

LESSON NINE

UNIQUE ROLES: The Great Love Story Women & Men in the Church

*“Neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord.
For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman;
but all things are from God” (1 Cor 11:11, 12).*

DAY 1: READ & SUMMARIZE

The following verses encapsulate the lesson to follow. Read them carefully, meditating on their message. Express the key concept of each passage as it applies to the various roles God has assigned to women and men.

A) 1 Corinthians 11-14 –

B) Ephesians 5 –

C) 1 Timothy 2 –

D) Titus 2 –

INTRODUCTION

Few subjects generate such heat as this one—men/women roles in the church. Although we may disagree on some points of Scripture where this issue is discussed, it is my prayer that these differences will not keep us from thrilling to the Great Love Story of which the woman-man relationship speaks: *“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church”* (Eph 5:31-32). Everywhere we look in the Bible, we see this theme from the first marriage in Eden to the last marriage, of the Bridegroom and His wife (Rev 19). To that reception the whole universe will be invited. So if all men and women in the church have such keyroles to play in history’s greatest love drama, then there must be a lot more at stake than we at first imagined.

A GOD WHO REQUIRES ORDER & ACCOUNTABILITY

It should be helpful to begin by understanding what God thinks about the ordering of His universe. Wherever we look in the world He created, it is obvious that the Lord likes order. From super novae to sub-atomic particles, this careful design and amazing structure is a visible display of the nature of the invisible God (Rom 1:20). This is just as true in God’s desire for order in the moral universe. For example, we read concerning human government: *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God”* (Rom 13:1). Regarding the churches the Scripture says:

- *“Let all things be done unto edifying”* (1 Cor 14:26)
- *“Let all things be done decently and in order”* (1 Cor 14:40)
- *“Let all your things be done with charity”* (1 Cor 16:14)

Obviously God cares about how things are done, and He expects us to take seriously the way He has ordered the universe. In this universe, God alone is sovereign. Yet in maintaining His universe, God has vested certain limited authority in His creatures at various levels. Concerning our first parents, Adam and Eve, we read, *“And God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth”* (Gen 1:28).

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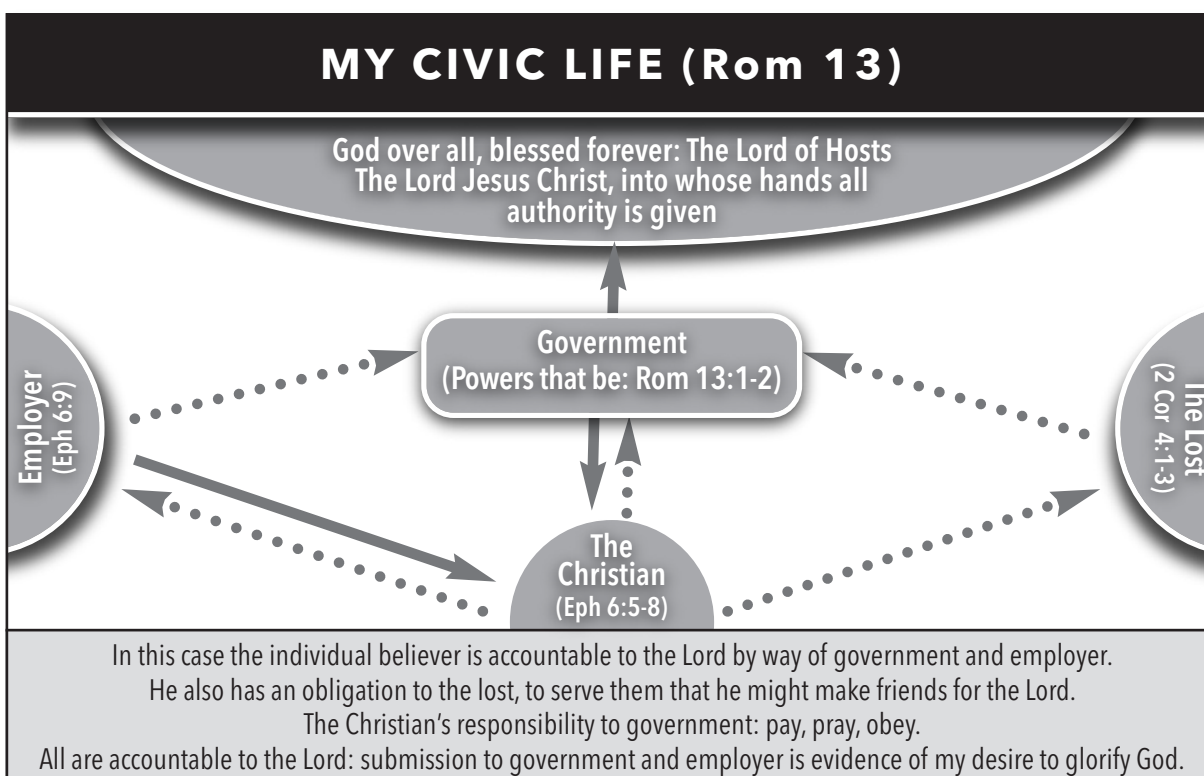
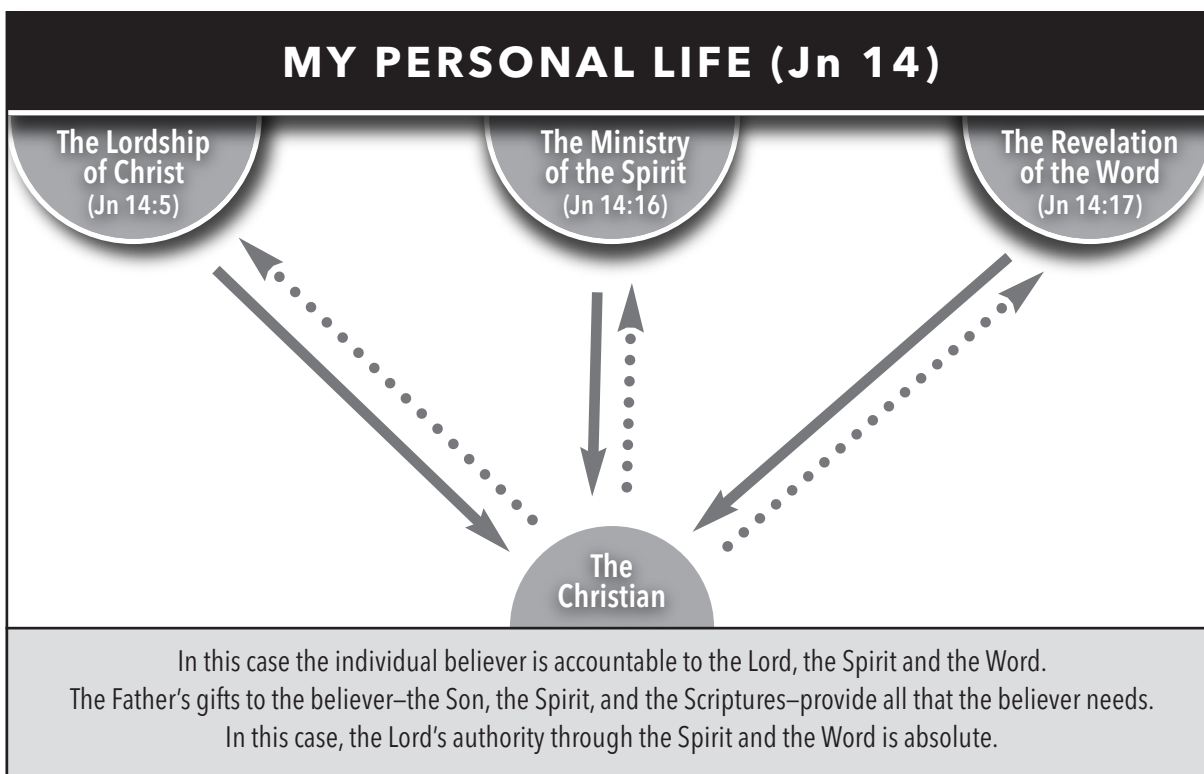
World Order, Home Order, Church Order

When Paul writes, *“Let all things be done decently and in order”* (1 Cor 14:40) he doesn’t mean things should be done one thing after another. The verse means that things should be done according to the arrangements that had been set in place for the

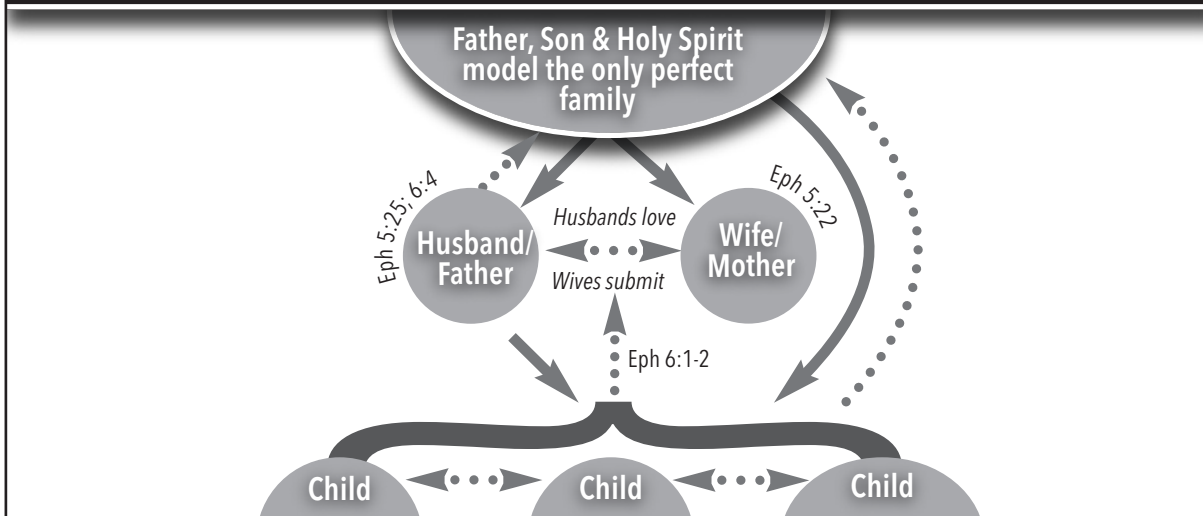
church, as opposed to doing things any way a person might like. The same word is used of the way the priesthood was set in order, so that the way things were done were not in chaos, or left to personal whim.

God has laid down three distinct spheres of delegated authority and accountability. There may seem to be some overlap, but God feels He has made matters sufficiently clear that we should know in any given situation in what sphere of accountability/responsibility we are operating and therefore what distinct order, or way of doing things, should be in place.

On the next page, you will find a schematic to show these chains of responsibility and accountability to help us see the orderly way the Lord has designed our lives to function for maximum blessing.

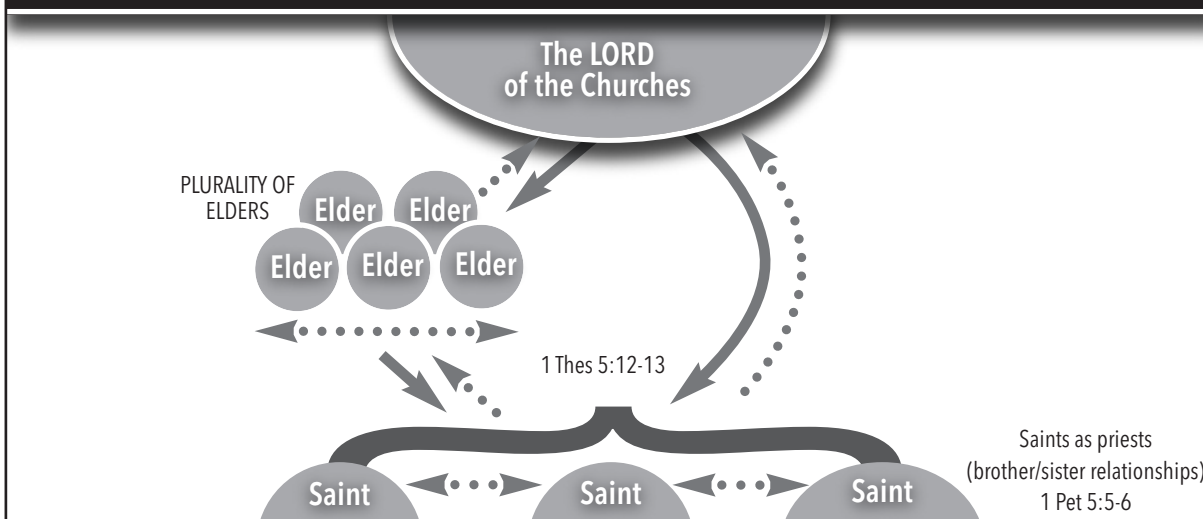


MY FAMILY LIFE (Eph 5 & 6)



The husband and wife are to have an attitude of mutual submission out of reverence to the Lord. Husbands are said to be primarily responsible both for their wives and for the children, but children obey parents. Unbelieving family members are sanctified—set apart for special attention from Heaven (1 Cor 7:14). The husband-wife relationship mirrors the CHRIST-UNIVERSAL CHURCH relationship.

MY LOCAL CHURCH LIFE (1 Pet 5)



The flock follow the shepherds as they follow Christ. The Lord cares directly for His people, giving them what the elders cannot; but works through elders in leading. The elders lay down their lives for the people of God and the Chief Shepherd will reward them some Day.

HOW DOES UNDERSTANDING ORDER HELP US?

Imagine that you see two men sitting in a restaurant, one older and one younger. You see the younger speak to the older. If you could hear, you would discover that they are father and son, but the father, semi-retired, works in his son's business. The son has just asked his father to make some business calls. After a mouthful or two, the father speaks. He asks the son to visit his mother, who is not feeling well. What has happened?

Although nothing visible has changed—same people, setting, meal—there has been a complete change of order. The first request was based on an employer-employee relationship (world order) and the second request was based on their father-son relationship (home order).

This is what clarifies the many confusions in people's minds about the propriety of women's

participation in certain settings (and when head coverings are proper, for those who take that seriously). Let me explain.

We must not think that the setting (like the restaurant in our illustration) is the determining factor in establishing order. You may have world order in a church building—providing a shelter for the community after a natural disaster, for example. When the building is used for a funeral or a wedding, that is home order. Or you may have church order in a house as the early churches did. In persecuted countries, it is church order in fields and barns and concentration camps.

The issue is order. Who would God hold responsible if something went wrong? If the answer is your employer or the government, it is world order. If the answer is the husband or father, it is home order. But if the answer is the elders, it is church order. Sometimes elders take too much upon themselves. They may pro-

vide spiritual counsel in personal or family matters, but should not meddle in the Christians' private affairs. It is quite the association that Peter makes when he says: *"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters"* (1 Pet 4:15). The elders should not act like "lords over God's heritage, but be examples to the flock."

A matter of much concern is the tendency for the elders to control the gospel efforts of a local assembly. You will notice that "gospel meetings" are not listed in Acts 2:42, or anywhere else for that matter. While no complaint should be raised for having an effective gospel work in a building owned by the Christians, it seems we need more personal exercise in the gospel and more "going" into the world with this glorious message. Woe betides the men who actively discourage others from fulfilling their personal responsibility in sharing the gospel, understanding, of course that

such efforts are done in God-honoring ways.

TWO IMPORTANT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 11: Headship and Glory

The setting of 1 Cor 11 should be noted. The second half of the chapter is so important; what about the first half?

1. First, the Corinthian epistle is the only one of Paul's letters which is addressed, not only to the believers to whom it is sent, but he adds, *"with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."* Did the Spirit of God anticipate present-day arguments that limit significant portions of this epistle to Corinth and its culture?

2. As well, the section dealing with the proper order for the saints' gatherings (chs 11-14) ends with the words: *"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto*

you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." Paul certainly wants us to take this section seriously!

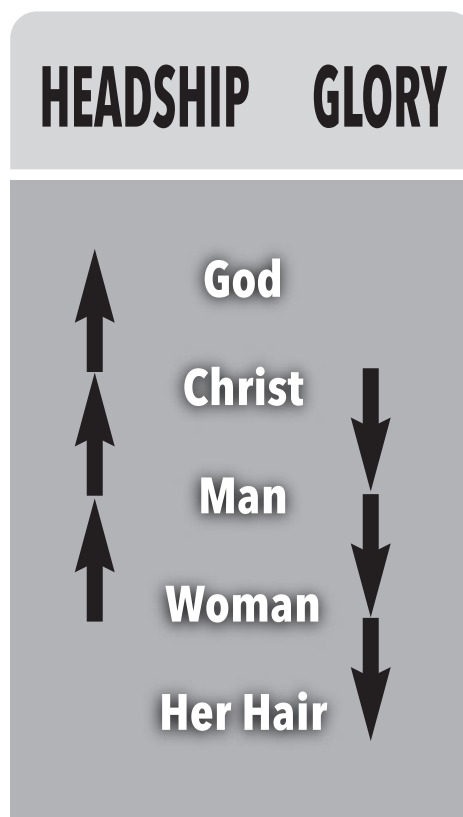
3. At the end of the first subsection (11:1-16) we read: *"But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God."* This does not seem to be simply a local issue in Corinth, does it?

4. Even a cursory reading of this chapter shows the shaky ground under the feet of those who reject this teaching for cultural reasons. The overall subjects of Christ's headship and God's glory are hardly local issues. Whatever you may think of the veiling of women in the church, surely these verses mean something important to the churches.

5. To make matters worse for the culture argument, Paul reaches up to heaven to bring in the angels as witnesses, then reaches back to Eden to show the creative

order of Adam and Eve, and finally argues from "nature itself." Are these not timeless principles that must directly affect the very throne room of the Deity?

Perhaps one more schematic will give a general layout of these two major subjects – **headship** and **glory**.



Headship: The public ministry of the man and the public silence of women give evidence of the headship of Christ. As v 3 states, *“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”* Please note two things. First, “head” cannot mean source because God is not the source of Christ. Secondly, the order is not arranged in simple ascending or descending order. The Spirit seems to direct Paul to “mix” them so as to temper “the head of the woman is the man” with “the head of Christ is God.” It reminds us that the Lord of the churches who has made this arrangement for the man and woman knows something of taking a humble place in order to glorify God on the earth.

Glorify: The uncovered head of the man and the covered hair of the woman are symbols protecting the revealed glory of God. The women are, like the Levites in the Old Covenant, the steward of

the coverings. I say coverings because there must be two coverings to cover the two competing glories in the church: the glory of the man is covered by the woman’s hair *“which is given her for a covering”* (v 15). Under this covering symbolically is the glory of man, for *“the woman is the glory of the man”* (v 7). But a second covering (a different Greek word is used to help us see this distinction), a veil, is necessary to also cover the glory of the woman, which, we are told, is her hair (v 15).

Thus when the men see the coverings they are reminded that their public participation is to be for the Lord’s glory—since their glory is veiled. The angels see the veiled glory and are encouraged in their submission to God. Remember there was a rebellion in heaven once. Is it not more than coincidence that the angel who led that rebellion (and who may seem, at times to be winning on earth), had for a title *“the anointed cherub that covers”*

(Ezek 28:14)? And you will remember the rebellion of Korah (Num 16) who was dissatisfied with his ministry—he wanted a more prominent part. Moses responded: *“Does it seem a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord?”* (v 9). What exactly did the Kohathites do? *“And their charge shall be the ark, and the table, and the candlestick, and the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they minister, and the hanging (that’s the veil)”* (3:31). In any case, those who practice the veil as a sincere act to guard God’s glory by covering the competing glories—they didn’t step forward on this; everyone else stepped back. It wasn’t many years ago that every Christian woman wore a head covering in church services.

THE REASONS FOR THE MAN-WOMAN ORDER IN THE CHURCH

There are two reasons given for the divine order between the man and the woman in 1 Cor 11:8-9. They may at first sound harsh in the light of today’s politically correct climate. But remember the first paragraph of this chapter. The man has been given to play the role of Christ, the eternal Lover, and the woman has the part of His bride, the object of His love. Now through that filter listen to these reasons: *“The man is not of (out of) the woman, but the woman (out) of the man.”* And *“Neither was the man created for the woman but the woman for the man”* (1 Cor 11:8-9). Do we not see the beauty of the picture? It is a picture! *“Christ is not of out of the bride, but the bride out of Christ.”* We too, like Eve, are the bride of the wounded side! How out of character, then, for the church (in symbol) to teach Christ. This is the reason the man is to take the public lead. It has nothing to do with importance or

capability. It is a role in the divine love story, with all the unseen world watching us play our parts. Did Sarah and Hagar know we would be looking at them today, symbolizing the two covenants? Or David playing the part of the true King of Judah? They might have been more careful with their lines if they had, don't you think? Again I say, there are much bigger things at stake here than our personal feelings or our desires to occasionally rewrite the script to our liking.

THE WOMAN'S ROLE AND MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE

Here is one of the great ironies of Christianity: no other movement has, at the same time, been so credited with the enrichment of women and with their impoverishment, with their liberation and enslavement; with their ennobling and debasing. One need only travel to cultures dominated by other religions to see the truth. While the Bible portrays woman as holding a unique role—differ-

ent from the man's—both in the home and the church, that role displays all that is uplifting about the Christian faith. Paul and his companion, Luke, who are sometimes charged with chauvinism for delineating these distinctive roles, cannot say enough about the pivotal ministries and influence of First Century women in the success of the Church's early expansion. Those who charge the Bible with demeaning women either have confused the divine revelation with man's distortions of it in Christendom, or else they have not done their homework. Notice how the woman is portrayed in the New Testament:

1. AS A ROLE MODEL TO YOUNGER WOMEN: The more mature women are to *"teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed"* (Titus 2:4-5). That is, the older women, having learned from the

Lord the secret of happy submission (see 1 Pet 2:21-3:7), pass this miraculous, life-changing truth on to the next generation of women who follow Christ into death to self and win over another generation of stubborn hearts.

2. AS THE DOER OF GOOD

WORKS: It is not that men are not to do good works, but women are often more strategically placed to do them. See the distinction in 1 Tim 2:8 with v 10. Note the qualification of the “widow indeed”: *“Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work”* (1 Tim 5:10; Rom 16:1-2; Acts 18:1-3).

3. AS SAVED THROUGH CHILD-

BEARING: *“Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety”* (1 Tim

2:15). Eve is spoken of here, and linked with all believing women in God’s plan of salvation for the human race. As one mother put it: “I raise men for God.” Even without physical children, many women have risen above their circumstance and become spiritual mothers to thousands.

4. AS THE KEEPER OF THE

HOME: The “keep” was the drawbridge; the keeper guarded what went out and came in. The elders are the keepers of the church; the women are keepers of the home (Titus 2:5).

5. AS THE PURVEYER OF PRIVATE

INSTRUCTION: See the beautiful ministry of Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19). Thank God for such “mothers in Israel”!

6. AS SERVANTS OF THE LORD:

Many were the women both in the Old and New Testaments with strategic roles in the purposes of God (often recovering

for the failures of men). Some were prophetesses: Miriam (Ex 15:20), Deborah (Jud 4:4), Huldah (2 Chron 34:22), Isaiah's wife (Isa 8:3), Noadiah (Neh 6:14), and Anna (Lk 2:36). Others showed hospitality to the Lord's servants: to Elijah (1 Ki. 17), and to Elisha (2 Ki. 4:10), to the Lord Jesus (Jn. 12:2) and to Paul (Rom. 16:6). Some were actually used to change the course of history: Ruth in maintaining the Messianic line, Esther in saving the Jewish race, Jehoshabeath in preserving the royal seed (2 Chron 22:11), to name a few.

7. AS GOSPEL WITNESSES: *In Philippians 4:3, Paul speaks of "... those women which labored with me in the gospel."* It was true then as it is today in the Middle East and many other lands: women can only be reached by women. How many of those in the choir of the redeemed in heaven first heard the sweet strains of the gospel from a mother or grandmother, from a woman missionary or Sunday School teacher,

from a female personal soul winner or neighbor? Paul wrote to Timothy his own testimony (one that could be shared by millions): *"I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice"* (2 Tim 1:5).

8. AS EXAMPLES OF HOLY LIVING: The New Testament utilizes men and women alike in showing us Christianity in 3-D. In living the life of Christ, there is no advantage of male over female. In many cases, women in their faithfulness stand out in stark relief to the unfaithfulness of men. For example, when all Christ's male disciples forsook Him and fled, the women were the last at the Cross and the first at the tomb.

9. AS SUFFERERS FOR CHRIST'S SAKE: The enemy has made no distinction between male and female when it comes to persecuting the faithful. Rachel "weeping for her children" has mingled her tears with multitudes of faithful

women and young girls who have paid the ultimate price for their fidelity to their Lord.

10. AS WORSHIPPERS: Some of the richest expressions in Scripture of personal worship come from the hearts of women. For Old and New Testament egs., see Hannah's prayer (1 Sam 2:1-10); Mary's Magnificat (Lk 1:46-55).

THE SOLEMN PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEN IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

1. Every MAN DESCRIBED AS THE IMAGE AND GLORY OF GOD (1 Cor 11:7): Of course women were made in God's image as recorded in Gen 1:27. That means that both the man and the woman are created with the very imprint of God upon their souls. For this reason, they are the only creatures on earth who can fellowship with God. But notice the different idea for these Greek words in 1 Cor 11. a) image, *eikon*, representation, means that God has called the

men to represent Him in this relationship just as the woman represents the Church. The second word is b) glory, *doxa*, manifestation (e.g. 1 Cor 10:24; 16:2). Man, by the way he cares for and gently serves women in the church and his wife in marriage, shows the gentlemanly heart of God to His creatures. Oh, what a responsibility, men! Your children's view of God the Father will be greatly formed by the way you act as their father. How it should keep us on our knees.

2. Every MAN IS A HOLY AND A ROYAL PRIEST (1 Pet 2:5, 9): As holy priests, we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices; b) as royal priests, we are to show forth God's virtues. In Peter's discussion of New Testament priesthood, however, there is no mention of male/female distinction. We should remember that the Lord doesn't listen for our voices. He hears our hearts. When we say the women are silent, we only mean as far as we are concerned. The Lord hears

them perfectly! But it is the man's solemn responsibility to come to public worship prepared to be called upon by the Holy Spirit to lead the collective praises of the saints. Preparation at home through the week is a must!

3. Every MAN GIFTED BY THE SPIRIT (Eph 4:7, 16; 1 Cor 12:4-7)

The word *charismata* is translated by the combined words "gift" and "grace." "Gift" emphasizes that this supernatural ability is not of me; "grace" emphasizes that this ability is of God. Men have especially solemn responsibility to not only develop and use their gift but to encourage their wife and children in the development of theirs as well.

4. Every MAN a SUPPLIANT and an INTERCESSOR (1 Tim 2:1-8):

Here the word is not "mankind" in general, but, referring to public prayers, is the specific word for "males." See the 4-fold objective: supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, Notice too the 4-fold character:

everywhere, holy, not wrathful, not doubting. Come, brothers, make your prayers "as large as are the promises." Have you ever prayed "for all men everywhere"?

5. While only SOME MEN ARE ELDERS, ALL ARE TO FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLE (see Titus 1:5).

Men, if you look behind, you will see someone is following YOU. We read that "*Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah*" (Gen 5:22). Was it the burden of having a son following him that led him to seek out his Father? I know the feeling.

6. Only some MEN ARE EVANGELISTS but ALL ARE TO BE WITNESSES (Eph 4; 1 Pet 3:15).

Why are so many Sunday School teachers, missionaries, and personal witnesses women? Where are the men? It's as if the men have said, "Here am I. Send...my sister." David once declared, "*Is there not a cause?*" (1 Sam 17:29). It is time for every Christian man to step forward in the great cause of soul winning.

7. Again, some MEN ARE GIFTED TEACHERS but ALL ARE TO BE STUDENTS OF GOD'S WORD.

Many places I go, it is the women with the good Bible questions. As never before, with every wind of doctrine blowing, we need men who will invest the time to get to know God and His Word in the sanctuary, then "the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). See also Jas 3:1; Eph 4; Col 1:28; 2 Tim 3:16.

QUESTIONS

FOR DISCUSSION...

1. What are ways you can specifically maximize the glory of God in your own life and how does it relate to the Church? Some verses to discuss include Mt 5:6; Jn 14:13; 15:8; Rom 8:17; 15:5, 6; 1 Cor 6:20; 1 Cor 11:3-7; 1 Pet 2:11, 12; 4:11.
2. How can we promote the believer's privileges and responsibilities to the younger generation?

UNIQUE ROLES

Review:

1. The notes say that “wherever we look in the world God created, it is obvious the Lord likes order.” Give or find some examples that are meaningful to you.

2. What practical lesson for your own relationship with God did you learn from the chains of accountability and responsibility in your personal life, your civic life, family life and local church life?

3. What specific action can you take as a result of the teaching about the woman’s role and opportunities for service?

4. What specific action can you take as a result of the teaching about the privileges and responsibilities of men in the local church?

DAY 3: WATCH & ANSWER

Fill in the blanks as you watch the video. TIP: It's helpful to pre-read the questions before watching. You can check the answers in the Answer Key (Appendix 10).

Distinguishing Biblical Spheres:

1. The Church is an – a larger message than what we personally understand.
2. Here in 1 Corinthians 11, the men have been called on to play the solemn part of in the home and in the church.
3. The man is to be the in the relationship.
4. All the great love stories of the Bible have their consummation in that glorious day, the day of the .
5. 1 Corinthians 11:8, The Lord Jesus was not made for the Church, but the Church was made for the Lord Jesus. Christ is not in heaven to do . We are on earth to do .
6. There is not one found in the New Testament except for that of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Understanding Order:

1. The restriction is that the women are not to act – of man to God or of God to man.

UNIQUE ROLES

2. In Genesis 1, man was what he was because of what came out of God:

. Woman was what she was because of what came out of man: .

3. 1 Corinthians 11, any and every man is head of any and every woman in the

.

4. The (church or home) does not determine which order.

Marriages and funerals are order.

5. Every sister has a gift given by the Holy Spirit that the Lord Jesus wants her to use.

They have a role to play in helping young women - a role of

.

6. "For centuries women have had the inestimable privilege of watching the

of God overcome the of man!"

7. Good works are the to the gospel... the winsome

influence of those who do in the community.

8. The of an assembly is in the hands of the men. The

of an assembly is in the hands of the women.

9. If it is wrong for a woman to stand and speak in a church meeting, it is just as wrong

and possibly for a man not to stand and

speak when prompted to do so by the Holy Spirit.

DAY 4: WRITE & REMEMBER

1. Record three significant statements from this chapter. Why are they significant to you?

A) **Statement One:** _____

B) **Statement Two:** _____

C) **Statement Three:** _____

2. Memorize **Romans 13:1**.

DAY 5: REFLECT & PRAY

Respond in prayer: Having looked carefully at the unique roles of both women and men in the Church, reflect on your own life in the following ways:

Praise: _____

Repent: _____

Ask: _____

Yield: _____

PRAISE: What specific blessing have you discovered in this lesson? Thank the Lord for it! **REPENT:** Is there something in your life that is hindering you from experiencing what you have just learned? **ASK:** What specific way would you like the Lord to help you live out these truths? **YIELD:** Is there a particular area in your life that needs to come under the Lord's rule?