

## **Statement on the Roles of Men and Women in the Ministry of Crossroads Community Church**

### **SUMMARY OF STATEMENT**

We believe the Bible teaches that men and women, being equal image bearers of God (Gen 1:27), are fully equal in dignity and worth before God and one another (Gal. 3:28), and that through the power of the Holy Spirit, men and women are to exercise the full range of their gifts in the church (Rom. 12:4-8, 1 Cor. 12). Nevertheless, we also believe the Bible shows God's plan as part of the created order for the headship of men as servant-leaders in the home and the church (Gen. 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor. 11:7-9; 1 Tim. 2:12-14), and that as part of God's plan for headship, He has assigned certain governing and teaching roles within the church only to biblically qualified men (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 11:2-16; 1 Tim. 2:11-15). Specifically, we believe that women can hold any leadership or ministry position in the church except for the offices of Elder or Pastor.

### **FURTHER DISCUSSION**

We believe that the Gospel is best presented in a community of faith when both men and women flourish as they use their uniquely designed and equally important spiritual gifts for the work of God-glorifying ministry.

In today's 21<sup>st</sup> century culture, the roles of men and women are seen as interchangeable; this is especially commonplace in the secular workplace – as well it should be. The church, however, is different and is thus often criticized because it does not conform to the same values of the culture. Let us be clear that at Crossroads we look to scripture, and not the culture, for our values. We believe the Bible is the actual and only Word of God. It is given and maintained by God, therefore it is trustworthy, and the sole basis of our beliefs and guide for living.

We begin by affirming that the Bible clearly teaches that men and women are absolutely equal in dignity before God and fully co-heirs of grace:

Genesis 1:27 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

However, we also believe that in God's sovereignty, His ordering of creation does not establish that men and women are interchangeable. Rather, we believe that God created men and women in His image, equal before God as persons, but distinct and complimentary in their manhood and womanhood. (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:18). We believe God ordained distinctions in masculine and feminine roles as part of the created order. (Gen. 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor. 11:1-16; Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).

For the church, we believe the Bible clearly teaches that oversight and authoritative teaching is reserved for the offices of Elder and Pastor, and being male is one qualification of being an Elder (see further explanation below). But this qualification is not based on men being superior to women, nor does it mean that female gifts or intellect are of lesser value to the work of the Gospel. Rather, God is showing us symmetry between the leadership of the local church and the leadership of the family, both of which also reflect the headship of God over Christ, and of Christ

(the groom) over the church (His bride) (1 Cor. 11:1-3; Eph. 5:25-27, 32). Leadership of the church therefore points to the created order and to God's redemptive design. As Christ submits to the Father, so we submit to His created order in the family and the church. Therefore, we believe scripture teaches that God has assigned certain governing and teaching roles within the church only to biblically qualified men. Specifically, we believe that women can hold any leadership or ministry position in the church except for the offices of Elder or Pastor. Apart from these two exceptions, it is the strong desire of the Elders and Crossroads Leadership that both men and women should be equally pursued to use their gifts for the work of ministry to the glory of God.

There are many within the 21<sup>st</sup> century church who do not agree with our position on the distinct roles of men and women in church ministry. However, we respectfully disagree. The debate over the roles of men and women in ministry, and in the home, is decided on the interpretation of scripture. We affirm that Crossroads' position in this Statement is based on sound and correct principles of Biblical interpretation. Crossroads has adopted The Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood,<sup>1</sup> as well as the Chicago Statements on Biblical Inerrancy and Hermeneutics,<sup>2</sup> and we believe our position is consistent with these statements.

We also fully understand and respect the sensitive nature of this topic. We do not want to divide over this issue, but rather to *unite*. We encourage open and honest conversation, dialogue and study with those who wish to wrestle with these kinds of difficult biblical topics. We encourage anyone who is struggling with this position or who has questions of any kind to please come to the Staff, Pastors or Elders to request clarification or for further discussion.

## **FAQs:**

### **IN WHAT LEADERSHIP ROLES MAY MEN AND WOMEN SERVE AT CROSSROADS?**

#### **Elders and Pastors**

The Bible describes the office of Elder as carrying with it the authority of governance over the local body of believers (Acts 15:2, 6, 23; 16:4). Elders are called to exercise that authority in humility and in a spirit of gentleness as those who are under the authority of the chief shepherd, Jesus Christ, to whom they must give an account one day (Heb. 13:17). From the description found in 1 Tim. 5:17-25 and Titus 1:5-9, the role of Elder is to be filled by qualified men who can be empowered with the responsibility to govern and teach the body. We believe "Elder" and "Pastor" are not two different offices. They are simply two different words for the same office (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-2; Eph. 4:11).

While women are not scripturally permitted to become Elders, it is also true that *most men* in the local church will not become Elders either. Thus, the issue of authoritative leadership in the church is not one of men vs. women, but rather a question of who is qualified and called to be, and set apart as, an Elder. Other than the offices of Elder/Pastor, women may (and are needed to) serve and lead in our body.

#### **Ministry & Staff Leadership**

One area in our church where women and men serve alongside each other and give administrative leadership is in the oversight of ministries and staff functions. These roles are

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cbmw.org/uncategorized/the-danvers-statement/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://defendinginerrancy.com/chicago-statements/>

consistent with the role of “Deacon” in the New Testament church, even though Crossroads, at this time, does not have an official office called “Deacon”. The role of a Deacon is not to oversee the church<sup>3</sup>, but rather to assist the Elders in ministry so that they may devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-6). We believe from scripture that men and women are allowed to serve as Deacons.<sup>4</sup> Many of the type of duties historically performed by Deacons in the New Testament are still performed in our church by those who are biblically qualified to be a Deacon (1 Tim. 3:8-13). They may be members of staff or lay leaders. Examples of these duties include caring for those in need and providing administrative leadership over ministries, staff, finances, facilities, and events. These duties may be performed by qualified men or women, subject to the oversight and authority of the Elders and Pastors. At Crossroads, the role of a commissioned Minister is a position that can be held under our By-Laws by men and women who have demonstrated the appropriate skills and abilities to assist in the shepherding of a specific area of ministry in the church under the direction of an ordained or licensed Pastor.

### **Life Group Leaders**

Our Life Group leaders play an essential role as the primary disciple-makers at Crossroads. While Life Group leaders do not exercise oversight of the church (and therefore are not required to meet the qualification of “Elder”), they teach, encourage and advise those whom they are discipling. Therefore, given the shepherding nature of a Life Group leader, wisdom, prudence and the weight of scripture call for healthy boundaries in the gender of these leaders. Adolescent and adult Life Group leaders should be the same gender as the group members. Life Groups with male and female members can be led by male or female leaders.

### **WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE SAY REGARDING THE ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN TEACHING?**

One of the responsibilities of an Elder/Pastor involves the teaching of sound doctrine and the ability to hold the body of the church accountable in the application of that doctrine to their lives. In 1 Tim. 2:12, scripture states that women are not permitted to teach or have authority over a man. We recognize that this is a controversial passage, and the subject of much debate. However, we affirm the correct governing principle from this text is that authoritative doctrinal instruction and the exercising of oversight and correction over men and women in the local church is a role reserved to the Elders/Pastors. This typically happens during the Sunday morning worship experience, as led by the Lead or Associate Pastor. There will be occasions when a female voice will be called upon to teach on a Sunday morning when applicable. However, we believe that when such teaching or instruction is not coupled with the exercise of authority, then the instructor is not required to be an Elder/Pastor, and thus may be either a man or woman, provided that person is gifted and equipped toward that purpose.

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<sup>3</sup> The usage of the term “Deacon” can be confusing in our modern church context. Some protestant denominations use the term “Deacon” to refer to a group of laity who supervise the Pastor and financial affairs of the church. Scripturally speaking, those duties are exercising oversight of the church and are more consistent with the office of Elder, not Deacon. That is why Crossroads uses the title “Elder” for the body of men who give oversight to our church. In this Statement, the term Deacon is used in its New Testament context to refer to the group of men and women who work under the oversight of Elders in order to help them in the daily work of ministry.

<sup>4</sup> The issue of whether women may serve as Deacons involves a question of interpretation of 1 Tim. 3:11. The Greek word “gynaikas” may be translated as wives or women, depending on the context. We believe that the grammatical structure of this passage (Paul using the term “likewise”) points to this verse being a statement of the qualification for women Deacons, not wives of Deacons. Other conservative, evangelical commentators and churches agree with this interpretation as well, but it is not a universally held position. Additionally, there is significant historical evidence that women served as Deacons since the earliest days of the church.

Those functions within the church that do not involve authoritative teaching (such as most equipping classes, counseling and prayer ministries, and guest speakers associated with a conference) may be performed by any person, male or female, whom the Elders discern is called to and gifted for that function. Ultimately, all instruction within the church occurs under the oversight of the Elders. Accordingly, the Elders will take an active role in determining the content of teaching at Crossroads and, when necessary, correct any teaching that is in error (with a spirit of gentleness and humility).

### **IN WHAT ROLES MAY WOMEN SERVE DURING THE SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE?**

Similar to the role of authoritative teaching, it is the role of an Elder to exercise oversight of the gathering of the body (i.e. a worship service) to ensure that it proceeds in good order (1 Cor. 14:40). While 1 Cor. 14:33-38 would seem to indicate that women are not allowed to speak in a worship service, we believe that the context of this passage limits its application to judging the soundness of prophetic statements, a role performed by Elders alone in the New Testament church. In fact, 1 Cor. 11:5 clearly implies an ongoing role for women in the worship service. In the context of a modern worship service, we believe that women may serve and lead as any man can from the “platform” through singing, playing instruments, leading worship, spoken prayer, the reading of scripture, testimonies, words of encouragement, the sermon (as noted above), collecting offerings, serving communion, and public speaking to welcome the church and to communicate information about events happening within the church.