NewSong Church

HARRISON, OHIO

POSITION PAPER

Men and Women in the Church

Equal in worth, distinct in role.

OUR POSITION

Men and women are equal in value, dignity, and worth, and God has given them distinct and complementary roles. At NewSong the office of elder is reserved for qualified men, and women serve the church in many vital ways, including as deaconesses.

POSITION PAPER

Men and Women in the Church

Equal in worth

God created humanity in His image, male and female (Genesis 1:27). Both men and women are created to glorify God and reflect His character (Statement of Faith, Article 10A). In Christ, men and women are equally sons and heirs of God, saved by the same grace, sealed by the same Spirit (Galatians 3:26–29; 1 Peter 3:7). Nothing in what follows makes a woman less valuable, less gifted, or less needed in the life of the church.

Distinct in role

Equality of worth does not mean sameness of role. Scripture teaches that men bear a unique responsibility of servant leadership in the home and in the church (Ephesians 5:22–25; 1 Corinthians 11:3). Paul grounds this order not in the culture of his day but in creation itself, before the fall (1 Timothy 2:12–14).

This leadership is modeled on Christ, who came not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45). It is a call to sacrifice, not a license for pride.

Why our elders are men

The elders are the church's pastors and overseers: they teach the Word, shepherd the members, and guard the church's doctrine (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1–4). The qualifications Paul gives for this office describe a man: “the husband of one wife,” one who must “manage his own household well” (1 Timothy 3:2–5; Titus 1:6). In keeping with these passages, our Statement of Faith says, “The office of elder is reserved for qualified men, in accordance with Scripture” (Article 10B), and our bylaws require that elders “be men who meet the qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9” (Article V, Section 2).

How women serve at NewSong

The New Testament is full of women who served Christ and His church: Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae (Romans 16:1–2); Priscilla, who with her husband explained the way of God to Apollos (Acts 18:26); the many women Paul names as his fellow workers (Romans 16:3–15; Philippians 4:2–3).

At NewSong, women:

- Serve as **deaconesses**, an office of the church, caring for the practical needs of the body under the oversight of the elders (Bylaws, Article V, Section 3)
- Teach and disciple other women, as Paul commands older women to train younger women (Titus 2:3–5)
- Teach children and serve in the nursery and preschool ministry
- Use every spiritual gift God gives for the good of the body (1 Peter 4:10–11)
- Vote as members on every matter brought before the congregation, including the affirmation of elders, deacons, and deaconesses and the final stage of church discipline (Bylaws, Article VI)

Why women serve as deaconesses

The office of elder carries oversight and the authoritative teaching of the church. The office of deacon does not; deacons serve the practical needs of the body under the elders' oversight. Scripture reserves the first for qualified men and, we believe, opens the second to qualified women.

The key passage is 1 Timothy 3. After listing the qualifications for deacons, Paul writes, “Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things” (1 Timothy 3:11). The Greek word here can mean either *wives* or *women*, and translators differ: the ESV reads “their wives,” the NIV “the women.” Either way, the passage describes women serving alongside the deacons in their work. Notably, Paul gives no matching instruction about women in his qualifications for elders.

Some ask how this fits with verse 12: “Let deacons each be the husband of one wife.” Like the same phrase for elders, this speaks to proven marital faithfulness. It tells us what a man must be if he serves as a deacon; it does not rule out women. For women who serve, Paul's standard is the same reputation for godliness and faithfulness (1 Timothy 3:11; compare 5:9–10).

The wider New Testament agrees. Paul commends Phoebe as “a servant of the church at Cenchreae” (Romans 16:1), using the same word translated *deacon* elsewhere. Women were deeply involved in the life and mission of the early church, and there is every reason for them to be so today. Women serving as deaconesses strengthens the church's care for its members and in no way weakens the calling of men to servant leadership in the home and in the church.

A second-order conviction

Our Theological Triage paper places the roles of men and women in the church among the second-order matters. Many Christians who love the gospel see this differently, and we receive them as brothers and sisters in Christ. We hold our conviction because we believe Scripture teaches it, and we seek to practice it with humility and joy.

KEY PASSAGES

Genesis 1:27; 2:18–24; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22–33; 1 Timothy 2:12–14; 3:1–13; Titus 1:6–9; 2:3–5; 1 Peter 3:7. Statement of Faith, Article 10.

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