

**The Bridge Bible Church**  
**Women in Leadership Stance**  
**2024**

**Historical Datapoint**

Since its inception, The Bridge has functioned within a Complementarian understanding of the Bible's instructions concerning leadership roles within the church for men and women. In 2013, the Elders formalized the church's stance with a document ([our 2013 stance](#)) which affirmed our understanding that God's Word teaches that the office of Elder and the position of Pastor should be male.

**2024 Decision**

A few years ago, the Elders sensed the need to revisit the 2013 decision. The Elders embarked on a multi-year effort which involved intense pursuit of wisdom and discernment from the Holy Spirit of God; in depth Bible study; examination of many related books, articles, podcasts and other resources; thorough discussion; consultation with a mixed-gender sub-team and a few other individuals; and still more prayer. **In the end, the Elders discerned the Lord leading them, through their understanding of the pertinent biblical teaching, to reaffirm our existing stance: There are many ministry and leadership functions in the church that are available to both women and men, however the office of Elder and the position of Pastor at The Bridge should be male.**

**Summary of the Decision Rationale**

The Bridge Bible Church believes that both men and women are made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-31, Matthew 19:4). Men and women are equally loved by God, children of God, and heirs to the promises of God (Galatians 3:23-29). Scripture affirms that God intentionally made men and women to be equal in value, yet different and complementary in design and function (Genesis 1-2). God made two, and only two genders in His image: "God made mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them". (Genesis 1:27)

The Bridge believes Scripture highlights the aforementioned complementary differences in design and function between male and female in two specific spheres: Marriage (the nuclear family) and the Church (the Family of God). These complementary differences in both the family and the Church can be seen in God's instruction for male headship and female submission. (Ephesians 5:22-24 (family); 1 Timothy 2:8-15 (among others

for the Church mentioned later). These concepts of headship and submission are originally witnessed within the Trinity, as the Son submits to the headship of His Father; and as the Third Person (the Spirit) takes on the role of “Helper”, which is similar to the Genesis description of Eve (“Helper/Help-mate”). (Philippians 2:8; John 14:26; Genesis 2:18) When God made mankind in “Our” (plural personal pronoun) image, we see how creating mankind both male and female so beautifully reflects two aspects of His image. (Genesis 1:26-27)

Our purpose here is to highlight God’s design for male headship in the Church, the Family of God. The Bridge believes Scripture teaches that those who hold the office of Elder should be male (1 Timothy 2:8-15, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4). The Bible teaches that the Elders are the highest spiritual authority over the church and under Jesus. Among other functions, they provide overall direction, spiritual guidance, and doctrinal safeguarding.

When considering the position of “Pastor”, we must first acknowledge the quandary that the New Testament did not imagine a position like our modern-day church cultural understanding of “Pastor” that is distinct from the first century church description of “Elder”. So rather than pointing to specific verses, like we do for determining God’s instruction for male headship for the office of Elder, we must use Spirit-led wisdom and discernment.

As the “2024 Decision” (above) states, the Elders have discerned that the position of “Pastor” at The Bridge should be considered similarly to the office of Elder, and thus be male. The following points were considered:

- Within the context of The Bridge, although our Pastors are not Elders (with the exception of the Lead Pastor), they are required to have the qualifications of Elders, as defined by 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.
- Our Pastors are sometimes required to function with the authority of Elders (e.g. Authoritative preaching at Sunday worship gatherings; Baptism interviews)
- Preaching brings a high level of authority which is virtually indistinguishable from any higher level of authority within the church
- The rationale of the 2013 decision is still valid: In our current church culture, Pastors are viewed as having a very high level of authority within the church. It is a common assumption that there is no higher level of authority.

This 2024 decision was made solely for the context of The Bridge Bible Church and is not referencing the role of women and men in any other sphere of life (i.e. professional, education, politics, business, general public). We denounce any evil view of manhood and womanhood that leads to the abuse, marginalization, devaluing, belittling,

objectifying, or demeaning of women (Psalm 5; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Colossians 3:19). We do not believe that the cultural beliefs of masculinity and femininity should determine how we interact with and treat one another, but that our identities and relationships should be founded on God's perfect original design of equality between women and men (Genesis 1-2).

We are convicted and motivated, within the biblical framework referenced above, to do all we can to support, promote, and encourage the women of our church to serve the Lord to the fullest extent within their gifting and in a variety of roles, including those of leadership.

We recognize that not all Bible-believing Jesus-followers will agree on this complicated doctrinal topic. But we earnestly pray that what we do agree on is that we should approach it prioritizing grace and unity, since we are all ONE in Christ Jesus (Romans 12:5)

### **Final Thoughts:**

This topic of "Women in Leadership" is a very important one in the American church today. It has also become one of the most hotly debated and (sadly) divisive ones. Most churches and individual Christians who study this topic find themselves in one of two divergent camps: Egalitarian and Complementarian. While the Biblical study and prayer of The Bridge Elders have led them to a Complementarian interpretation, they readily acknowledge that some Bible scholars and church practitioners have arrived at a different (Egalitarian) interpretation. Thankfully, the vast majority on both sides would affirm that this is not a primary doctrine (not central to the Gospel) and therefore allow for disagreement between sisters and brothers in Christ, while still maintaining fellowship together in grace, love, and unity. Unity among sisters and brothers in Christ is one of Jesus' highest priorities for His Church. While on Earth, Jesus prays to His Father in John 17:22, "The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one...". The call to maintain unity in the Church becomes one of the apostle Paul's loudest exhortations in his letters.

Ephesians 4:1-3 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

In full recognition of the weightiness of this topic, the Elders humbly and gently ask for your grace in helping to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace in our church as we lovingly and prayerfully journey forward together.