

# Millington Baptist Church Position Paper on Women in Ministry

Approved by the Board of Elders 10/2/01

## **Purpose:**

Every disciple of Jesus Christ is called to serve. God endows each believer with at least one spiritual gift; He develops passion within them for specific areas of ministry; and He guides them into training and experience that will make them effective. Our goal as a church is to free both men and women for His calling in ministry. The church, the world and the believer all benefit when His people serve Him in those ministries to which He has called them.

This policy statement seeks to set forth what the Bible teaches about women in ministry within the local church.

## **Summary:**

Men and women are created in the image and likeness of God, are loved by Him, and are offered the gift of eternal life without distinction in terms of gender. They have equal access to God through prayer and His Word, and at the new birth are granted spiritual gifts according to the sovereign purpose of God. These gifts are not gender specific. They are to be exercised for the glory of God and the good of the Body.

By God's design, the position of ultimate authority in the Church and in the home has been given to men. This is not a statement of greater worth or ability but simply of God's choice, nor does it mean that women have no authority or leadership responsibilities in these two spheres.

For the glory of God and the strength of His People, every effort must be made to help gifted men and women respond to His call, serving in various areas with vision and confidence in God's strength.

## **Principles:**

- ❖ Men and women are created in the image and likeness of God – Genesis 1:26-31
- ❖ Men and women are granted spiritual gifts without gender distinction – 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Peter 4:10-11
- ❖ When both men and women are present, persons of each gender occupy places of authority, teaching and leadership in the Bible – Acts 18:26; 21:9; Romans 16; 1 Corinthians 11:3-16
- ❖ Men alone are authorized by God to hold the final authority as servant leaders in the home and in the church (Elders) - 1 Corinthians 11; Ephesians 5:21-33; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:3-9

## **Application:**

- ❖ The position of Elder and Pastor is reserved for men alone.
- ❖ Because all other leaders are accountable to the Elders and Pastors, all other positions of leadership in the church are open to men and women.

## Background:

- ❑ Women had an active role in both the OT and in the NT church. Though the priesthood was closed to women (and to men who were not from the family of Aaron), the prophetic ministry was open to both men and women. Acts 21:9 pictures the daughters of Philip as prophetesses. In Acts 18:26, Priscilla is seen as teaching Apollos. In fact, the order of their names may be a statement of the primary leader in this setting. It is changed from the first mention (Acts 18:2). Women are clearly active in leadership roles in the Church at Rome (Romans 16), and 1 Corinthians 11:5ff shows women leading worship, including the areas of prayer and prophecy.
- ❑ The 1 Corinthians 14:34 command for women to “remain silent” is set in the context of disturbances to the worship service. The same word is directed to both men and women in vv. 28 and 30, again in reference to keeping order in worship.
- ❑ Ephesians 4:11 couples teaching with the office of pastor (elder). Teaching which is exercised with the authority of the office of elder must be kept distinct from the exercise of the gift of teaching. Women are not excluded from the gift of teaching, nor should they be excluded from the exercise of that gift, even when men are present. Furthermore, all teachers, both men and women, are under the authority of the spiritual leaders of the church. The same is true of women who serve in other elected offices, which has always been the practice in our church.
- ❑ The “teaching” of 1 Timothy 2:12 is not the same as our position of Sunday School teacher or discussion leader. The teaching to which this passage refers is the “official” instruction/position of the church communicated by the elders and pastors. Other readings of this passage would bar women from teaching *any* subject or being given *any* position of leadership where men might be present or effected. In fact, the words “teach” and “have (usurp) authority” in this passage are connected by a conjunction, which regularly joins two ideas that mutually define each other (see other examples in Romans 3:10; 9:16; 1 Corinthians 2:6; and 1 Timothy 6:16).
- ❑ The word translated “silent” in 1 Timothy 2:12 does not mean refraining from speech. Rather, it means “quiet, orderly.” When the same word (*hesuchios*) is used in Acts 11:18; 22:2; 2 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 Timothy 2:2; and 1 Peter 3:4, it is used to describe quietness in terms of atmosphere or spirit, not of speech. The idea is a quietness of spirit, not of tongue, and if practiced as Paul advocates in 1 Timothy 2:12, would keep a woman from “usurping” the position that God has designed for a man. She does not have to refrain from all speech to accomplish this end.

## Conclusion:

God has been so gracious in preparing His people for ministry. We look forward to seeing each one answer God’s call to serve in that place of ministry for which He has designed and prepared them. God’s Family will grow in strength and number as we serve Him together in the power of the Holy Spirit.