This is lesson number twenty-three—Limitations for Women in Ministry, Part 2. In our last lesson, we looked at the views presented by The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood and replies to that view by the Christians for Biblical Equality. If there are limitations placed on the roles of women from a biblical perspective, where should we draw the line? Can women teach adult Sunday school classes? What about serving communion or chairing a committee? We want to follow Scripture, but there aren’t any verses that talk about these specific things.

Usually men and women who ask these questions genuinely want to encourage more opportunities for women in the overall ministry of the church. They sense that many evangelical churches have been too traditional and too restrictive on ministries available to women. These people want to question the way we have always done things in the light of Scripture, but they also do not want to encourage anything that is contrary to Scripture. Can our churches examine their traditions and see if there are more areas of ministry which they could open to women as well as men?

Dr. John Hannah says that cultural agencies are both a blessing and a curse at times. In some instances, the slavery crisis of the nineteenth century, it has caused the Lord’s people to stumble about in darkness, disregarding the clear evidence of biblical truth. At other times, cultural attention has awakened the church to rethink some of its positions, only to discover that it was confusing tradition for Scripture. For example, the civil rights issue of recent decades. It is precisely the latter function of culture that has awakened many Christian people to reevaluate the role of women in the Lord’s work. If the church has allowed its teachings about biblical truth to be encrusted with mere traditions, just what are they? How should these be judiciously corrected? Could we be in danger of such crusading zeal to rid ourselves of traditions that we unwittingly exchanged an old set of traditions for a new set?
Dr. Wayne Grudem, president of Christians for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, in support of the Danvers Statement, says that there are three areas where restrictions appear for women in ministry. Number one, in the area of governing authority. Number two, in the area of biblical teaching; and number three, in the area of public recognition or visibility. Grudem has compiled lists in each area with the order of greater authority to lesser authority for each service listed, making the point that these lists do not rank in importance to the church. In fact, Paul tells us that all members of the body are needed, as 1 Corinthians 12:14–25 says. Verses 24 and 25 say, “But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.”

When we talk about levels of governing authority or Bible-teaching responsibility or public recognition, we are not talking about greatness or importance. Looking at the areas, first of all, of governing authority, listed as in the order of the most responsibility or authority to the area of least responsibility or authority:

1. President of a denomination
2. Member of a governing board of a denomination
3. Regional governing authority (like a bishop)
4. Member of a regional governing board
5. Senior pastor in a local church
6. Member of a governing board with authority over the whole church; in other words, the elders

How in between number six and number seven, people who support the Danvers Statement would probably draw the line there. Starting with number seven then, there are more evangelical groups who accept these responsibilities of authority for women.

7. Presiding over a baptism or communion service
8. Giving spoken judgment on a prophecy given to the congregation
Wayne Grudem would draw his line after number 8.

9. Permanent leader of a fellowship group meeting in a home (both men and women present)

10. Committee chairman or chairperson

11. Director of Christian Education

12. Sunday school superintendent

13. Missionary responsibilities: many administrative and organizational responsibilities in mission work in other countries

14. Moderating a Bible discussion in a home Bible-study group, men and women present

15. Choir director

16. Leading the singing on Sunday morning

17. Being a deacon in churches where this does not involve governing authority over the entire congregation

18. Administrative assistant to the senior pastor

19. Church treasurer

20. Church secretary

21. Member of advisory council to regional governing authority

22. Meeting periodically with church governing board to give counsel and advice

23. Regular conversations between elders and their wives over matters coming before the elder board, with understanding that confidentiality is preserved

24. Professional counselor—one woman counseling one man

25. Professional counselor—one woman counseling a couple together

26. Professional counselor—one woman counseling another woman
27. Speaking in congregational business meetings

28. Voting in congregational business meetings

Now remember, and we will begin to discuss these later on, but they were listed in the order of most authority to the area of least authority.

The second area presented by Dr. Grudem was that of the area of biblical teaching.

1. Most authority would be teaching the Bible or theology in a theological seminary.

2. Teaching the Bible or theology in a Christian college

3. Preaching or teaching the Bible at a nationwide denominational meeting

4. Preaching or teaching the Bible at a regional meeting of churches

5. Preaching or teaching the Bible regularly to a whole church on Sunday morning

Dr. Grudem says that the people who support the Danvers Statement would draw a line between number five and number six.

6. Occasional preaching or teaching the Bible to the whole church on Sunday morning

7. Occasional Bible teaching at less formal meetings of the whole church, such as Sunday evening or a midweek service

8. Bible teaching to an adult Sunday school class (both men and women present)

9. Bible teaching at a home Bible study (both men and women present)

10. Bible teaching to a college-age Sunday school class

11. Bible teaching to a high school Sunday school class

12. Writing a book on Bible doctrines
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<td>31</td>
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32. Teaching Vacation Bible School

33. Singing a solo on a Sunday morning (It’s a form of teaching since it often has biblical content or exhortation.)

34. Singing to the congregation as a member of a choir

35. Singing hymns with the congregation

I think as we go through these lists, we can begin to see that people are genuinely concerned about women’s work in the church to come up with a wide variety of opportunities.

The third area that Dr. Grudem presents is in the area of public visibility or recognition; and although this area was not addressed by the Danvers Statement originally, people who support this view say that there are areas of visibility that take with it more authority or less authority. And the first one, and the only one that would be a line of distinction for people who adhere to the Danvers Statement would be the ordination as pastor, a member of the clergy in a denomination. And then they say that all of the areas after this would be open to men and women alike.

2. Being licensed to perform some ministerial functions within a denomination

3. A paid member of a pastoral staff (such as youth worker, music director, counselor, Christian education director)

4. A paid member of administrative church staff (such as a church secretary or treasurer might be)

5. Performing a baptism in churches where this is not exclusively the role of the clergy or the elders

6. Helping to serve the Lord’s Supper in churches where this is not exclusively the role of clergy or elders

7. Giving announcements at the Sunday morning service

8. Taking the offering

9. Public reading of Scripture

10. Public prayer
11. Prophesying in public where this is not understood as having authority equal to Scripture or Bible teaching

12. Singing a solo on Sunday morning

13. Giving a personal testimony in church

14. Giving a prayer request in church

15. Being a member of a prayer team that will pray for people individually after the service

16. Welcoming people at the door (like a greeter)

17. Editing church newsletters

18. Singing in the choir

19. Singing of hymns with the congregation on Sunday morning

20. Participating in the responsive reading of Scripture on Sunday morning

Now Grudem realizes that such lists are incomplete. For one thing, there are specialized ministries in parachurch organizations which would have similar charts, but with different titles in many places. For example, a mission agency, campus organizations like Campus Crusade for Christ or Intervarsity or Navigators, and other specialized ministries such as Focus on the Family or Prison Fellowship could all have similar lists of activities, but with slightly different specific items.

Also lists of this kind cannot include the very important factors of variation in attitudes, which can make a big difference in the actual degree of governing authority in a specific situation. Does a particular woman have a domineering attitude or a gracious servant heart? This list also cannot take into account any variation in goals which a person is trying to attain. For instance, is a woman seeking more and more authority over men or genuinely seeking to use gifts for the benefit of the church? In situations which churches see as borderline, it may be hard to decide in advance, and the difference may well depend on variations in attitudes and goals found in the specific people involved. Grudem feels that the size of a class makes a difference. One church may have
a college-age class of three students, while another may have a college-age class of five hundred students. Surely what it means to teach and have authority over men applies differently in these two situations according to Grudem, but I ask the question, “Why does the number make a difference?” Are we using situational ethics here? I have a concern about this statement.

Grudem continues by saying that we must recognize the fact that God in His wisdom has given us a Bible which specifies many principles for conduct and does give some specific examples of application. But by its very nature, the Bible cannot speak in specific detail to the thousands and even millions of real-life situations that people will encounter throughout the centuries. What then are we to do? We understand the principles that allow such activities. We understand the principles that prohibit other activities. Then between these parameters, we attempt to make a mature judgment based on the wisdom of God that He gives us and our knowledge of the situation.

If we could conduct a scale between no on the left and yes on the right, we would place on the left side 1 Timothy 2:12 where Paul, according to Grudem, prohibits a woman from teaching or having authority over men. We’ve already discussed this passage in a previous lesson. He says that it is very evident from the context that Paul is talking about the assembled congregation in this passage, and he is giving principles that apply to the entire congregation. So Grudem is saying that the left end of the scale prohibits women from teaching or having governing authority over the whole congregation. We have discussed this issue as well.

At the right end of the scale would be put Acts 18:26, where, in a less formal setting, apart from an assembled congregation, we find that Priscilla and Aquila were talking to Apollos, and “they took him apart and expounded to him the way of God more accurately.” Grudem would also put on the right side the teaching of children. He summarizes his stand and that of the CBMW, the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, when he says, “When the church assembles, there is a teaching and a governing authority over the congregation which is reserved for men.”

Christians who agree with this foundational principle agree with those in The Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood and agree with the Danvers Statement. People who differ with this put themselves in the other camp, the egalitarian camp.
Some different questions arise with the addition of many churches which have started meetings in homes. According to the list we have been looking at, the supporters of the Danvers Statement would allow for a woman to be a permanent leader of a fellowship group meeting in a home with both men and women present, which was number nine on our list of areas of governing authority.

Grudem is not comfortable with a woman holding this position, however, especially if the group regularly carries out pastoral care of its members and functions as a sort of minichurch within the church. His reasoning is that the leader of such a group carries a governing authority that seems to be very similar to the authority over the assembled congregation that Paul mentions in 1 Timothy 2. But are these home churches that we are looking at today in our own culture similar to the home meetings that were in the New Testament times in which women did have more upfront positions? When they went out in the culture, remember in that Hellenistic society, was when women went back into the homes, because it was not proper for them to have any type of public position in the community.

We need to see that his reasoning is that the leader of such a group carries this governing authority that seems to be similar to what Paul was mentioning in 1 Timothy 2. In addition, he does not feel comfortable with a woman being the regular instructor in a home Bible study or adult Sunday school class where much instruction is carried out. He doesn’t deny that God may bless His Word with good fruit anywhere, no matter who teaches it.

Grudem’s next question is “When do children become adults?” and “When does teaching boys become teaching men?” He feels that it will vary from society to society and from culture to culture. It may even vary from subculture to subculture within our own country. Grudem says that in our own culture if children graduate from high school, move away from home, and begin to support themselves, then surely they are no longer under the instruction of their mothers at home, but are functioning as adults on their own. A new household has been formed. In that case, the young men are certainly adult men, and it would not be appropriate for a woman to teach a class with them as members. He says that high school boys are still at home under the teaching of their mothers, as a Sunday school would be just an extension of the home.

Grudem also addresses the situation where there is an occasional preaching to the whole church on Sunday morning. He cites
evangelical leaders such as J. I. Packer, James Montgomery Boice, and James Hurley, who have all publicly written or stated their acceptance of this. Their argument is that 1 Timothy 2:12, which focuses on governing authority and teaching in the church, thereby indicates to us that what Paul really has in mind is the office of elder, and as long as a woman does not hold the office of elder or does not regularly perform the functions that an elder performs, then 1 Timothy 2 would not prohibit her from occasionally preaching.

Grudem disagrees with their views on the grounds that Paul is speaking of activities and not the office of elder in 1 Timothy 2:12. He mentioned a grief with the Danvers Statement, but that there is room for legitimate difference of understanding of how these biblical teachings apply to specific situations. He says that they agree in principle, but differ slightly in one specific application. He agrees with the fact that many of these areas of ministry may indeed be more numerous, more publicly visible, and more prominent in the life of the church than we had previously thought.

I’m concerned oftentimes in looking at some of the distinctions that he makes, however, on the age of young men, to say that a young man from high school who goes out on his own is totally independent. I think in our culture, especially in the US, this is a phenomenon that doesn’t exist very often. Most young boys who graduate from high school in our culture will possibly go to college and very few of them totally support themselves in this endeavor. And then we also face the phenomena, which we mentioned before, about young men and women who come back into the home after college to pursue further studies. They need the financial support. Are they then totally independent at this point, and where would he draw the distinction?

I can remember talking with a professor years ago, who is no longer at our seminary, who said he drew the distinction at age ten, but could not come up with any type of biblical framework for the age of ten as being the cutoff for a woman to teach a young boy.

Looking at all of these issues from a slightly different focus, I would like to talk about a position paper which Dr. John Hannah was asked to comprise for the parachurch ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, and afterwards looking at a response to the paper from Alice Mathews who was assistant to the president of
Denver Seminary. Dr. Hannah espouses the headship submission relationship as relating to the home and the church. All women are not subject to all men. In an article written by Bruce Waltke for Christianity Today, he put it this way,

Husbands authoritatively lead their wives both in the home, the microsocial unit, and in the church, the macrosocial unit. A hierarchy exists eternally in the godhead and is ordained of God on earth prior to the fall. Though equal in substance, the Father is the head; in other words, has chronological and hierarchical priority of the incarnate Son, as 1 Corinthians 3 says. But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of every woman, and God is the head of Christ and He is greater than Him. As John 14:28 says, “You heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I am.” As the Son does what pleases the Father, so also the Spirit does what pleases the Son.

Dr. Waltke went on to explain his position of chronological priority of God the Father over God the Son and that certainly involves the incarnate Son, because the preincarnate Christ was in the beginning with God because He is God. There was no confusion there. Waltke says that God stands behind the husband’s leadership in the home by granting him veto power over his wife’s and/or his daughter’s vows. As Christ is the head of his church, so the husband is the head of his wife. The egalitarian and centrist views unwittingly undermine the headship of both God and Christ. Centrism is a view that stresses both the mutual subordination and the interdependence of man and woman.

Church government must be consistent with the government of the home, for if a woman had headship in the church (the higher institution over the home), of necessity, she would have headship of the home. Not surprisingly, the Old Testament in contrast to other religions did not provide for women to become priests who taught the law. Likewise, Christ who was a revolutionary for the equality of women as God’s image did not appoint women as apostles, and the apostles did not allow women to rule or teach men in the church.

Dr. Hanna questions two points of Waltke. Number one, he does not see that a centrist’s view necessary undermines the headship motif. Remember, centrism is a view that stresses both the mutual subordination and the interdependence of man and woman, and
Dr. Hannah does not see how that view will actually undermine the headship motif.

Number two, he questions Dr. Waltke’s interpretation of a woman’s prohibition of teaching that it requires qualification. Dr. Hannah feels that it does not. Hannah explains how the office of deacon being open to women is a debated subject. 1 Timothy 3:10–11 says, “And let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.”

The three major interpretations of this verse are number one, the women mentioned are unmarried assistants to the male deacons. Number two, the women mentioned are the wives of the male deacons (that is Charles Ryrie’s view), and number three, the women mentioned are a select group of female deacons within the church (that’s James Hurley’s view). Hannah says that the second and the third views are more probable, and both of them handle the data adequately.

But it’s so difficult for us to come up with clear-cut decisions in these matters. Whether or not they held the office of deacon in the New Testament times, it is clear that women fulfilled many of its functions as shown in 1 Timothy 2:10, which said, “Rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness.” And 5:9–10 says, “Having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints’ feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work.” And Acts 9:36 says, “Now in Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha (or Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did.”

Phoebe may have been a recognized deacon of the church in Cenchrea, because Romans 16:1–2 alludes to that. If so, this would indicate that both men and women served in this office. However, since she was probably a wealthy social leader in the city, she may have been simply an unofficial patroness of the church.

Dr. Hannah continues to address the question of a woman teaching within the church context when 1 Timothy 2:9–15 says that she must remain silent. He states three views. First of all, that Paul is just reacting to personal practice. Number two, that Paul was stating a universal truth which needs some qualifications, that
of limiting the restriction to corporate worship. If this view is true, then Hannah raises three other questions. He says, “What constitutes teaching in the worship service of the church? Does a testimony or a devotional? A missionary report, singing a solo, or reading a passage of Scripture?” His second question, “If it’s limited to the church, does a woman violate Paul’s injunction if the elders of her church, realizing that she is a competent teacher, agree that she should teach the whole church, men included, in the area of her competence which may or may not involve the direct exposition of Scripture?” And then his third question, if it is true that there are some qualifications about where these practices should be done, Hannah’s question is “Can a woman teach men in settings apart from local church worship or church-related meetings, such as in college classrooms, in personal evangelism, in a writing ministry, or on a mission field where no male missionaries are serving?” Hannah says that a distinction needs to be made between primary authority in the church and secondary or extended authority.

While the application of the principle can be more or less broad, a woman under authority can do more than remain silent. He lists some specific observations for Campus Crusade. First of all, the highest realm of decision-making must be male; however, the process of decision-making wisely involves all competent, knowledgeable sources. This preserves the male leadership mandate of Scripture that applies both to the church and the home. In the case of Campus Crusade for Christ and in parallel with the church and eldership, the top executives (like Dr. Bright or Loren Lillestrandal) should be men.

The second point that Dr. Hannah makes for Campus Crusade is that the executive committee may not be devoid of competent women, like Mary Graham, but the final decision should be made by a group of men. The third point that Dr. Hannah makes is that women within the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ should be encouraged to be teachers, as well as administrators, campus directors, regional directors, national or international directors. The right for such ministry is by the fact that competent delegation from the highest sphere of leadership in the organization is presented.

The fourth point that Dr. Hannah makes is that there is no blanket prohibition in Scripture that restricts women from teaching and exercising delegated authority over men. The emphasis in 1 Timothy is upon orderliness and propriety. Women can teach
men if they do not usurp authority to do so. It must be a delegated privilege given to mature women in the Lord. The fifth point that Dr. Hannah makes is that while it’s difficult to escape a hierarchical model in the Scriptures, it must always be remembered that love, care, compassion, and servanthood are essential. There is no room for a self-serving leadership. The repugnant feature of a subordinationist scheme is that all too often it is not correctly defined. What it means to lead needs a Christian transformation. The church has defined the term from clues derived from our secular culture and in agreement to our fallen condition all too often.

Number six, the issue of privilege by right of delegation applies equally to both male and female. The seventh point that Dr. Hannah makes is we need wisdom to proceed cautiously. All things are lawful; not all things are expedient. Only qualified people should be placed in positions of leadership in the Lord’s work. The issue is not primarily a sexist issue; it is a wisdom issue. And then the eighth point that Dr. Hannah makes is that leadership of Campus Crusade for Christ must have wisdom, grace, and courage to maintain biblical standards and qualifications for those who labor in ministry.

Alice Mathews agrees to some extent with Dr. Hannah. She says that sin requires hierarchy, but adds the question as to whether or not God’s redeemed people to live as sinners who require hierarchy or as the first fruits of His new creation recapturing the ontological and functional equality of Genesis 1 and 2. She disagrees with Hannah’s statement that within the framework of the personal equality of man and woman, God has established a functional order in which man has the responsibility of headship in both the home and the church and woman has a responsibility of willful submission in recognition of God’s order.

Alice Mathews questions the translation of kefali as leader, which we addressed in a previous lesson at length. We came to the assumption that kefali meant head and not source. It does mean leader, and I’m saying that Alice Mathews disagrees with this. She’s raised what she considers to be a valid question about God’s established order at creation and for His new creation. She also questions Waltke’s statements that the Old Testament did not provide for women to become priests who taught the law. She says that this is true, but he overlooks the fact that God gave more than one woman in the Old Testament a prophetic role that put her in a position of speaking the authoritative Word of God to
priests, to the high priests, and to the king.

Mathews also questions his statement that the apostles did not allow women to rule or to teach men in the church. She asked in reply, “What does he do with Priscilla whom Paul did not rebuke for teaching theology to Apollos? Is teaching in the church only a matter of geography? Would he agree that a woman can teach theology two-on-one as long as it is done in a home or on park bench? I doubt that.” But in reply to her criticism, we have already established the view that Paul’s restrictions were limited to the corporate body of believers. Although Mathews doesn’t want to be painted with the same brush as Mollenkott and Jewett on these issues, she doesn’t want to go too far on the other side either.

She said that when we fail to recognize the conditional character of both the text and the interpreter, that the human author was living in a definite place in time, and the reader also lives in a definite place and time, we risk sounding as if the Bible is untouched by culture. I would disagree with her premise here at this point, because I think we have looked at culture and to say, “Yes, there are biblical passages that do have cultural implications,” but that does not mean that all of the biblical passages we have we can attribute to culture. We know that God had timeless principles that He established for us in His Word, and that we must abide by those.

Paul wrote to Timothy under very specific conditions according to Alice Mathews. To a real man in a real city where there were real Christians in a real church being assaulted by real and powerful heretical forces; and Paul was really worried whether the younger Timothy might be able to handle the situation he had put him in. These real facts conditioned what was written. All texts exist in a culture. Not to take that cultural historical setting into consideration is to turn a blind eye to the reality about which the author wrote according to Mathews. She also concludes her rebuttal to John Hannah with an observation of the role of teacher being very different today from the time of the early church. She said, “Before the New Testament Scriptures were canonized, teachers were the authoritative dispensers of truth. Authority resides in them,” she said, “the teachers. Today, the locus of authority lies in the teaching, not the teacher. A teacher’s authority can be judged against the Scriptures. Restricting teaching to males only implies that the authority resides in the teacher rather than in the Scripture.” That is the priestly view of ministry, but I’m asking the question, “Doesn’t her logic disregard passages like Mark 1:22
which says, “And they were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” And the words of Jesus in Matthew 23:2–3 which says, “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore, all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and they do not do them.” This applies, from my standpoint, to the fact that the authority was not in the teacher, but that the authority was always in the word that was spoken according to Christ’s words.

We need to see that, in conclusion to this lesson, we’re reminded by Dr. Ross that only when we duplicate the situation of the original context and what Paul meant by the church, can we be absolutely sure that his rulings apply directly. The more that a current situation or organization differs from that idea, the more uncertain we are about how directly or literally we should make the ruling apply.

If we were to apply Paul directly, attention must be given to the arena in which the text is to be applied. In the Episcopal Church, for example, the bishop or overseer has the authority of headship over the assemblies and the priest or elders in the parish churches are under him. If headship and authority are taken as the meanings of these passages, then a woman should not be a bishop. If the parish priest is perceived as the head of the church, then a case might be made to apply these rulings there. Now in an Independent Baptist Church, the pastor is the head of the assembly, and that would call for the application differently.

In some, the question of applying Scripture today involves a careful study of the text’s meaning as it harmonizes with all of Scripture, and then a consideration of the contemporary situation or circumstances to determine if the passage applies directly or not. If Paul’s teachings are to be considered culturally oriented, then they would only apply directly today in a setting that corresponded closely to that culture. One dare not overturn a culture without careful investigation. In other words, one cannot simply sweep Paul’s teachings on this matter aside by saying that they were just for that culture and retain other teachings of his that are less subjectionable. If we were to argue that his teachings were only applicable to that audience and that culture, I would have to deal with the fact that Paul, as well as Moses, worked to bring harmony and order to the believing community that was living in a fallen world. So even in a liberated society, certain principles from Paul’s teachings would have to be evoked.
Caution and care in every situation are imperative. We cannot throw Scripture out en masse saying that it is cultural.

In the midst of revelation, which showed the many ways in which God was pleased to use women to further His kingdom, we have the apostolic rulings that women keep silent in the churches and not teach or have authority over men. In order to harmonize these passages, we must either say teaching is different than all these activities or that Paul has a specific setting in mind. Dr. Ross prefers the latter approach to harmonize Scripture, that the rulings were given directly to the local assembly of the church when it met under the spiritual leadership of the overseers or elders for the purpose of worship and service, continuing in the apostolic doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers as believers in Christ, and coming together to exercise their spiritual gifts for mutual edification. And that church was largely Jewish, but certainly part of the Greco-Roman world. By the end of the New Testament, we have a thoroughly structured hierarchical organization under which the Christians could worship and serve.

Consequently, Christian organizations (like colleges and seminaries) and activities (like missionary work, Bible classes, discipling, and counseling), do not fit the setting and the circumstances of the first-century worship assemblies. In fact, some of these activities have precedence in the Scripture, whether with Priscilla or the prophetesses are in line with the Great Commission. Individuals who lead such organizations or activities may decide that it might be wise to use the apostle's rulings as safe guidelines, to maintain harmony in the group out of concern for the weaker brothers and sisters. It would be very difficult to say that a woman doing missionary work or discipling or teaching is sinning. The circumstances of the church or the organization in its cultural setting must be studied closely to determine how Scripture must be applied.

In conclusion to this whole series, we need to see that there is so much controversy in looking at the limitations of women in ministry, and we have seen arguments from both sides of the fence, both for total acceptance for no biblical authority imposed at all to total egalitarianism, to whatever a man can do, a woman can do as well. I think we need to be very careful when we take these views and stay in one camp or the other without considering what the Word of God says. I believe firmly that the Word of God is teaching us that there are role distinctions. How we make these role distinctions will, to a great extent, be determined by how we
interpret and apply the Word of God to our own lives.