

Women in Leadership

A Biblical Vision of Kingdom Partnership

At Northwest, we believe God calls both men and women to use their gifts to build His Church. Our conviction isn't based on changing Scripture to fit culture, but on reading Scripture as one unified story—from Creation, through Jesus, to the early Church.

God's Design Was Partnership

From the beginning, God created men and women as equal image-bearers (Genesis 1:26–28). Eve is described as an *ezer kenegdo*—a strong ally and corresponding partner, not a subordinate assistant (Genesis 2:18). The hierarchy introduced in Genesis 3 is presented as a consequence of the Fall, not God's original design.

Jesus Restored What Sin Distorted

Throughout His ministry, Jesus consistently elevated the dignity and calling of women. He welcomed them as disciples, included them in His ministry, and entrusted the first announcement of His resurrection to women, commissioning them as the first witnesses to the greatest news in history (Matthew 28:1–10; John 20:11–18).

The Holy Spirit Gives Gifts Without Distinction

At Pentecost, Peter declared the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy:

"Your sons and daughters will prophesy... Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit."

Acts 2:17–18 (Joel 2:28–29)

The New Testament teaches that spiritual gifts—including teaching, leadership, prophecy, shepherding, and service—are given by the Holy Spirit without gender distinction (Romans 12:3–8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11–13).

Women Led in the Early Church

The New Testament records numerous women serving in significant ministry roles:

- **Phoebe** served as a deacon and carried Paul's letter to the Romans (Romans 16:1–2).
- **Priscilla** helped teach Apollos and clarify sound doctrine (Acts 18:24–26).
- **Junia** is recognized as "outstanding among the apostles" (Romans 16:7).
- **Lydia** and **Nympha** led churches that met in their homes (Acts 16:14–15, 40; Colossians 4:15).

These examples demonstrate that women actively taught, led, and helped establish the early Church.

Understanding Difficult Passages

Like all Scripture, difficult passages should be interpreted within the broader story of Scripture and the historical context in which they were written. In 1 Timothy 2, Paul was writing to the church in Ephesus, where false teaching and the influence of Artemis worship were creating confusion. His instruction begins by saying, "Let a woman learn" (1 Timothy 2:11), a remarkably affirming command in a culture where women often lacked formal religious education. The rare Greek word *authentein*, translated "exercise authority" in some English Bibles, appears only once in the New Testament and is understood by many scholars to describe domineering or abusive leadership rather than healthy, Christlike authority. Rather than prohibiting women from teaching for all time, we believe Paul was addressing a specific situation in Ephesus while protecting the church from false teaching.

Our Conviction

We believe the Bible presents a consistent story:

- **Creation:** Men and women were created as partners in God's mission.
- **Jesus:** Christ restored dignity and calling to women.
- **The Church:** The Holy Spirit empowered both men and women to lead, teach, and serve.

For these reasons, Northwest welcomes both men and women to serve in every area of ministry according to the gifts God has given them.

Our Practice at Northwest

Men and women are equal in value, distinct by God's design, and called to partner together in building His Church.