will we have women elders?

The soonest that we could possibly have at least one woman on the Elder Board would be in May of 2019.

We normally receive names for elder training in the fall of the year. If this change passes, we could receive nominations for men and women in the fall of 2018. If a woman is nominated, she will be considered for our elder training process. After completing that process, the woman would enter into a pool of other candidates who have gone through that same process in the past. If the Elder Candidate Election Committee (ECEC) selects her out of that pool as a viable candidate (just like they do a man), then the candidate would first be presented to the Board and then to the members for a vote at the annual meeting in May 2019. If elected by the members, the candidate would begin to serve a three-year term.

It is important to note that this bylaw change doesn't guarantee that a woman will serve on the board according to this timeline. What it does change is that the elder candidate process will no longer be restricted to men. Women will have the same opportunity as men and will go through the same qualifying process that men go through. We want the best people on the board regardless of gender.

It is also important to mention that the same restrictions will apply to both men and women. For example, men who are spouses of senior level staff are not part of our elder candidate pool. In the same way, women who are spouses of senior level staff will not be a part of our candidate pool.

6. What is the view of our denomination, the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA)? Does making this bylaw change affect our standing with the EFCA?

To answer this question, we need to understand one of the philosophical pillars of EFCA. That pillar is congregationalism. Chris has been reminded of this as he has kept the president of the denomination, Kevin Kompelien, informed as to the proposal we are making. Kevin has assured Chris that each congregation has the right to govern its own affairs under the Lordship of Christ. If we abide by the theological statement of faith, we will be in good standing with the denomination. The issue of women being on the Elder Board is not addressed in the statement of faith; it is also explicitly identified by the denomination as an issue on which each church has the freedom to make its own decision ("...it must be stated that because of our congregational form of church government, the local church is free to make its own decision on this matter"¹⁶). If this decision is made by the members of our congregation and not by the Elder Board or pastoral staff, we are in good standing with the denomination. Kevin is praying for us, that we would stay united as a local church and reach our community with the gospel in a powerful way.

7. How would this change affect staff and volunteers who are complementarians?

It is our hope that we will have unity in our church as we move forward and that staff and volunteers who are complementarians will continue to serve in their roles at Blackhawk. Again, we are not trying to change anyone's view, but we simply don't believe that this is an essential issue on par with other doctrines like the deity of Christ. Our denomination has this key distinctive: "In essentials unity. In non-essentials, charity. In all things, Jesus Christ." We hope that we will be able to focus our efforts on our mission of building a community to reach a community.

8. If I am a complementarian, why should I vote yes?

A complementarian could vote "yes" to having a woman on the Elder Board if they agree that...

- This really is a much-debated issue. Godly people using accepted methods of interpretation do come to different conclusions on this topic. Reasonable Bible-believing people can and do disagree on this issue.
- This is a non-essential issue. Although it is important, it is not in the same category as issues that are foundational to Christianity like the deity of Christ or salvation by faith alone in Christ alone.

¹⁶ Greg Strand, "Ministry of Women and Credentialing." Evangelical Free Church of America. <https://www.efca.org/blog/understanding-scripture/ministry-women-and-credentialing> (accessed April 2, 2018).

- This would help our church be more missional. Reaching our community is important and having a gender restriction on leadership would make no sense to my non-believer friends who I would like to see come to Blackhawk. There are plenty of ethical and moral issues about which we as a community of Christ-followers need to maintain. Those issues alone can be barriers to reaching my friends. Why would we want to make it even more difficult for non-believers who are turning toward God? The track record of the early apostles consistently opting for a missional direction in their secular godless culture makes a lot of sense.
- This would create a stronger Elder Board. Women would strengthen the Board just as they have every other area of ministry at Blackhawk.

Section 2. Broader Questions

1. What are the essentials of Christian faith? How are we to understand the difference between “essentials” and “disputable matters”?

At Blackhawk we would consider the essentials of the faith to be things like the authority of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the Trinity, and the gospel – God’s plan of salvation by grace through faith alone in Christ alone. These are the kinds of things that we find in the historic creeds of the church. These things don’t change from time to time and from culture to culture. The list is small.

Non-essentials of the faith or “disputable matters” are the kinds of things that Christians frequently disagree about. “Disputable matters” are non-moral issues that often reflect a tradition or practice. Some “disputable matters” would be things like the mode of baptism, the frequency and way to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, and various styles of worship. We would also consider church polity (how a church governs itself) as a disputable matter. Christians have a history of disagreeing about how they are to best organize themselves in the local church. This is part of the reason we have so many denominations.

Disputable matters don’t seem disputable to people who feel strongly about them. For example, we’ve had people decide not to attend Blackhawk because we don’t have a permanent cross in the front of the “sanctuary.” Paul instructs us about how we are to handle disputable matters in Romans 14:1-15:13. We are to “make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification (Rom. 14:19).” Sometimes that means that we give up something that is important to us for the sake of someone else.

When James, one of the leaders of the early church, declared, “It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God (Acts 15:19),” he was talking about eliminating circumcision as a requirement for being a follower of God (cf. Acts 15:5). We know from reading the New Testament that many Jewish people thought circumcision was an essential of the faith, yet to the early apostles, circumcision was not. The apostles made the change, and the motivation was missional. They wanted to reach more and more people with the gospel, and they didn’t want a non-essential thing like circumcision to be an unnecessary barrier to reaching their culture.

2. Is the issue of affirming gay marriage an “essential of faith”? If not, how is it different from the issue of women elders?

This is a hot-button issue in our culture, so we want to be clear about our posture and beliefs. To anyone reading this who is gay or lesbian, indeed anyone in the LGBTQ community, you are welcome at Blackhawk Church; we want you to find community here and grow in your pursuit of God. It’s what we want for

everybody. We want to help you get to know God, to experience grace, and to embrace His vision for the world. At the same time, we don't want to mislead anyone about our beliefs. We believe that God intends marriage to be between a man and a woman.

The issue of same-sex marriage comes up when we talk about women leadership in church because many people think the two issues are linked. As one website puts it:

...Research shows that the majority of churches and denominations that affirm women pastors and elders often then adopt pro-homosexual and pro-abortion positions... it is important to note that when compromise occurs in one area of scripture, it is easier to compromise in another (www.carm.org).

We disagree with this notion. We don't think the two issues are linked because the nature of the biblical data on the two issues are completely different. If you have read through the "What the Bible Says" section of this paper, you have a sense of the wide range of biblical passages invoked in the discussion, the way the different texts point in different directions, and the complexity of the arguments involved in interpreting them to produce a coherent set of beliefs. In contrast, there is a narrow dataset when it comes to homosexual marriage, and the texts point in the same direction:

Using our categories of *ideal* and *culturally-bound text* (we explain these categories at the beginning of "What the Bible Says"), we note that Genesis 2:24 is the *ideal* text ("That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh."); it declares that marriage is intended for two sexually-differentiated people in a covenantal relationship. In both ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman culture, homosexuality was openly practiced. Yet within these cultures, the biblical authors consistently rebuked every form of homosexuality that manifested in their time. The Old Testament narratives give a negative portrayal of homosexuality in Genesis 19 and Judges 19. The law code declares homosexuality out of bounds for the people of God (Lev. 18:22; 20:13). In the New Testament, Paul declares homosexuality a consequence of human rebellion (Rom. 1:26-27) and again declares the behavior out of bounds for the people of God (1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10). Therefore, we have an *ideal* text that says, heterosexual marriage is God's ideal, and we have *culturally-bound* texts in both Old and New Testament that prohibit ancient manifestations of homosexuality for God's people. That is about as clear as it gets in biblical ethics.

So, is this issue essential to faith? No, it is not listed in the creeds; it is not on par with denying the deity of Christ. However, this issue is also not a disputable matter (one on which for the sake of unity, we might agree to disagree). There is a third category – beliefs and practices that are not mentioned in the creeds, but contradict the explicit and consistent teachings of the Bible. For example, polygamy and slavery are also not mentioned in the creeds, yet they are not disputable matters; the church is in agreement that the two practices violate God's ideal (See the analysis of the two issues at the beginning of "What the Bible Says" and note that the biblical data for homosexual marriage is more consistent than that of both polygamy and slavery).

Historic Christianity has spoken clearly and with great unity regarding sexual behavior. No one really questions the unified voice that orthodox Judaism and Christianity have had for centuries regarding same-sex marriage or relationships. Specifically, our denomination, the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) has taken a clear stand on same-sex marriage. The General Conference of the EFCA recently adopted this resolution (June 2017): "The EFCA affirms that God created human beings uniquely in His image as male and female, and He has designed marriage to be a covenantal relationship between one man and one woman."

We also note that EFCA explicitly allows individual congregations freedom on the issue of women in church leadership, but does not do so on the issue of same-sex marriage.

This idea that including women in church leadership leads to affirming homosexual marriage is a false slippery slope argument. Yes, one can simply lump them together into the category of “Where our culture is trending,” but in the light of Scripture and theological reasoning, the distinction between the two is clear.

3. Doesn't the headship of men reflect the headship of the Father in the Trinity? Isn't the pattern of loving headship and subordination rooted in the Trinity itself?

We cannot answer this question in full; it would require writing a few books. Instead, we will summarize some recent developments in the field of Trinitarian theology; this summary should clarify how we think about the relationship within the Trinity and the issue of women and church leadership.

In recent decades, some complementarian scholars (e.g., Wayne Grudem, et al.) have publicized a doctrine of the Trinity called the Eternal Subordination of the Son (ESS). Before this, theologians have generally held to the *economic* subordination of the Son—the idea that the Second Person of the Trinity was only subordinate to the Father during his time on earth. The doctrine of ESS takes this idea and projects it into the very essence of the Trinity itself; that is to say, the Son has always been and will forever be subordinate to the authority of the Father. Complementarians use ESS to argue that the relationship between men and women should be patterned after this archetypal relationship of loving hierarchical complementarity between the Father and the Son.

In the summer of 2016, a debate concerning ESS erupted among many complementarian theologians. Theologians who specialize in the Nicene Creed and early Christian theology came to the conclusion that ESS cannot be reconciled with the “eternal generation of the Son” statement of the Nicene Creed; in addition, they consider ESS to contradict the oneness of the Father and the Son. As the Nicene Creed is one of the few statements that unite all of Christianity, many theologians (including many complementarians) now consider ESS to be outside the bounds of Christian orthodoxy.

As a result, many complementarians now refrain from using Trinitarian arguments in the discussion of women and leadership. One prominent example is Professor Denny Burk, the President of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, the flagship organization for complementarianism. This is what Burk had to say in the aftermath of the 2016 debate (<http://www.dennyburk.com/my-take-aways-from-the-trinity-debate/>):

Whenever I speak or write on complementarian themes, I do not trade in speculative, extra-biblical Trinitarian analogies. I think this kind of an approach is unhelpful and unwarranted in scripture. When the scripture makes an analogy, we should strive to understand and explain it (e.g., 1 Cor. 11:3). Explaining scripture is not speculation, but even here it is imperative not to go beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6). The complementarian case is made primarily from texts dealing with creational and covenantal realities (e.g., Gen. 1-2; 1 Cor. 11:1-16; Eph. 5:21-33; 1 Tim. 2:12). Our convictions about gender must be rooted in these kinds of texts, not in speculative analogies to the Trinity.

On this point, we agree with Burk. We do not believe appeals to the Trinity are helpful in this discussion.

4. What does this debate say about the relationship between husbands and wives?

In this document, we have been careful to focus our attention on the area of church leadership, but the reality is that the debate between complementarians and egalitarians is even more complicated than what we have summarized and covers much more ground. The debate extends to the three arenas of life: family, church, and society. The following grid is helpful for sorting the various positions in this broader landscape:

	Family	Church	Society
Hard Complementarian	The husband is the leader of the family. While he loves and serves his wife, he gets the final say in making decisions.	Women should not teach or have authority over men.	Women should not have jobs where they exercise authority over men.
Soft Complementarian	The husband and wife share decision-making. If they disagree, the husband has the calling to be the first to sacrifice his own interest in their disagreement.	Women can teach and have authority over men, as long as they serve under a male senior leader.	Women can have authority over men as long as they serve under a male leader.
Egalitarian	Roles in the family are determined by gifting and mutual submission.	Roles in the church are determined by gifting.	No restrictions

While there are scholars/pastors who are hard complementarians (or egalitarians) across all three arenas, there are many who are more eclectic. Many believe in complementarianism for the married couple, but not in the church or society; others, the other way around.

5. 1 Timothy 2:11-15 seems so clear about women not having authority over men. What do biblical scholars have to say about this passage?

It is impossible to summarize the scholarship on this passage. In their third edition of *Women in the Church: An Interpretation & Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15* (notice that this entire 400-page book is devoted to this one passage), Andreas Köstenberger and Thomas Schreiner provide a bibliography on the recent scholarship (articles and books) that address the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15. The single-spaced listing of entries runs for 30 pages! So instead of a summary, we offer our perspective on how to engage critically with the arguments made in this discussion.¹⁷ We divide the arguments into three categories: full complementarian reading, full egalitarian reading, and hybrid reading:

¹⁷ In accordance with our faith commitments, we have limited ourselves to scholars who believe in the authority of 1 Timothy in our contemporary church context and its Pauline authorship.

- Full Complementarian Reading

The strength of the complementarian reading lies in verses 11-14. Its handling of these verses is coherent and straightforwardly comprehensible. While complementarians generally concede that Paul writes 1 Timothy to deal with the specific problem of false teaching in Ephesus, a problem related to a particular group of women in the church, they note that the ad hoc nature of this letter does not take away from the logic of the passage. To address the problem of these women in the Ephesian church taking leadership roles and teaching heresy, Paul invokes the universal principle of male leadership revealed in Genesis 2 and 3. As Schreiner puts it:

Women are prohibited from teaching or exercising authority because of the creation order. The creation of Adam before Eve signaled that men are to teach and exercise authority in the church. Moreover, the events in Genesis 3 confirm the necessity of male leadership. Eve, beguiled by the Serpent, took leadership in responding to the Serpent. Adam, although he was with Eve, failed to intervene and exercise proper leadership. Instead, he allowed Eve to respond improperly to the Serpent.¹⁸

There are many points of contention in Verse 11-14. One of the biggest is found in verse 12 in the phrase “to assume authority (*authentein*).”¹⁹ Egalitarians argue that the Greek word means “to seize authority” or “to domineer”; complementarians disagree. However, from our perspective, the most difficult part of the complementarian reading is not in verses 11-14, but in verse 15: “But she will be saved (*singular verb*) through childbearing – if they continue (*plural verb*) in faith, love and holiness with propriety.”²⁰ This verse is difficult for the complementarian readings for a couple of reasons. First, if Paul is talking about leadership and authority in the church, why does he bring up childbearing? How is that germane to his argument?

Second, how can Paul teach salvation by grace through faith and then require motherhood for women to achieve salvation?

Complementarians provide different solutions. Some argue that verse 15 simply doesn't fit the context; obviously, that is not a solution. Some say that the person being saved in this verse refers to Eve and the child born refers to Jesus; this reading seems obscure. A further suggestion is that the verse doesn't refer to Eve, but Mary, the mother of Jesus; this idea suffers the same charge of obscurity (not to mention the second verb in the verse is plural, so who are the “they” in this verse?) Finally, some complementarians bite the bullet and argue that “to be saved” refers to spiritual salvation for women in general. Douglas Moo makes this argument²¹ as

¹⁸ Thomas Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15: A Dialogue with Scholarship” in *Women in the Church*, 3rd ed. Eds. Andreas Köstenberger and Thomas Schreiner (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 225.

¹⁹ Burk observes, “Without question, 1 Timothy 2:12 is the most contested verse in the wider debate among evangelicals about women in ministry” in Denny Burk, “New and Old Departures in the Translation of ἀὐθεντεῖν in 1 Timothy 2:12” in *Women in the Church*, 279.

²⁰ NIV 2011 translation with “women” replaced by “she”. “Women” is not in the Greek, and the verb *sōthēsetai* “will be saved” is singular.

²¹ Douglas Moo, “What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority over Men? 1 Timothy 2:11-15” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, Crossway Books, 1991), 192.

does Schreiner, who argues that the logic of mentioning childbearing in this passage lies in the fact that childbearing is emblematic of the divinely-ordained differences between men and women. Thus, "When Paul says that women will be saved by childbearing, he means, therefore that they will be saved by adhering to their ordained role."²² Schreiner does not think all women must bear children to be saved, but they must act in accord with their proper role (childbearing included).²³

This interpretation has obvious difficulties.²⁴ Schreiner's explanation of why Paul brings up childbearing in the context of a discussion on church leadership feels like a stretch. Though he softens his conclusion, the idea that women attain salvation through childbirth (or doing things in accord with proper gender roles) does not cohere well with the broader Pauline theology.

So as we observe, the degree to which complementarian scholars struggle with verse 15 marks this verse as the Achilles Heel of the complementarian case.

- Full Egalitarian Reading

The strength of the egalitarian argument is that it is highly explanatory. It makes sense of all the verses, including verse 15.

Egalitarians argue that 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is addressing a situation particular to Ephesus, where there were significant problems with some of the women in the church (cf. 1 Tim. 5:14-15; 2 Tim. 3:6-7). The reason this was happening is that Ephesus was the home to the temple of the goddess Artemis. This temple was led by female virgins who oversaw thousands of female priestesses. In this context, male leadership was virtually non-existent. Thus, Paul was writing his protégé, Timothy, who was trying to minister in this context where women came from a pagan background and sought to exercise complete authority over men.

Thus, egalitarians argue that when Paul writes, "Let a woman learn in quietness with all submissiveness" he is addressing a religious culture of Ephesus that was matriarchal.²⁵ Now that these women were submitted to Christ they needed to learn a mutually submissive relationship with Christian men rather than immediately exercising authority over men and telling them what to do. It is also no surprise that he continues by saying, "I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority (or "to dominate") over a man."

²² Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15," 222.

²³ Ibid., 223.

²⁴ Schreiner softens his argument by arguing that "Paul is not asserting in 1 Timothy 2:15 that women *merit* [italics his] salvation by bearing children and doing other good works.... Paul uses the term σωθήσεται rather loosely here, without specifying in what sense women are saved by childbearing and doing other good works.... I think it is fair to understand the virtues described here as a result of new life in Christ." Ibid., 223.

²⁵ Gary Hoag describes how women learn in Ephesus: "The learning setting...for women in Ephesus is not depicted as quiet, and women do not take a submissive posture. Women are portrayed in a context of recitation and indoctrination. They go to the Artemesium daily to perform their cultic duties, say their prayers to the goddess, and they take a fiercely competitive rather than humbly submissive posture to vie for different priestess roles that play a part in extending the glory of the goddess and their own renown." Gary Hoag, *Wealth in Ancient Ephesus and the First Letter to Timothy: Fresh Insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophone of Ephesus* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 92.

The historical context helps explain Paul's next statement in verses 13-14. In Ephesus, the worship of Artemis is linked to the goddess Isis. "The Artemis myth alleged that the goddess, the woman, was the author of man."²⁶ The Isis myth says the goddess Isis deceived Ra, the male god, and usurped authority from Ra.²⁷ Thus, women dominance in Ephesus is founded on the mythology of women authoring and deceiving men to take power. Paul's re-telling of the story of Genesis 2-3 is his way to command the women in the church to give up the myths that they grew up with.

Finally, egalitarians argue that verse 15 makes perfect sense in the historical context because Artemis is the goddess of childbirth, the deity that protects women during pregnancy and the process of giving birth. The high rate of mortality for women who give birth in the ancient world makes worshipping Artemis an imperative. Thus, Paul, in asking the women to reject the Artemis/Isis myths, reassures them that God will keep them safe in childbearing (translating *sōthēsetai de dia tēs teknogonias* as "She will be safe in childbearing").

Our assessment of this reading is that while it explains all the verses, its weakness is that it is almost entirely circumstantial; there is no mention of Artemis in the letter. The case relies on an extremely detailed reconstruction of the social context of Ephesus in the First Century. Can we rely so heavily on this reconstruction without direct attestation in the text itself?

So, to summarize, we have an egalitarian reading that relies on a historical reconstruction with minimal direct evidence from the text, but is highly explanatory, and we have a complementarian reading that directly relies on the text but runs into theological problems with a key verse.

- Hybrid Reading

The final category is a hybrid position. Like complementarians, Gordon Hugenberger argues that in 1 Timothy 2 Paul is appealing to a universal norm of male leadership in Genesis 2-3; however, he points out that Genesis 2:24 makes it clear that this story is not about gender roles, but marital roles. He also points out that the Greek terms for "man (*anēr*)" and "woman (*gynē*)" are also the normal terms that Greek uses for "husband" and "wife." So, Hugenberger argues that this entire passage is about male leadership in the family; it has nothing to do with the church (https://www.parkstreet.org/teaching-training/articles/women-leadership#key_texts). Cynthia Westfall makes a similar argument, noting that nothing in the passage (1 Tim. 2:1, 8) indicates that this is a discussion about church leadership; rather, the text points the other way as Paul would not limit his instructions on clothing to what is worn at church (1 Tim. 2:9).²⁸ Thus, both Hugenberger and Westfall see this passage as dealing with the issue of spiritual formation of wives in the home. Within the context of heresy among women in the Ephesian church, Paul is commanding the wives to pay attention to the husbands and getting the husbands to teach their wives at home. The family context also makes sense of verse 15, as Westfall notes, "There are several interpretive options (and alternate translations) for 'yet she will be

²⁶ Ibid., 91.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Cynthia L. Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2016), 286-90.

saved through childbearing'..., but none of them make sense as a conclusion to a discussion of the conduct of men and women in a worship service."²⁹ In contrast, if it is a family context, the reference to childbearing makes sense as Paul asks the women to surrender their heresy and superstition concerning childbearing, realizing that safety in childbirth comes from God as the couple (the "they" in verse 15) continue in faith, love, and holiness.

Our assessment is that this hybrid position combines the best of the complementarian position (straightforward reading of vv. 11-14) and the egalitarian position (a clear explanation of v. 15). It proposes a simple shift in context (church to family), a shift that works very well with the text, and a shift in translation (e.g. "woman" to "wife"), one that works very well with the Greek language.

As we said at the beginning of this discussion, we cannot hope to be comprehensive or to assess the arguments with authority; this is our best attempt to make sense of a difficult text with a multitude of interpretive options. But for the purposes of our brief paper, we hope that the members of Blackhawk can see that all three views are trying to present legitimate biblical interpretations. Each view has its own strengths and weaknesses. It is a good bet that biblical scholars will debate this passage for years to come.

²⁹ Ibid., 289.