

Week 1: The Weight of Scriptural Evidence

1. Focus

- **Core Question:** Does the Bible, as a whole, support excluding women from leadership, or does it support including them?
- **Approach:** Apply sound hermeneutical (interpretive) principles to Scripture, examining both Old and New Testaments.

2. Interpreting Scripture (Hermeneutics)

A. All Scripture Is Inspired

- **2 Timothy 3:16 (KJV)**
“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”
- Key principle: All Scripture must be considered when forming doctrine.
- The Bible should agree with itself—interpretation of one passage must align with the whole.

B. No Private Interpretation

- **2 Peter 1:20–21 (KJV)**
“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”
- Behind the human authors stands **one divine Author:** the Holy Spirit.
- The Bible must be read as God’s unified Word, not as fragments subject to personal bias.

C. Old Testament Relevance

- When Paul and Peter referred to “all Scripture,” they primarily meant the Old Testament, since the New Testament was not yet canonized.
- This means the Old Testament must also shape our doctrine of women in ministry.

3. The Beginning: God’s Design in Genesis

A. Creation in God’s Image

- **Genesis 1:26–27 (KJV)**
“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”
- Both male and female share God’s image.
- Both were given **dominion and authority** over creation.
- No hierarchy is mentioned—partnership and equality are emphasized.

B. Complementarian vs. Egalitarian Views

- **Complementarian View:** Men and women are equal in being, but men alone lead in church and family.
- **Egalitarian View:** Men and women are equal in both being and function, sharing leadership and authority.

C. Common Misinterpretations

1. **Order of Creation Argument** – Some argue Adam’s creation first implies superiority.
 - Counterpoint: By that logic, humans (created last in Genesis 1) would be inferior to animals—yet they are the pinnacle of creation.
 - Therefore, order of creation does not imply hierarchy.
2. **“Helper” Argument** – Woman described as *ezer* (helper).
 - Most often in Scripture, *ezer* refers to **God as Israel’s helper** (e.g., Psalm 33:20).
 - This implies **strength and partnership**, not inferiority.
3. **The Fall and Consequences** – Genesis 3:16 describes the broken relationship (“he shall rule over you”), but this is descriptive of sin’s effects, not prescriptive of God’s design.
 - God did not *command* male dominance; He described a tragic consequence of sin.
 - Redemption in Christ restores God’s original intent of equality and partnership.

4. Jesus' Confirmation of God's Original Design

- In addressing divorce, Jesus said:
“But from the beginning it was not so” (Matthew 19:8, KJV).
- Application: Many broken patterns we see in relationships today are the result of sin, not God's design.
- The same principle applies to how we view women in ministry—*God's original intent was partnership, not subjugation.*

5. Scholarly Insights

- The Bible, while written in patriarchal cultures, **consistently subverts patriarchy** by elevating women into leadership roles.
- Women in Scripture were not merely “filling in gaps” until a man arrived. They were:
 - **Called, anointed, and commissioned by God.**
 - Used in leadership roles without apology or qualification.
- If “all Scripture is inspired,” then stories of women leaders (Deborah, Huldah, Esther, etc.) must shape doctrine just as much as commands.

6. Discussion Questions

1. Why is it essential to consider the whole of Scripture when forming doctrine?
2. How does Genesis 1 challenge the idea that women are inferior to men?
3. Why is Jesus' phrase “from the beginning it was not so” important in today's conversation on women in ministry?

7. Reflection & Application

- **Personal Reflection:** Have I interpreted Scripture through tradition or culture rather than God's heart?
- **Application:** Study the whole counsel of Scripture when forming convictions.
- **Prayer Focus:** Ask God to restore His original design for men and women—working together in unity, equality, and power for the Gospel.

8. Sticky Statement

“From the beginning, God created men and women as equal partners in His image—sharing dominion, sharing calling, and sharing His mission.”

9) Memory Verse:

“In Christ there is neither male nor female... for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” – Galatians 3:28

10)Notes: