

River Vineyard Church Team Vision Meeting
Tony Ranvestel
August 3, 2008

I want to talk about some stuff that God has been doing in me over the last several months. It's been pretty profound. The changes God's made in my thinking and the way I read the Bible and understand some things. I'm actually really excited about it. It's changed me.

I've talked to some of you already face to face, in person, but I want to take some time tonight to talk through some of the Bible text that deal with the issue I want to talk about tonight, specially talking about men's' and women's roles in the home and church. And I want to give you some definitions so we're all understanding and are on the same page. And then I want to give you some background just about my life, my story, my progression dealing with this particular issue.

So, there's three definitions that will come in handy if you understand them. The terms are egalitarian, hierarchical, and complementarian. These are the three main terms that people use when they talk about this issue of gender roles in the home and in the church. I'm not sure if you knew or you probably didn't know that there was a debate going on about these things, but there is. It's become quite a hot topic in the church, especially in the last 20 to 30 years or so.

And so, those terms. Egalitarian is on one side of the fence, one extreme. Egalitarians believe that men and women are equally valued before God, but there is to be no distinction in what roles they have, meaning in the home and in the church in particular. They simply function in the home and in the church based on how the Spirit has gifted them. Ok, so equal value before God. No distinction in roles. Just go on based the Holy Spirit has gifted them on.

On the other extreme is something called hierarchicalism. Hierarchicalists believe that women shouldn't do anything. Ok. They shouldn't teach, they shouldn't lead, they shouldn't contribute very much. And in these kind of churches, people, there's kind of rope going down the middle and women sit on one wide and men sit on the other side. And women kind of sit there with (this is the most extreme side) they have a covering on their head and they don't speak. K? The danger on that side certainly is, well women are viewed as inferior to men. And that in my eyes, is clearly not biblical.

In the middle is a model that we call complementarianism. Complementarians believe that men and women have equal value and essence before God, same as egalitarians would, but they have different and complementary God-ordained roles. And so, one of those roles is that men have primary responsibility of leadership in the church and in the home. They have the primary calling of authority and leadership. It doesn't mean they are the only ones with authority, it doesn't mean that they're the only ones who make decisions, it just means that the primary responsibility ultimately rests on the shoulders

of the men to be the leaders. And it's God-ordained thing that began, that God did at creation.

Now, that word authority tends to scare people. Partly because authority has been abused. People who have been in charge of people have done foolish things, some of it in the name of God. And it makes people feel very unsafe, very horrible. But biblically, I believe authority is a wonderful thing. Authority is a God-ordained thing. Uh, there's authority in the trinity. Father, son, Holy Spirit. Jesus chose to submit himself to his father and pray prayers like, just like re learned today at church, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. So Jesus didn't see authority as a bad thing necessarily. As a pastor in a church, I have some level of authority. And that's a good thing, I think. Unless I begin to abuse it and then it's a bad thing, for you guys, right? But it's a good thing to have people who are in charge, people who are in authority, and then people who are following that authority.

So, let me just kinda talk you through my background in this and why it's even come up on our radar screen at RVC. Rewind the tape 8 years ago. I first found a Vineyard in Carbondale, IL. So I was a first year grad student, that was 7 or 8 years ago and that church, which is now called Vine Community Church was a complementarian church. Excuse me, I'm having problems with my Fazoli's. ☺ Two years later, I graduated from SIU, moved to Champaign and began attending the Champaign Vineyard which is an egalitarian church, k. So I've kinda been subject to these two different kinds of styles of leadership, two different styles of biblical philosophy that pertain to this particular issue.

Um, I did not study this issue for myself biblically because I didn't need to and frankly I didn't have time to. I was very preoccupied with trying to get planned for RVC so that we could move here and you know have the team all moved and start a church and get this going. So, I did not spend a lot of time studying the text or reading anything about it. Uh, we moved here under egalitarian presuppositions. That's what my leaders were in Champaign and so that's what is what I was. You know, I even preached a sermon on 1 Timothy, chapter 2, I believe it was last fall, from an egalitarian perspective. Again, that's just kinda what I knew. I listened to a couple of talks, read a couple papers on it, and it seemed to make sense to me, so that's how I taught that text.

Now, five months ago is when all of this kinda started swirling in me again and I was challenged by one of my old pastors, who was actually the guy who was the old pastor of the Carbondale Vineyard to figure this stuff out for myself. And the way it kinda went down is that I was meeting with him, just kind of hanging out and he asked me "what kind of things are you learning about?" And I said that I'm reading a lot of Wayne Grudem, John Piper, listening to a lot of Mark Driscoll. Just listed some books that I've been reading and sermons and teachings I'd been listening to. And he said "Oh, that's interesting. All those guys are complementarians, so what do you do with that gender role stuff?" You know, because I had told him that I didn't agree with it, that I was an egalitarian. And I said well, you know, I actually haven't thought about that a whole lot. Uhh, it hasn't, I haven't really gotten there yet. And so he challenged me. He said "Well, basically, you're a big boy now. You lead your own church and so you probably

better ought to figure out what you think the Bible says on it. Right? Instead of just taking for granted what other people think Bible says on it.? And so I said, you know what. You're right. I'm going to do that.

And so for the next four months, I studied intensely on the issue. I entered into this whole learning process with a great deal of fear and trembling because I know what an emotionally charged, explosive issue it can be. And this is one of those issues that has to play out on a practical level. Right, everyone in here is either a man or a woman. Right? So this issue affects all of us. I knew that coming into this. And I read some things and realized that the debate was very lively and it gets very emotionally charged, so I did my best to do my homework. And if I had to compare it to anything, I'd would say that I put more energy into this that I did studying for my master's degree thesis. I just began reading everything I could get my hands on and listening to everything I could get my hands on to try and come to some biblical conclusion on this particular issue.

And after this time of learning, and study, and prayer I've found that I land confidently as a complementarian. That's how I read the biblical text. I believe that the Bible really points to a husband's leadership in a marriage, and again, it's not a domineering kind of leadership. It's a Jesus type of leadership. And male eldership in the church. Now I'm going to explain what those things mean. And we're going to work though some Bible texts to see how I came to those conclusions and what that means.

And frankly, as I entered into this learning, I was really hoping that I would be an egalitarian. Um, because I knew that the other side was going to put me in some awkward situations, particularly because the Vineyard movement, Vineyard USA is and egalitarian movement. And so, it's been an interesting several months as I've worked through this. So I want to take some time to teach us through it right now.

Now, again why again is this an issue even? I know that many people have been asking me that. What's the big deal? Why did this even come up in the first place? Aren't there more important things to be thinking about?

Vineyard began as a complementarian movement. John Wimber, who founded the Vineyard, he was a complementarian. He believed in male only eldership. In 2006, the Vineyard shifted their position on this particular issue and said formally on a national level, we will be egalitarian. However, each local pastor can lead their church in whatever way they see fit.

I guess this is more than just an opinion issue. In my opinion the Bible says this, in my opinion the Bible says that. Ok, the root of this issue and the reason that it is an issue in my mind is. . .The question is how do we read and interpret the Bible. How are we going to read texts and then try to make them say something one way or another. And I can't with integrity read, especially some of the scriptures we're going to be reading from tonight, and have those things say to me something from an egalitarian perspective. As I read them and understand them, I just believe that they point to this

idea of male leadership in the home and in the church. And you know, the issue is what are we going to do when we read texts in the Bible that clearly seem to say one thing. Are we going to try to make them say something else because it's more comfortable or are we going to flex when we bump up against those particular texts. And so that's the issue at hand here. This is, in my eyes, how do we read scripture, how do we treat scripture? And I just felt that coming to an egalitarian perspective was causing me to do harm to the text that I was just not willing to do. I couldn't bring myself to interpret those texts with integrity. And so, we're going to look at the Bible tonight and I want to talk you through that.

So, we're going to start at the beginning. Turn to Genesis chapter 1. I'm going to have you do some flipping today, so I hope your fingers are ready.

Gen 1:27 – “So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

So, first point. God created humans, k. Men and women in his image. Not just man in his image, God created man and woman in his image. Men and women are equal. They are totally equal. They both represent God. The two of them together, side by side, represent God. Men and women are equal. Look at verse 28:

“Then God blessed them and said, Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

Both male and female are blessed, k, and they are told, they are commanded to fill the earth and to rule the earth together. Read verse 31:

“Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!”

This is a good thing. God made men and women very differently, but he said that two of you guys are equal before me, you're both in my image, you're both to rule and reign together, do this thing together, fill the earth together. And it's a good thing.

Now, there are clues throughout the book of Genesis, particularly the first few chapters as to this idea of male authority and headship. And there are also a ton in the new testament. So, I just want to walk you through some of these texts that I think point to this idea of the fact that Adam was actually given this leadership responsibility, even as far back as the Garden of Eden. So, chapter 2, verse 18:

“Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.”

So, man is alone. This is not good, right? God says there needs to be another, a counterpart to man. And so God makes him a helper. Now this word that's used for helper here, it's not a demeaning role. You know like, my dad lays tile for a living, he

still lays tile and he has helpers. You know, my dad makes the good money and his helpers kind get 10-12 bucks and hour. That's not the kind of helper that they author's referring to here. This word helper is also used of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. This idea of helper is like the most wonderful thing, you can't live without it. Ok, that's the kind of helper, coming alongside, just like the Holy Spirit is our helper. The Bible calls the Holy Spirit our helper. It's the same kind of idea here.

So, God makes this helper for man. Paul understand this role of helper to mean that the man has authority over the woman. I'm not going to read that right now to save you time, but if you're taking notes, it's 1 Corinthians 11:9-10. So, as Paul looks back on that text, he sees this idea of the women being a helper, meaning the man has authority, has headship over the woman.

Jump down to chapter 2, verse 21:

“So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. 22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man”

So, God creates Adam first. Then, he creates Eve and he takes, from Adam, a rib and creates Eve. He takes a piece of Adam out of his side and creates this helper, this person to be alongside him. And figuratively, that's where she belongs. Ok, at his side. Not in front of him, not behind him, but at his side as a helper.

Paul again affirms that this creative order signifies a man's authority. That man was created first, then woman. Paul says, uh right this one down too. This part of that same text 1 Corinthians 11:3-10 and 1 Timothy 2:13, we're going to be reading that one in a bit. And so, in Paul's eyes, this creative order means that men have authority over their wives.

Verse 23 – “At last!” the man exclaimed. This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called ‘woman,’ because she was taken from ‘man.’”

So, in this text, Adam did a very significant thing. He was naming Eve. K, in old Testament cultural context, the person who names another person has authority over them. That's one of the reasons why God names his prophets. You read about prophets in the Bible that many times they change their name. Jesus actually changed Simon's name to Peter. Right, it was a significant turning point in the life of Peter. It showed Jesus' leadership and authority over him. On the road to Damascus, Jesus changes Paul's name as he took authority over his life. Does that make sense? So this active naming is significant and in fact, Adam names Eve. First he calls her women, here, and later after, after God puts a curse on him for sinning, he names her again. He names her twice. Once before the fall and once after. Now jump down to verse 3, verses 1-9:

“The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?” “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’” “You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.” The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. Then the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

And so, what’s happening here is this kind of classic scene that certainly all of you guys have heard about and have visualize before when Adam and Eve are in the garden. Satan, who is disguised as serpent approaches Eve and tempts her. He says, ‘hey, why don’t you eat this fruit? Why don’t you disobey God and eat this fruit. It’s good for you. You’ll like it. IT will open you eyes. You’ll see more clearly.’

And so, of course, she does it. It is significant that Adam is standing right beside her. Ok, as she does it. He’s not kind of off somewhere, he’s sitting there, I think, watching the whole scene. She eats it. God comes and who does he call on first, Adam. Even though Eve sinned first, Adam is the one that God approaches to hold him responsible for what has happened.

Paul again affirms this twice in the Bible. Romans 5:12, Paul says “When Adam sinned, sin entered into the world. Eve was the one who sinned first, but Paul says when Adam sinned, that’s when sin entered into the world. And so Paul is blaming Adam first, calling him responsible.

Again, in 1 Cor 15:21, Paul says “Death came into this world through a man.” He’s talking about Adam. So even though Eve was the one who sinned first, God holds Adam responsible and Paul affirms that and he says, no Adam was the one who was to have responsibility and leadership and he just stood by, idly watching while his wife sinned. And so Adam is held responsible, not Eve.

And so this is the essence in the Bible of headship and authority. And again, those words are kind of messed up in our culture because we’ve had bad experiences with authority. Right? Governmentally, politicians who have authority really muck things up by being bad leaders. You know husbands in marriages who have authority and they are abusive and they’re cruel and they’re close minded and they’re stubborn. We don’t want to be under that kind of authority, right?

But the Biblical idea of authority and headship is simply you take responsibility even when something is not your fault. You take leadership, you take initiative. And Jesus modeled this marvelously when he came to earth and took responsibility for our sins. And so we follow him. We're the ones who sin. Jesus comes down, like a new Adam. Right, there's that parallel in the Bible. Jesus is like the new Adam and Jesus takes responsibility for our sins. We are the servants. He's the one who initiated it. He's taking leadership and responsibility. We submit ourselves to him and we follow him because of what he's done for us. That's the idea of headship.

Now, the fall introduced all kinds of distortion into relationship between male and female. K, we're going to read about that right now. Look at verse 14, 15:

"Then the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all animals, domestic and wild. You will crawl on your belly, groveling in the dust as long as you live. And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring."

So, the serpent is cursed here. And if you've ever seen a snake or handled snakes, you'll realize that's so true. I love amphibians and frogs and mammals and bugs and I hate snakes. K, there's still a curse there. He brought a great deal of fear when it comes to serpents.

Verse 16 - Then he said to the woman, "I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you."

So, here God is cursing the women for this. First, he says childbirth is going to hurt. I just lived through this 3 days ago. I watched my wife and what she went through on that hospital bed trying to have our little boy Max. It is a painful, painful ordeal. Which doesn't seem to make a whole lot of sense because it's one of the most wonderful things in the world too. And so God is just giving us an image here. A wife is wonderful. Though it's wonderful to procreate, and children are such a blessing, there's going to be an incredible amount of pain as this happens. It's one of the ways he reminds us of our sinfulness, of our brokenness, this broken world that we live in. It's not just all peaches and candy, there's a lot of hurt involved too.

And he also, in the second part of that verse there, there becomes this distortion in what was a previously harmonious relationship between man and women, husband and wife. God says part of the curse is that this relationship is going to be skewed. And there's going to be a power struggle. That's not the way it's supposed to be. That's not the way it was before the fall. There was harmony, it was complementation before the fall. Now, as soon as sin entered the world there's a power struggle. And this is still the water we're swimming in today. We still feel this. Men and women kind of going back and forth, men are from Mars, women are from Venus, that whole thing.

And then verse 17-19:

“And to the man he said, “Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return.”

So man is cursed. God says for you work is going to come hard. Many of you have jobs, many of you do, you know it doesn't matter what you do, work is hard. Right? It wavers against us. It seems like you can't find a career that's just like ahh, finally there. There's always some kind of struggle, there's always some kind of tension in the workplace. Even in the church. People want to work for church because they think that's everyone's happy and worship together all day long, but there's struggle there, right? It's a workplace, it's a job. And so, we're still living under the effects of this curse. The ground was going to fight against Adam and for Adam, again this is a picture about how Adam fights against God. Because every time he goes to work, he remembers this kind of struggle with God. It's reminding Adam, oh yeah this is how I am with Father God, I disobeyed him. There's this power struggle.

So, now turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 2. (small tangent about his microphone)

Now this is one of the clearest texts in the Bible, in my opinion that point to this whole idea of male only eldership in the Bible. So, we're just looking Genesis where God is establishing this structure of how men and women relate to one another, this authority structure and now Paul picks up this theme as well in 1 Tim, Chapter 2.

Now, you know I've had to do some explaining here, because I said earlier I taught this text less than a year ago from an egalitarian perspective and I think I did a pretty convincing job, actually. And what I'm saying to you guys I believe I was wrong. I believe that I misinterpreted the texts, I did not have integrity as I dealt with the text and um, that scares me. Personally, I take my job very seriously. I take my responsibility very seriously, as a preacher and teacher of God's word, very seriously and so I'm just fessing up to you guys. I think I was wrong in the way that I explained it and I want to re-explain it to you now in the way that I think it was written and what it actually means biblically, having more of a foundation of understanding and the bigger picture as I've studied this issue extensively and found out how other big issues kind of inner-mesh with it.

So, start in verse 11, 1 Timothy chapter 2. Again, the bigger picture is that Paul is teaching the assembled church. K, he's writing this letter to Timothy, who's a church planter. And he says here is how I want you to conduct church life, here's what it should look like for you guys. And we're going to read here, he gives some instruction and the gathered assembly and then he moves on in chapter 3 to talk about the leadership structure of the church.

So starting in verse 11- “Women should learn quietly and submissively.”

Um, let's stop there. Women should learn quietly and submissively. Now, that was a revolutionary thought right there, that women should learn. K, cause we're talking about a culture here where women have no rights, k? So for Paul to say here that a women should learn, right away, people are like what, are you serious, women should learn? So, he's going against the tide, he's going against the culture saying no, women need to learn about Jesus as well. Women should learn quietly and submissively, just like anyone else would learn. Just like anyone else should learn in a classroom. If you're in a class and you were sitting there and the professor and every five minutes you were being disruptive, and raising your hand and being antagonistic. That's not honoring to the teacher or to the material. So, he says women should learn quietly and submissively.

Look at verse 12 - I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly.

So Paul says I'm not allowing women to teach or have authority over men and I want you to hold onto that thought. The idea of teaching and authority. K, he links that here and in the very next verses we'll see in chapter 3, Paul refers to the office of elder and their primary responsibility of teaching and authority. K, so hang onto that thought. Teaching and authority.

But first I want us to look at why Paul did not allow the women to teach or have authority. K, we need to think through why that is. Now what I talked through last fall was that is was a cultural thing. And so, it was easy for me to explain away and say well, we're not in the same cultural situation as Paul was back then and so we don't have a problem with teaching and authority. But, Paul doesn't use a cultural argument here. He doesn't say I do not permit women to teach or have authority because of cultural context. He refers back to creation. Ok, the stuff we just learned about. That's why I taught that first – Genesis 1-3. He looks back to creation.

In verse 13 he says, “For God made Adam first, and afterward he made Eve.”

And this is the reason why Paul gives for why he does not permit women to teach or have authority. He appeals back to the creative order of man and woman as the reason why men are to have this role of teaching or have authority in the church.

Now, here's the thing. Cause everyone's ears are bristling right now. This cannot mean that women van never teach or have authority in the church. It absolutely cannot mean that. We must always, when we come to hard texts like this, use the Bible to interpret the Bible. So, we've got to look at other places in the Bible where teaching and authority happen and put all the pieces together and paint ourselves a picture of what Paul is actually saying here. Now, I say that this can't mean that women can never teach or have authority over men because there are instances where women do teach and have authority over men in the Bible. K, there are several of them.

I'm just going to list a few for you. Priscilla taught Apollos. Apollos was a Bible teacher. Ok, Priscilla and Aquila, husband and wife duo, they're spoken about several times in the Bible. It says clearly that Priscilla and Aquila taught him, that he went on to teach about. That's in Acts 18. So, here we see a woman teaching a man. K, and then the man goes on to teach the Bible.

John 4 – some of you are familiar with this story. Jesus approaches a woman at a well and he tells her, you know all about the history and all about her life. You know, you need to drink from me, living water, and you'll never be thirsty again if you drink from me. And he says God is seeking out worshippers who will worship him in spirit and in truth. And he reveals himself to her as the messiah, as King Jesus. And she runs and she tells everybody in town about it. And she's one of the first Gentile evangelists. This woman tells all of her friends, this whole town is suddenly intrigued and they come to listen to Jesus. So, here this woman at the well is clearly teaching other people.

Women are encouraged in 1 Corinthians to pray and prophecy in the church. K, they are encouraged to pray and prophecy in the gathered assembly. So, Paul doesn't have a problem with that.

Phoebe is deaconess in the church in Centria. Romans 16:1, Paul refers to Phoebe who has this leadership role of deaconess. K, so Paul doesn't have a problem with women teaching or having authority over men. I believe he is referring, as we'll see here in the next chapter, to the specific office of elder. That includes both teaching and authority as part of his job description. I think Paul's saying I don't want women to have that role in the church. And the reason is because this is the creative order. The responsibility of leadership falls on the shoulders of men in the congregation. So, bear with me we're going to get there in a second.

Look at verse 14 – “And it was not Adam who was deceived by Satan. The woman was deceived, and sin was the result.”

So Paul's just saying he was tricked. She got snookered man. I don't think he's being degrading to her, he's not saying she's inferior or she's incapable, right and that's her fault or something. Some people have interpreted it that way and they've gone so far to say that women are inferior. And that does line up with the Paul or the Jesus that I know about in the Bible. The Paul and Jesus that I know about in the Bible love, support, and empower women. K, so I think Paul's just saying yeah, Eve was tricked in the garden.

Verse 15 – “But women will be saved through childbearing, assuming they continue to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty.”

And so what I think he's saying there is that women will be saved just like everybody else through faith, if they believe in Jesus, through love, if they love Jesus, through holiness and modesty, do they have a life that's been transformed by Jesus. This idea

of childbearing will help her grow in her relationship with God. K, and certainly as a father I have grown deeply in my relationship with God just from being a dad. From watching my wife bear children and then in turn raising those kids. You learn a lot about patience and love and if you guys were at second service today, I shared, I didn't for the first service, so for your sake, I'll just kinda retell you the story. I was sitting in the hospital chair the other day with Brooks. On the first day of his existence on planet earth and I don't even know him. I know nothing about him, he doesn't even have a personality. (someone corrects him and says he's thinking of his son Max). That's like the 8th time I've done that already. And Sarah wants like five kids. I'll never get all their names straight.

So, my new son Max, who I don't know yet. Literally he just eats and sleeps that's all he does. He has done nothing to earn my love. But I love him so much. And so that's how Father God feels about us. You know? We can do nothing to earn his love but just the very fact that we exist and he knows us, he knows who we are. We are his children and his heart overflows with love for us. I didn't get until I was a parent so much. And so that is one way that God has taught me about his love. And so I think that's what Paul's getting at here. He's not saying women, to go to heaven, you have to have babies. Right, because that would totally negate salvation for anyone that were not able to conceive children or any women who weren't married, right? He's absolutely not saying that. That's not consistent with scripture. He's saying women are saved, just like everybody else. Faith, love, holiness, and modesty. And this idea of childbearing is the hope of that in a significant way to grow in their relationship with God.

And I was thinking about this, actually the last few weeks that Sarah was very pregnant with Max, um, you know like feeling him kick and like trying to listen, trying to find his heartbeat. I thought, man, what an awesome opportunity that a woman has that man doesn't have. I can never experience what it's like to have a child growing in my womb, unless you're the guy who was on Oprah, who wasn't really a guy. He was like a sex-change guy. It's really weird. Don't even watch that episode.

But there's something so marvelous about it that a woman can learn in childbearing, man I mean a life grows in your womb. What a miracle, what an awesome testament of creator God that you can take part in that after the creation. So, I think that's the kind of stuff that Paul's getting at here.

Now, to read on in chapter 3. Verses 1-7 "This is a trustworthy saying: "If someone aspires to be an elder, he desires an honorable position." So an elder must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach. He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money. He must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him. For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?

6 An elder must not be a new believer, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause him to fall. Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the devil's trap."

So, here Paul, he has moved from explaining, you know first in the gathered assembly, he does not permit women to teach or have authority over men. Then he jumps right is to this description of eldership. K, one of the main job responsibilities, again, for eldering was teaching and authority. Biblically, they're also responsible for prayer, for study of the Bible, for raising up other leaders, leadership development and giving tasks to other people in the church to do. And of course, teaching doctrine to the church and having this governing authority over the church body. And he says here in verse 1-7, elders are to be chosen men, k, it's not all men who get to be elders in the church, it's only chosen men. The people who God calls; supernaturally they have a call on their life to be in this leadership position. And they have character. And that's what he's doing in these verses, he's saying these are the kind of men that are supposed to be elders in my church. They got called by me. And then their lives that got to line up with scripture. They ought to have these character qualities in their life so they can do a good job taking care of my church.

So, in 1 Timothy 2:13, where Paul says "I do not let women teach men of have authority over them." He must be referring to this office of elder because elsewhere, he does let women teach and have authority over men. He doesn't have a problem with that. I believe this is a continuous line of thought for Paul. He talks from chapter 2 into chapter 3, it's one flow.

Now, what does that mean, what does that mean on a practical level? Because we don't really use these terms a whole lot anymore, elder, deacon. Some churches do, we don't really a whole lot at RVC. So practically, is it hot in here? Could someone find a thermostat? I'll keep teaching, you make it cooler.

So, eldership today based on the Biblical description, as best as I can surmise, would be equivalent to an ordained pastor today or the board member of a church. So people who are responsible for the overall leadership, oversight, direction, protection, and teaching of the church. K, that's what Paul's definition, the biblical definition of what an elder would be. Today, we would say that's a pastor or someone who's on our board of directors. K, someone who's responsible for the overall direction of where this ship is headed. Right, the men who are in charge of teaching people. the men who are in charge of protecting the church from people who might come in and try to sabotage us., people in charge of the vision, the overall leadership structure. I believe that Paul says those people are to be men, that description he uses elder, again we would call that pastor or board member.

Now look at verse 8-13: "In the same way, deacons must be well respected and have integrity. They must not be heavy drinkers or dishonest with money. They must be committed to the mystery of the faith now revealed and must live with a clear conscience. Before they are appointed as deacons, let them be closely examined. If

they pass the test, then let them serve as deacons. In the same way, their wives must be respected and must not slander others.”

Now, does your Bible have a little star by the word, their wives? Now look down, this is a good exercise. 3:11 – little star, another way to translate that word wives, because it just says wives there, but also women deacons. K, the women deacons. Paul refers to Phoebe, who was a deaconess. She was a women deacon.

“So, in the same way, their wives (or the women deacons) must be respected and must not slander others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do. A deacon must be faithful to his wife, and he must manage his children and household well. Those who do well as deacons will be rewarded with respect from others and will have increased confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus.”

So, deacons do all the rest of the ministry, k. They do everything else. Elders are responsible for overall governance, leadership, teaching of doctrine, k, protection, direction for the church. It's a small group of called men. Deacons, both men and women do everything else. And they are the ones that make ministry happen. And so, again we don't use that word deacon very much, but today we would refer to them as a small group leader a worship leader, a team leader, a kid's leader. Anyone else that involved in the life of the church, that's serving and making stuff happen, we would consider, so you guys would be considered deacons, I believe. K, you're serving, some of you have leadership roles over others and your making life and ministry happen. That is to be both men and women.

Now, let me distinguish here, because we've been throwing out teams elder, deacon, blah blah blah, I want to distinguish here between, in the Bible, between offices and giftings. The Bible is very clear that there are offices in the church. This idea of the office of elder and the office of deacon. These offices are restricted to men and women who are called and have proven character. K, elders and deacons.

Gifts, giftings are given freely by the Holy Spirit, k, including teaching and leadership and they are given to both men and women alike. Ok? So, let me just say this very clearly. If women are gifted to teach and lead, I believe they must lead. And they must teach. If God has gifted them in that way. But again that's different than an office. As far as offices go, and elder will be a male and a deacon will be a male or a female. But whoever to teach or lead can do so as a deacon. I don't think there's any problems with that biblically. It's not that women are not, let me say this very quickly to, it's not that women are not capable of doing it. OK, it's not that they don't have the ability to do it. I know many women who are better leaders and better teachers than myself. And if I were, you know even in whatever, the business world or the church world. So this is not a matter of guys are better so that's why they get the offices that women don't get. It's absolutely false and I believe unbiblical. Ok, it's a matter of calling to these different offices verses giftings. So, whether if you have teaching gifts or you have leadership gifts then, my goal for you is that you would function in those gifts very freely according under the authority of scripture. K, that you would be able to fulfill those things that God

has gifted you to do. And that you could bless the church and bless the world with those gifts. Does that make sense?

Let me just say to that I don't think that any of this influences the position of women in politics or academics, or business world or anything like that because we have very clear other scriptures that point towards telling women, 'hey go get em, man' Proverbs 31. You know, I preached on that a few weeks ago and actually had a lot of people come up to discouraged and said (*said in a mocking women's tone*) "I can't do all that. That's like supermom and business woman and everything else." And I thought, you know that's fine, do whatever you do. But clearly, God's saying, it's all right man. He praises this woman for her shrewd business sense. She goes out, she turns a profit, she's got some fields, she's working hard, and she's taking care of business. So, this doesn't eliminate what women can do in society in any way, shape, or form.

So, I just want to read you, kind of to wrap up what my position is on this biblically. I'm actually stealing the words from a guy by the name of Mark Driscoll, someone who's teaching has influenced me a lot in this regard. Ok, so I'm just going to tell you what he says and I'm going to say I agree with that. Ok, so he says:

"Everything in the Bible is open to a woman. The only thing that the New Testament restricts is the office of elder, that's it. This is consistent with the Old Testament where everything was open to women but the office of priest. This is consistent with the ministry of Jesus where everything was open to women except for the 12 disciples. And this is what the New Testament teaches that this office of elder is singular thing that is reserved exclusively for the competent and trained (and I would add called) men."

And that's the conclusion that I have come to biblically on this particular issue as far as the church goes.

How am I doing on time? I have a little bit of time left. Now, I want to talk really briefly through one other text. Ephesians 5. Turn there in your Bibles. 1 Timothy 2 and Ephesians 5 are the two texts that I could not get around as I read them and read them, and re-read them and studied them and read commentary on them, I could not get around these two texts. To see the Bible, to see these ideas from an egalitarian perspective. These just, these stumped me.

Ephesians 5:21-33 – "And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything. For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. No one hates his own body but feeds and

cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. And we are members of his body. As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

So, again, I'm not going to spend a ton of time on this one, but I kinda wanna say a couple things very quickly. Paul's very clear that there is to be mutual submission in a marriage. K, he says in the very first verse there, 'and further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.' But I believe that Paul is outlining what that submission looks like and it's a different kind of submission between a man and a woman. So, a husband submits himself to his wife by literally being willing to die for her sake. That she would be loved, and cared for, and supported and encouraged and empowered. He's willing to forsake his own desires, his own wishes, right? He's willing to put himself on a cross, crucify, die to himself so that his wife can be cared for and loved. That's the way he submits to his wife. Frankly, husbands that are out there, as examine yourself and I know I fall really short of that. We all do. None of us can do as perfectly as Jesus did.

The wife, then, submits to her husband by following his leadership, his Christ-like, loving leadership. K, this does not mean that the man wears the pants and whatever he says goes, right? And some people have twisted this to make it say that. And they've been oppressive, abusive, and ignorant, and lazy foolish husbands and their wives are dying. K? They hate their marriage. And that's absolutely not, that's not what Paul's saying here. That's absolutely not what he's saying here. He's saying husbands, you love your wives and you treat them so well that it's just like Jesus treated his church. He died for them. You'd be willing to give anything for her so that she would be protected, and nourished and cared for and loved and ? (*I couldn't make out this word*). And wives follow that man. Follow that husband. He gave everything to be sure that you're cared for. That's the picture that I think Paul's painting here for a marriage. And that is the essence of headship and submission in a marriage. K, it's not a forced thing. It's not something that's imposed on women. K, it's out of love and Christ-like servant-sacrificial leadership. And so frankly if the husband and wife come to a disagreement, all right, it shouldn't really come down to well, I'm just the husband so I what I say goes, submit to me women. Right, and that's what some people have turned it into. No, it turns into the husband loves the wife so much that they are going to sit and hash through this together. He is going to see her perspective and consider her feelings and consider what she would want more than what he wants. And then they'll come to a decision together. Does that make sense? See the difference there?

Loving couple, Christ-like leadership. That's what I think Paul's painting a picture of here. And the passage 'wives, submit to your husbands' it's not blindly, it's not ignorantly. It's very intelligently. K, it's constructively. K, this doesn't mean that women just have a free card and get to bail out and do nothing. Absolutely not. No, the women, they are both invested in this relationship, doing it together. But ultimately, the primary responsibility of leadership falls on the shoulders of the husband. And so if the

family isn't growing spiritually, and we see this in our society all the time. Dad stays home, lays on the couch, while mom is driving the kids to church. K, the mother is trying to raise the kids spiritually, the father is completely uninvolved. Alright, the dad is just kind of this emotionless, non-engaged, not spending time with his kids, he's not loving his wife, not supporting her, and she's trying to be mom and dad. Discipline and probably has a job as well. And this is epidemic in our society. Fatherless homes. And all the weight falls on the shoulders of the women. And they end up getting the real short end of the stick in my opinion. So, Paul, I think is painting, a heavenly, a heavenly portrait of marriage, the way that God intended for it to be.

Now, so for implication as I close here. Responding to this is welcome news. Many of you have said, I've always thought that before, that's how I read the bible. And so I don't have too much else to say to you guys. That's in a big nutshell, my thoughts on the matter. Some of you are really going to need to pray, process, learn, dialogue. And I have a lot of resources on this issue, and so if you want resources, I can, I have stuff all over the spectrum in this particular issue. I have papers, and books, and teachings on CD, and MP3's and everything else and so I wanna welcome you into this learning process with me. K, so some of you just, I'm willing to answer any questions you have about this.

Now, what does this not mean for RVC? It does not mean we're going to become chauvinists. K, absolutely does not mean that we're going to become some macho, Braveheart stuff on TV. That's not, that's not what this means at all. In fact, one very interesting thing that happened in me as I was learning about this, as I was reading about how Jesus and Paul in particular were towards women, is I realized that my default nature . I'm one of four boys, k. All brothers. My dad is very kind of patriarchal, what he says goes. Um, I played football for 8 years, and so I would just hang out with the guys, you know, I lived in a house with like 18 other guys are something. It was ridiculous my senior year of college. And so that's kind of my default mode. I love hanging out with guys, I love chiding them and you know wrestling with them. And I love watching men grow in their faith and grow into leadership and develop and mature. That just turns me on. It's something that I think God has given me and I want to give that out. That just excites me. So that is my default mechanism.

Now one thing that God did in me that I wasn't expecting through this whole issue was show me how, how short I fall when it comes to empowering women in leadership. And having that same kind of passion and zeal to see women raised up and fulfill their God-given role. And so that is something that has been striking for me. I want you to know that I am committed to that. I'm committed to seeing women raised as godly, wonderful leaders in our church. And I wasn't expecting that in myself. But that's how God works, he kinda flips it on us sometimes. So, we will not become chauvinists, women are not second class citizens, they are not inferior in any way, shape or form.

Now, what this does mean for RVC. It means that our pastors and our board will be men. Called men. Called men who have character, who are quick to do the job, who are also very deliberate about listening to women. Ok, because frankly, women have

half of the picture, right? Sometimes, I think a little bit more than half. That was supposed to be a joke. And so we will have leaders who, particularly pastors and elders who listen to women, who consider them. How's it going, how are you feeling? What's happening. Let's bounce some ideas off each other. Let's process these types of things. Uh, this also means that Sarah is no longer a lead pastor. And that actually, very welcome news for her. Um, she was absolutely relieved as we began to talk about it and process this, that she would no longer be lead pastor. She didn't want to be in the first place. Um, she was trying to set a model for a great egalitarian church, and so, even though she didn't have the same daily responsibilities that I've had, the way we justified her being a lead pastor was, I said, 'well, I just run through all my decisions through her anyway. And so, she's basically, like more than anyone, she influences me in this church. And every decision I've made is seasoned by my wife's great wisdom and knowledge. And frankly, that's not going to change. It just probably won't. Pillow talk. You know lots of ministry decisions get made while we're laying in bed. You know, we're sitting on the couch, and that's just how it works. I need her perspective, I realize I don't always see the whole picture. So, some of you may wonder what she thinks about all this and she gave me permission to say agrees with me. And so, if you would like to pick her brain about the matter a little bit more, she can field some questions, but obviously she has another priority, so she can't answer a ton of emails. But if you have any questions, you know, you can feel free to contact her. She'll be willing to dialogue with you.

Um, and prayerfully, this has, this whole issue has changed our marriage in some surprisingly positive ways. As I've begun to learn what it means to be a leader in my home and to care for my wife the way that Jesus would care for my wife. Uh just as an illustration, I had some guys over, I was talking to them about this. Sarah was sitting out there with us, sitting on the back porch and I said hey, Sarah what do you think about all this stuff? And she looked at me, kind of laughed and said 'well, you're finally acting like a man. Not that you weren't before or you know.' So, there have been changes in our marriage as we learn what it means to be husband and wife, complimentary roles in kingdom, working together to do this stuff. Uh, we will continue to invest in our women, as I said, as I said what this means for RVC. We will also continue to invest in godly, in building up godly men. K, men who are strong and grace-filled and loving like Jesus. And we will continue to be a relevant, reproducing community of authentic Jesus followers who experience and extend the life, love, healing, and hope of Jesus. K, that is not changing. We're still going to do the mission that we came here to do. We're still going to build a church that people can come in, meet Jesus in a profound way, have their lives transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, give their lives over to service and sacrifice. That's what we want to be about.

We want to plant other church planting churches. K, we want to build up, raise up disciple making disciples. Same kind of style, same kind of worship, same kind of atmosphere. K, we will continue to love and respect the whole body of Christ and we are not going to become theological bullies. K, I, I have a deep respect for people who, um, who don't agree with me on this particular issue. I have listened and read too much garbage where people who confess to be Christians are slamming one another and

condemning one another to hell over this issue and I think that's foolish. I think it's not Christ-like. I think it's very arrogant and so we're not going to go there. Ok, I come to this decision very humbly. Again, I tell you fearfully, even. I recognize that I am a broken human being trying to read the Bible and makes sense of it. And at the same time I can say that I have come to firm conclusions on this. I believe that this is what the Bible says. So, we're not going to go and you know calling other people bad names because they may not see eye to eye. Does that make sense? Agree? K.

Now some of you've asked what does this mean for us as a Vineyard? Uh, I told you before that the Vineyard is an egalitarian movement so in some senses, we're swimming upstream a little bit. Uh, I'll just tell you that I am currently processing with my leaders in the Vineyard, meeting with them, talking with them on the phone. I've got a meeting up in Chicago tomorrow with Steve Nicholson just to keep dialoguing, keep processing and I'll let you know as things progress. And that's where we are right now with that.

Now, I'm going to close with two quick things. Number one, how can we handle this poorly? K, there are ways to handle this thing poorly and ways to handle this thing well. You can handle it poorly by complaining, criticizing, and gossiping. So, if that's what you want to do, be my guest, but we'll have some words. Please don't go there.

How can we handle this well? Be willing to learn and grow, ask lots of questions, k, and be willing to dialogue. I want to move together on this one. K? Alright, I'm over. We're going to worship.