

Eldership Study

Report of the Elders to the Congregation

Distributed September 2007

**Women Elders at Quail Lakes Baptist Church
Report of the Elders to the Congregation
September 2007**

I. Introduction

At the Elder Council meeting of November 19, 2006, an issue was raised regarding the appropriateness of Women serving as Elders at Quail Lakes Baptist Church. Soon thereafter, a Study Team was formed on the issue and the following is the report of the Elder Council to the Church Body on that question. The Study Team reported their findings on “Final Report” to the Elders on June 23, 2007. On Saturday, July 14, 2007 the Elder Council met for a decision-making meeting regarding the question and authorized the writing of this report to the Congregation.

This report is in large part a reproduction of the Study Team’s report to the Elders, with the addition of the Elders’ subsequent motions and action steps.

The Study Team members reporting were: Lester Cook, Robin Gordon, Donna McFall, Steve Sevy, Faith Thompson and Pastor Marc Maffucci. Peg Helland was a member of the team for a good portion of the process but left the team prior to completion of the report. We thank all of these folks for their contribution to this study effort.

The Study Team writes...

1. This was our question.

Purpose of the Study Team:

This Study Team was established to research the question, “Is it biblically appropriate for women to be elders at Quail Lakes Baptist Church (QLBC/Quail)?” The recommendation of the Study Team will take into consideration the scriptural passages and principles that apply, as well as the Mission and Vision of QLBC and how this issue interfaces with that mission/vision.

2. This was the process.

As we approach difficult interpretive questions we need to come to the Scriptures with a mixture of courage and humility. Courage to ask the hard questions and humility to structure the process of finding the answers that will emerge from the Bible rather than our own preference. Our starting point in this journey was the perspective that stated, “All questions are fair and we look to the Bible for the answers.”

The Study Team reviewed two major interpretative positions (each with a variation) regarding the issue of women in ministry roles. We then considered how this relates to our specific question of the biblical appropriateness of allowing women to be elders here at Quail.

All of the views that we have considered are views held by scholars who are highly regarded in terms of their work in the original languages, committed to biblical inerrancy and evangelical Christians.

The questions that needed to be answered were:

- 1) Does the Bible teach a hierarchical structure of male and female relationships?
- 2) Do we find women in leadership positions in the Bible?
- 3) Does the Bible limit women from filling certain leadership roles?

3. These are our assumptions.

- 1) We believe that all scriptural texts that deal with the related issues should be interpreted in context and treated as equally authoritative in the discussion in keeping with their proper exegesis.
- 2) We believe in the principle of allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture. We take that to mean that when rightly understood the Scripture will come together in a cohesive way that makes sense. We further take it to be a principle of interpretation that when a New Testament (NT) Scripture comments on an Old Testament (OT) Scripture, the NT provides a window of interpretation that is part of the greater context of the Bible and needs to be taken as authoritative commentary on that OT passage.
- 3) We assume that clear patterns will emerge as we study the breadth of Scripture on this issue and that the application of the biblical principles in our context of ministry needs to be in line with those biblical patterns.
- 4) We assume that the issue of difference between believers on the topic of women in ministry generally, and our more restricted question specifically, is not one of having a high view of Scripture versus a low view, but rather one of interpretation. Therefore the question is not one of believing or not believing the Bible, but rather how we interpret the Bible.

We agree with the following statements:

In the N.A.B. Statement of June 7, 1985 which focused on the issue of Women's Ordination we read...

"It is too easy to come to a dogmatic conviction, to argue from emotion, without having ever faced all of the difficulties with Scripture and practice. It is not a matter of quoting a verse and settling the issue. People on both sides of the argument are able to give very convincing arguments from Scripture."

Craig Blomberg writes...

“I recognize that equally godly scholars who are equally committed to the inerrancy of the Bible come to different conclusions because of the complexity of the data...All of us who speak and write on gender roles would do well to begin and end every address with the caveats, “I could be wrong” and “I respect the right of fellow evangelicals and evangelical churches to come to different conclusions and I will cooperate with them rather than combat them...”¹

In the language that has made its way into the culture of Quail, we call this a “Debate for” rather than a “Die for” or “Divide for” issue.

The N.A.B. statement regarding the ordination of women states...

“A primary concern needs to be sound biblical interpretation. This demands that two basic questions be asked of every passage we study. First, what was the Bible saying through God’s human servant to the first hearers or readers of the message? The second question is “How should we understand and apply the passage to people today?” To answer the last question, the teachings and commands of the Bible fall into one of two categories: 1) unchanging highest ideals, norms or standards or 2) regulations for people where they were.” (page 17)

We have used the words “prescription” or “description” as a shorthand way of referring to these two forms of Scripture. Some passages are “prescriptions” for all time – they establish “supra-cultural norms” that are to always be obeyed. Other passages are “description” of that which is meant to occur in a particular setting and time. Proper biblical interpretation needs to be able to understand this important distinction.

II. Our view regarding the questions of women in leadership as a general principle.

We come down on the side of the Complementarian view which understands that there is a difference in roles that is built into the creation by God between males and females and that there is reserved for the male a “headship” function that carries into ministry leadership.

This view holds that the difference is built into the design of God’s creation and that it is seen consistently throughout His word, the Bible.

The creation account shows that God created man (*adam*), on the sixth day “in the image of God he created them” (Gen. 1:26, 27). Chapter two of Genesis gives details of God’s creation that are not disclosed in the “summary” account in Chapter 1. This

¹ Blomberg, Craig L. *Women In Ministry: A Complementarian Perspective. Two Views On Women In Ministry.* Ed. Stanley N. Gundry and James R. Beck. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001, 2005), 123.

was not an afterthought on God's part, but seems intended to show aspects of the creation process that would affect the environment and eventual activity of humanity.

Having placed man in the Garden of Eden to tend it, and having warned him against eating of the forbidden fruit God declares “it is not good for the man [*ha-adam*, adam with the definite article] to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him” (2:18). “God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place. And the Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which he had taken from the man and brought her to the man” [*ha-adam*] (2:21, 22).

The creation account is tied to several NT Scriptures, e.g. 1 Timothy 2:11-14 and 1 Corinthians 11:7-10. These Scriptures do not declare that because man was created first he is in any way superior to woman, for his image is no greater than that of woman as both were made in the image of God himself (1:27). What they do establish is the position of woman in the congregation and in the home in contrast with the man in those places. Man’s position is one where the “buck stops.”

This complimentary difference does not establish unequal value between males and females, but it does recognize difference in function with male headship designed into the structure of family and church life. For reasons of clarity and to avoid the possibility of being perceived as aligning ourselves with authoritarian abuses, it must be stressed that males and females both are created in the image of God. A difference in role and function is not a difference in worth. An example of this can be derived from the Trinity itself, even though the roles of the persons of the Godhead are varied, each person in the Trinity is wholly God.

III. Following are some observations from the Scriptures which demonstrate that male headship is a pattern that is consistently present.

Genesis 2:20-22

20 But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

NIV

1. We believe that the order of creation within the human species matters. Jews who were used to operating within a culture of primogeniture, which gave the firstborn a double share of inheritance, would have seen it this way. Paul seems to see it this way as he refers to this in 1Tim. 2:13,

I Timothy 2:13

13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

NIV

We believe that the emphasis given the order of creation in Genesis, coupled with Paul’s commentary demonstrates that the order has significance as it relates to the function of males and females.

2. Naming in the Genesis narrative is a reflection of authority. This practice is extended by the man to the woman in Gen. 2:23.

Genesis 2:23

23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

NIV

3. "Helper" - ('ezer)

Genesis 2:18

18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

NIV

"Helper" here is one who comes to the aid of another where the other has the primary responsibility for the task. In that sense it speaks to a supporting role within that task, not inherent inferiority, thus it can be applied to God when He helps human leaders. The use of "'ezer" communicates the idea that one will be serving and helping the other where the one helped carries the primary responsibility. Thus God is our "'ezer" (helper) at times – even though He is superior. In the Genesis passage and usage, the man and woman share the work of dominion, but the man is invested with the primary responsibility to see that it is accomplished. It is significant that the man is never the "'ezer" to the woman. This is due to the fact that in the tasks described, he carries the primary responsibility.

Genesis 3: The Fall

4. The fact that the serpent (Satan) tempts the woman initially is a deliberate attempt to circumvent God's established leadership order. (More on this in the discussion of 1 Tim. 2:11-15).
5. Adam was rebuked first by God after the sin, thus implying a responsibility for leadership that fell to Adam.

Genesis 3:11-12

11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" 12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

NIV

6. The results of the fall are a twisting of the already present lines of leadership. The headship of the male is not initiated at the curse; however, it becomes distorted here.

Genesis 3:16

16 To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." NIV

The fall is not the place where headship starts, but it is the place of its distortion. This distortion is not a prescription of how men and women should behave but a prediction of how they will behave due to sin.

Summary from Genesis:

The distinction between males and females, which invested in the male a headship role, existed prior to the fall. This is the design built into creation by God. Abuse of that design, not the design itself, is the inevitable result of sin entering the human experience.

IV. The rest of the Old Testament

There is no question that women function in ministry roles as recorded in both the OT and NT. However, many of those roles that are much talked about in writings that advocate an egalitarian view are obviously non-leadership roles. It is unhelpful to add tasks such as mourner (2 Sam. 1:24) and in the NT, doorkeeper (John 18:16-17) or even patron (Acts 12:12) to the discussion. That women serve in ministry roles is a clear and joyful fact. These examples, however, do not bring clarity to the issue of leadership.

In the rest of the OT the following observations can be made:

1. The overwhelming testimony of the OT reflects the practice of patriarchy – male leadership in home, religion and society.
2. Religious leadership in ancient Israel in terms of the priesthood was reserved for men; however, in other roles of public leadership we see women functioning. The position of priest in the OT is one in which there was not any female participation. To cite a woman's menstrual cycle as the reason for this is to miss the fact males were deemed unclean for a variety of reasons from time to time. There must be another reason.

However, it is clear that women do function as prophets (Jud. 4:4 Deborah, 2 Kings 22:14 Huldah). These women have influence and exercise leadership (Miriam, Ex. 15:20, Micah 6:4). This demonstrates the fact that women are gifted and capable, and called into leadership roles. However, it must be noted that these are in fact minority situations - that is to say they are the exception rather than the rule.

3. The traditional Jewish and Christian assumption is God wanted to mirror the headship principle that He instituted in creation by reserving the ongoing religious leadership position to the male. This would mean the fact of male priesthood is not culturally driven, but driven by God's intention.

4. Prophets in the OT, both men and women, were not day-to-day leaders, did not conduct worship services or function as administrators of tabernacle or temple life. Thus, it is inappropriate to look to this function as like that of pastors or elders.
5. We see an overarching pattern that begins here in the OT where women are permitted to lead in all areas except one. This is true of the OT and the NT. In our judgment, this pattern is so obvious that it must be there on purpose.

V. New Testament

Jesus and the Gospels

1. Jesus advances the treatment of women significantly by seeing them as equal in a way that would have been considered counter-cultural in his day (his teaching on divorce Matt 5:32, Mark 10, his dealing with the woman at the well John 4, his dealings with Mary and Martha Luke 10). However, He does not promote what would be considered an egalitarian approach (egalitarian meaning that the Bible teaches that both males and females are to function in equal roles without distinction).
2. To say that He was unwilling to scandalize his contemporaries and thus held back from having women in the 12 does not make sense in light of all the ways that Jesus was very willing to be revolutionary and defy norms.
3. Jesus repeats the Old Testament pattern of having one position of leadership that is restricted from women's participation. In this case, it is that of being among the 12.

VI. Acts

The issue of spiritual gifts.

1. The Holy Spirit indwells and empowers all believers, both male and female; therefore, there must be places for all to use their gifts. However, the exercise of one's gift in a particular ministry must be done in a manner that is compatible with scriptural principle. The gift is an enablement for a function but it is not an entitlement to a particular role. One must look for the role in which that enablement can be used based on the best reading of the principles of the Word of God.
2. The example of Priscilla and Aquila:

Acts 18:18-19

18 Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken. 19 They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

NIV

Acts 18:26

26 He(Apollos) began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

NIV

Rom 16:3

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.

NIV

2 Tim 4:19

19 Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus.

NIV

The fact that Priscilla's name appears first, where the husband's name would normally be found, indicates that she was the more prominent partner probably in relation to the task of teaching Apollos and possibly by personality. It should be noted that even with that prominence, she taught Apollos in partnership with her husband and this took place in what appears to be a private setting. It would be also a mistake to miss the distinction between the public and private nature of the instruction. It clearly says in Acts 18:26 "they took him aside." In other words, to a different setting than the public church meeting, even if that church meeting took place in a home. There is not a contradiction here with what Paul disallows in his letter to Timothy.

VII. Epistles

1. The question of Phoebe commended as *diakonos* and *prostatis*. (Romans 16:1-2)

Romans 16:1-2

16:1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. 2 I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.

NIV

The (*diakonos*) is the identical term that is translated deacon (servant) and she should be considered a deacon in the sense of the office. However, we know from early church history the function of the female deacon was to care pastorally for women to teach women and to baptize women. It would have been inappropriate for men to do so.

Prostatis (patron, helper) is not a leadership term. It seems Phoebe, as well as others, fulfilled this by virtue of finance and provision.

The question of Junia (Romans 16:7)

Romans 16:7

7 Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

NIV

It is clear Junia is a female name and translations that turn it into Junias (NIV), thus male, are in error. However, by referring to Junia and Adronicus together it may indicate they were husband and wife like Priscilla and Aquilla; thus, this may be another husband-wife team.

The language of “outstanding among the apostles” cannot mean simply “well known to the apostles.” The use of *en* followed by a plural object is to be rendered “among.” However, we need to define what apostle means. There are “little a” apostles who have the gift of being a “sent one” or one sent on a mission of service for the Lord and thus are not to be considered to have the “office” of authority in terms of the 12. Then there are the “capital A” Apostles who have that office – the 12 and Paul. Spiritual gifts must be distinguished from offices – all the gifts can be exercised outside of the formal offices of authority in the church, i.e. one can “shepherd” another without being the pastor. “Little a” apostles have a leadership function that includes teaching, but it is not designed as an office of local ongoing church administration and instruction.

2. The question of Synteché and Euodia (Philippians 4:2-3) and Phoebe (Romans 16:1)

Philippians 4:2-3

*2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.
3 Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

NIV

Euodia and Syntyche are called “contenders.” This is not a clear office; however, it does seem that Phoebe is a deacon (servant) in the church. The usage in the following verse does lend itself to an office, that of deacon.

Romans 16:1

16:1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea.

NIV

Further, 1 Tim. 3:11 seems to refer to women functioning as deacons (possibly in married couples).

1 Timothy 3:10-11

10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. 11 In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of

respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.
NIV

However, as will be seen in the discussion of eldership, deacons do not have positions of authority but rather service. It is not a leadership role in Scripture – this in an example of female deacons using gifts under the male headship.

3. The question of Ephesians 5 and family relationships

Ephesians 5:21-24

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. NIV

Mutual submission is the ethic that is established in the passage, yet it is clear that Paul goes on to establish role differentiation under that ethic. Mutual submission as an over-arching principle of life cannot mean that we all functionally submit to everyone all at the same time – that would be anarchy. It is a heart and mind-“set” that demonstrates how we go about pursuing the role into which God places us.

VIII. The controversial passages

1. Galatians 3:26-29

26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.
NIV

We have printed that verse in its immediate context for it seems that the verse is declaring that all people are united and equal in Jesus and that equality is symbolized in the shared experience of baptism. Equality in reference to salvation is the teaching and should not be pressed to mean identical in all respects. If this were true, how would we apply such a principle regarding maleness and femaleness to the issue of homosexuality and marriage?

In short, we do not see this passage as commenting on the issue before us. We do not see this as a “manifesto” passage from which issues that regard gender flow. That interpretation of this passage is unwarranted in its context and, if followed, will establish contradiction with many biblical principles regarding human sexuality.

2. 1 Corinthians 11: 3-10

3 Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. 4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. 5 And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head-it is just as though her

head were shaved. 6 If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head. 7 A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. 8 For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; 9 neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10 For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.

NIV

Paul uses the term “head” in verse 3 to mean authority and then relates it to the physical head of a person. The term head (*kephale*) may carry the sense of “source” but the pairing in verse three with the example of Christ and God shows that authority is the main idea. This pairing also demonstrates different functions do not at all indicate difference of worth in that both God the Son and God the Father are equally God.

While we note that much is made of the use of “*kephale*” translated as “source” versus as “head,” in reality we feel that this is a false dichotomy and note that even where “source” is a possible way to take the use of that word there is also present the idea of authority.

In verse 5, the issue of prophecy is seen and obviously women are noted as prophets in the NT.

Acts 21:8-9

8 Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. 9 He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

NIV

The prophetic function, however, is not equal to the ongoing elder/pastoral function either in the regularity of preaching or the continuing leadership for direction of policy of a church body. Rather, the prophet serves with an occasional prophetic insight granted by God to the church; in this role both males and females function as God gifts.

Head coverings in this passage are the specific application of his principle of male headship and cultural propriety in this context. In other words, that is the way Paul calls the church here to illustrate the trans-cultural ideas. The message for Paul is the church needs to be making sure they do not give off the impression that they are rebelling against God’s ideal order or against God’s moral codes.

We see that the force of this section is that women can prophecy as God gifts them to do so – as long as they conform to the issue of propriety (as also with men).

3. 1 Corinthians 14:33-40

...As in all the congregations of the saints, 34 women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law

says. 35 If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

36 Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? 37 If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. 38 If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.

39 Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. 40 But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

NIV

The issue here is disruption in worship and not a call to overall silence in the church (after all, Paul has just said that women could prophesy). In fact, this is not really a controversial passage at all when rightly understood. The scene was one of women, now functioning with new found freedom to learn, calling out or asking questions in the public setting that was causing a disruptive environment. Paul says – do this at home so that decorum can be maintained in the church.

4. 1 Timothy 2:11-15

11 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. 15 But women will be saved through childbearing-if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

NIV

The context for this passage is the church of Ephesus, which was battling against false teaching. However, there is no indication that it was the women who were the false teachers and Paul makes no overt reference to the false teaching in his reasoning. If in fact the main issue here is the context of the false teachers in Ephesus, why is there no mention of the men who were falling prey to this heresy? It seems that while something in the context sparked the question of women's roles, Paul's answer looks to larger non-situational issues.

The only imperative in verses 11-12 is that a "woman should learn." This call for the women to learn would have in and of itself been a new step. The manner in which they are to learn is that of quietness (hesychia).

- 1) Present tense of verse 12 means Paul is indicating continual action, not an activity that is restricted to one specific moment thus "I am continually not permitting" or "I am in the habit of not permitting."

Verse 12. "Authenteo" should be translated as a positive action, "have authority," not a negative one, "domineer." This is because when grammatically linked in a pair to another positive action (here, "teach"), both actions carry the same positive sense.

Verse 12. “Teach” and “have authority” are two sides of the same coin; they are not two separate actions. Thus, the implication is “authoritative teaching” or a role where authority and teaching may go together. Here Paul is forbidding the very actions that apply to elders most obviously.

2) 1 Tim 3:2

“Now the overseer must be above reproach...able to teach,
NIV

- 3) In verse 13, the appeal to the creative order makes this a timeless principle that comes from before the fall. It is vital that we are consistent in the way that we understand Scripture to comment on Scripture. We would ordinarily read the OT through the lens of the NT where the NT comments directly on an OT passage. If we apply the reading of Genesis 1-2 through the lens of 1 Timothy 2: 11-15, where Paul refers to the creation narrative, it appears the order of creation does indeed signify a difference in the function between male and females. Thus, we see Paul understands headship to be in the very least inferred by the creation order. To dismiss Paul's thoughts here is not to simply dismiss his application (that may be a cultural element) but his interpretation he puts forth while writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

In other words, the modern reader must see that the Holy Spirit has cohesively inspired the texts of Scripture. In so doing the Spirit gives us a trans-cultural principle. That principle is male headship hinted at by God in the creation accounts, and confirmed by Paul here in Timothy – all under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

To fail to allow the principle of Scripture authoritatively, commenting on Scripture here, is to call into question the Holy Spirit's overarching superintending of the process of inspiration and to call into question the veracity of all the passages where the NT comments on OT passages.

- 4) Verse 14 is a subset of verse 13 and not a second rationale point for Paul's restriction. It is as if in verse 13-14 he is simply referring the reader to the earliest records and saying this principle is for all time. It was part of Satan's method of temptation that as he came to the woman he was making an “end run” around the leadership that God had invested in the man.
- 5) Verse 15 takes us away from our investigation and is admittedly unclear to us. It seems to be saying that as a woman fulfills the roles for which she is created she is blessed and using the most obvious example of the male female distinction (childbearing) as a prime example of that fact. While Paul is not explicit here about which role he has in mind it is notable in the very next verse he moves on to discuss elder/overseer.

6) 1 Timothy 3:1

3:1 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.

NIV

Initial questions addressed:

Having reviewed the issue before us in these ways it is prudent that we reference once again the three questions we noted in the beginning of this document:

1. Does the Bible teach a hierarchical structure of male and female relationships?
(Answer – yes, as it pertains to the home and church, but always in an ethic of self-sacrificial love and mutual submission.)
2. Do we find women in leadership positions in the Bible?
(Answer - yes, with the exception of one position retained for male headship in each era of biblical history.)
3. Does the Bible limit women from filling some leadership roles?
(Answer – yes, there is a limitation.)

IX . Eldership in the Bible

We now move on to a discussion of eldership. Once we rightly understand what an elder is, we may then add that understanding to our view of women in leadership of ministry and position ourselves to see the answer to the study group's question.

Relevant passages:

1 Timothy 3:1-7

3:1 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. 5(If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

NIV

Titus 1:5-9

5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. 6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. 7 Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless-not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not

given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. 8 Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. 9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.
NIV

1. Elder and Overseer are interchangeable terms. (Acts 20:17, 28, 1 Peter 5:1-2, Titus 1:5, 7)

There are two different words used in this review, one is *episkopos* the basic meaning of which is *overseer, oversight*, the other is *presbuteros*, almost always translated *elder*. An attachment to this paper presents analyses of both of these words as they occur in the NT. The translations of these words, in their context, are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*.² While overseer is the primary and most used English translation of *episkopos*, *presbuteros* or cognates may be translated *old*, referring to age, *elder*, as a position in the church, *elder*, as the Jew's Sanhedrin, or *elder*, as a reference to the heavenly elders in the book of Revelation. It can be seen, therefore, that the context in which this latter word appears must determine its meaning.

In Titus 1:5, the apostle Paul, addressing Titus who had been left in Crete to oversee the churches established on his Paul's post-Roman imprisonment, is instructed, *"This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—7For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach, ..."*

It will be noticed that within this context Paul begins by instructing Titus to appoint elders in each of the churches on Crete, and then continues by instructing Titus in the personal character of these appointees by referring to them as overseers. Thus, the two words are used synonymously.

The word "elder" may describe the maturity these servants are supposed to possess. They are to be examples of the principles found in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1. The word overseer seems to be a title that gives a description of the work. See Hebrews 13:17.

2. A plurality of Elders is the biblical norm.

Acts 14:23

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

NIV

² The Holy Bible. English Standard Version. (Wheaton: Crossways Bibles, 2001)

Were there multiple elders in a church or were churches limited to only one elder? The answer appears clearly to be there was no limitation, the number being up to the particular body of believers. Looking at the passages on the attached listing of *elder*, occurrences may be broken down into those that definitely have multiple elders and those that probably have multiple occurrences, as follows:

Definitely: Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17, 18; 1 Timothy 5:1, James 5:14.

Probably: Acts 11:30; 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1, 5.

We do not find biblical support for the modern idea of the senior pastor as the sole elder of a church. In fact, we find this to be an inappropriate import from the CEO model of the business world.

3. The New Testament demonstrates the appropriateness of financial support for at least some of the elders serving a church.

1 Timothy 5:17-18

17 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages."

NIV

4. The pastor of a local church is one of the plurality of elders. He exhibits the gift of teaching the Word and shepherding the ministry. This then puts the pastor of a local church in the unique position of being one of the elders and also bearing the responsibility of providing leadership for the elders as he teaches the Word of God. Even so, the pastor's authority to function in this way is one that is delegated to him by the elders. He does not rule the elders. (In the modern setting the pastor is employed by the elders representing the church, and then he receives his delegated leadership responsibilities).

A relevant article in our constitution reads...

ARTICLE TEN: Pastoral Staff

C. Term of Service: Both the senior Pastor and Associates will serve at the pleasure of the Board of Elders.

5. In the modern context the church staff is under the managerial authority of the senior pastor. At Quail, the ministerial staff are members of the Elder Council by virtue of their office and represent the areas of their ministry.

Our conclusion, therefore, is that the highest human authority in the biblical church polity is the elder who is elected by the congregation as their representative to shoulder the burden of church leadership. As the elders delegate function, they may do so to

hired staff and the hired Senior Pastor; however, his leadership is delegated to him by the Elders.

X. Elder actions

The Study Team made the following recommendation based on their findings:

We find Quail should retain the current structure of male eldership as this structure is most appropriate as the application of what we see as the Biblical principles that are relevant.

The Elder Council on Saturday July 14th 2007 after having discussed the Study Team report voted on the following motion:

“Quail Lakes Baptist Church should continue to have only male Elders.” The motion passed.

In keeping with looking for ways to accomplish our mission in excellence, and in obedience to the Biblical model the Elder Council recognized the need to review the current role of the Elder and the leadership structure of QLBC.

The following motion was brought before the Elder Council:

The Elder Council initiate a study to critically look at the functional organization for consistency with the decision affirming male Elders which will

1. Express high value for each area of ministry.
2. Continue excellence in oversight and communication in our various ministry emphases.
3. Demonstrate openness and availability for women to use their gifts while remaining under the biblical leadership of male elders.

The motion passed.