

Cityview Position Paper (2022)
Gender, Marriage, and Ministry

Our “theological priorities” at Cityview include the following statement under our *secondary* doctrinal commitments (where we practice *leadership clarity and membership unity*):

Cityview Bible Church is complementarian in our view of gender roles. What does that mean? It means we affirm the equal value/worth/gifting of men and women as created in God’s image AND hold to distinct roles for men and women in the home and the church.

In this position paper, the Cityview elders seek to expand this statement, define terms, and review key passages that shape our understanding of the meaning of gender and specific gender roles within the life of the family and the church.

It is important to start by recognizing that orthodox, Bible-believing Christians can disagree with one another on this secondary doctrine and still love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. We work with many churches in our city that have different beliefs and practices when it comes to gender roles in the church.

At the same time, this doesn’t mean our convictions are unimportant or insignificant. We believe our interpretations of these passages are faithful to the original meaning, and we build our ministry model to submit to Scripture, to our best understanding of God’s good design. We ask all those in ministry leadership at Cityview to support and teach our position as laid out in the following document.

1. What is Gender?

Gender is a God-given biological reality, not an internal emotional reality. The Bible says in Genesis 1:27 that God created humans in His own image, making them “male and female.” God created the male and female genders in the beginning. As embodied creatures, we know and experience our gender in our physical bodies. The physical body is important to God and an essential part of our being. Jesus entered His creation in the flesh (John 1:14). We are commanded to honor God with our physical bodies (1 Cor 6:20). God designed our embodied gender on purpose as part of the created order. When we reject our God-given, embodied gender, we work against God’s created order. God commands the people of Israel not to dress as the opposite gender (Deut 22:5), and He commands men and women to not give themselves over to sexual desire for the same gender (Romans 1:26-27). In other words, God created embodied gender on purpose, making us male and female, and He desires that we honor Him in all things and submit to His design.

2. Why did God create us male and female?

God created the male and female genders as one way to reflect His image into creation (Gen 1:26-27). Adam was created first (Gen 2:15, 1 Tim 2:13) and then Eve (Gen 2:22). God created woman from the same substance as man (Gen 2:22-23), and He designed the woman as a “helper corresponding to him.” (Gen 2:18). In other words, God created men and women to complement each other, bringing strengths and abilities into a family, church, and community that the other gender needs. Men and women are different by design, united in purpose to rule over creation and build culture. (Gen 1:28-29). God also designed the male and female gender to become one in marriage (Gen 2:24-25 and Matt 19:4-6). It is through the union of man and woman in sexual oneness in marriage that children are created and brought into the world. (Gen 1:28, 2:24).

EQUAL IN CHRIST

In what ways are men and women equal before the Lord?

1. Equal in Value, Worth, and Dignity

Because men and women are both created in God's image (Genesis 1:27), they are equal in value, worth, and dignity. Gender equality is rooted in the doctrine of creation. Men are not more valuable than women, and women are not more valuable than men. In God's eyes, men and women carry equal dignity and worth.

2. Equal in Salvation

Men and women are both saved by grace through faith in Christ (Eph 2:8-9). They are both made right with God through the blood of Jesus and the regenerating work of the Spirit. Men and women are one in Christ (Gal 3:28), united by the gospel, and brothers and sisters by faith (Matt 12:50). From an eternal perspective, men and women are co-heirs in Christ, with an equal inheritance in His Kingdom (1 Peter 3:7).

3. Equal in the Holy Spirit

Men and women who believe in Christ receive equal blessings from the Holy Spirit. They are equally baptized (1 Cor 12:13), filled (Eph 5:18), called (Eph 4:1), sealed (Eph 1:13), and gifted (Rom 12:6-8). The Bible does not distinguish between male and female spiritual gifts. They are all given to men and women within the church.

4. Equal in Mission

Jesus called all of his disciples to testify to His resurrection (Acts 1:8) and make disciples of the nations (Matt 28:18). Jesus had 12 male apostles, but He also had many female disciples who followed Him, supported His work, and spread His message (Luke 8:1-3). Men and women carry the Great Commission equally into the world.

DISTINCT IN ROLES

In what ways does God call men and women to different roles in marriage & ministry?

1. Complementary Roles in Marriage

Not all men and women are called to marriage. Singleness is a Christ-honoring choice that allows full commitment to serve the Lord (1 Cor 7:32-34). In marriage, God calls men to leave their father and mother and become one with their wives (Gen 2:24). Christian marriage is a lifelong covenant commitment between one man and one woman (Matt 19:1-10).

Within Christian marriage, God calls husbands to be loving, servant leaders of their wives and wives to respectfully submit to their husbands. Ephesians 5:25-30 (along with Col 3:19 and 1 Pet 3:7) commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the church and to give up his own rights for her flourishing. The husband is called to use his headship (Eph 5:23, 1 Cor 11:3) over his wife as Christ uses His headship over the church – to serve, sacrifice, and lead for her benefit. Husbands are to honor their wives as co-heirs with them under Christ (1 Peter 3:7).

Ephesians 5:22-24 (along with Col 3:18, Titus 2:5, and 1 Peter 3:1-6) commands wives to respectfully submit to their husbands as an act of devotion to the Lord. As the church submits to Christ, wives are commanded to respectfully submit to their husband's leadership. This does not mean that they should follow their husbands into sin, as their ultimate allegiance is to Christ. It also does not mean that they should submit to verbal, physical, or emotional abuse. Rather, it means that in issues that are not sinful, they should respectfully follow and encourage their husband's leadership.

God calls Christian husbands to take responsibility (and reject passivity) for the material and spiritual well-being of their wives and children, to be selfless and Christlike in their leadership. The Scriptures command men to provide for their families (1 Tim 5:8), to be faithful husbands and good managers of their own household (Titus 1:6, 1 Tim 3:4-5), and to ensure the spiritual and physical flourishing of their wives (Eph 5:25-30). God calls Christian wives to partner with their husbands in building a God-honoring home by loving their husbands and children well (Titus 2:3-5).

As Christian husbands lead their homes, they must also submit to authority in their lives. Along with women, men are also called to submit to church elders (Heb 13:17), to government rulers (Romans 13:1-2), to employers (Eph 6:5), and to the authority of God Himself (James 4:7). Husbands are called to model godly submission to authority to their wives and children.

2. Complementary Roles in Church

The Bible gives evidence of women following Jesus as disciples (Luke 8:1-3), serving in significant ministry roles in the early church (Romans 16:1-16), and co-laboring with the apostles for the gospel (Acts 18:26, Philippians 4:2-3). Just like men, women are called by God to use their gifts, talents, and abilities to proclaim the gospel, make disciples, and build up the church. At the same time, God has established a clear pattern of male leadership within the local church that restricts the role of elder (1 Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-5) and the authoritative teaching in corporate worship on behalf of the elders (1 Tim 2:11-14, 1 Cor 14:32-36) to spiritually qualified men.

The pattern of gifted women functioning under male spiritual leadership is seen throughout the Bible – from the male priesthood in the Old Testament to Jesus choosing 12 men to be the founding apostles of the church to the NT epistles calling men to serve as church elders. This doesn't mean that women are not gifted or called to lead, but that God has a unique role for men to fulfill in providing authoritative leadership for His people.

Elders in the NT are not commanded to lead alone, but in plurality (Acts 14:23) so that even as elders provide leadership to the church, they also submit to Christ (1 Peter 5:1-4) and to one another as a group (1 Tim 5:17). Local-church elders in the NT are spiritually qualified men who have been set apart by the Holy Spirit and the local church to work with a group of other elders to follow Jesus' leadership in shepherding, discipling, guarding, and expanding His church. They are called to lead as Jesus taught leadership – using their position and authority to serve others, not to lord it over others (Matthew 20:24-28, 1 Peter 5:2-3).

Like men, women in the local church are called to use their spiritual gifts to serve the body while at the same time honoring the spiritual authority that God has placed above them (1 Cor 11:2-16). Women in the NT are seen ministering in a variety of contexts and roles while at the same time not serving as elders in the local church.

How Cityview Applies Our Understanding of Gender in the Scriptures

- 1- We consistently work to equip, encourage, support, and honor women who serve in ministry – whether they do so as a volunteer or paid members of our staff. (Romans 12:10) We have both male and female deacons at Cityview, based on our understanding of 1 Tim 3:8-13 and the example of Phoebe in Romans 16:1.
- 2- We restrict the role of elder to biblically qualified men within our congregation. Because the lead pastor at Cityview is also an elder, this restricts the role of lead pastor to men (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6). In addition, we restrict the authoritative preaching of God’s Word in corporate worship on behalf of the elders to men (1 Tim 2:11-12, 1 Cor 14:34-35).
- 3- Because we understand the word “pastor” in the New Testament refers to a spiritual gift and the act of shepherding (not an office), we do not restrict the title of “pastor” to men (Ephesians 4:11). We allow male and female ministry leaders to administer sacraments (communion and baptism) within our corporate worship. All governing elders are commanded to be shepherds of the flock (Acts 20:28-30), but not all pastors are called to be governing elders over the flock.
- 4- Men and women are both allowed to teach to both genders within the Cityview family outside of corporate worship as long as they do so under the authority of the Cityview elders and in line with the established doctrinal positions of the church. (Titus 2:3-5, Romans 12:7, 1 Corinthians 11:4-5).
- 5- We only officiate biblically defined marriages between one man and one woman who are equally yoked spiritually. (Genesis 2:24, Matt 19:1-9, 2 Cor 6:14)
- 6- We equip husbands and wives to fulfill their God-given roles in marriage through our premarital and marriage enrichment ministries. (Eph 5:22-33)
- 7- We call Christians to use whatever authority they have been given in the home, church, or society to follow Christ’s example of selfless, servant leadership, not domineering or abusive leadership. (Matthew 20:24-28)
- 8- We call all Christians to submit to God-given authority in their lives in a way that honors God and one another. (Hebrews 13:17)
- 9- We remind all Christians that we will give an account to God for how we have treated others in our lives, and so call believers to treat one another with love, respect, honor, and kindness. (Col 3:12-14)

What We Don’t Affirm at Cityview

- 1- We deny that all women should submit to all men. This is nowhere commanded in Scripture.
- 2- We deny that women can’t teach or lead men in the church or society. Women with leadership and teaching gifts can and should lead and teach men and women within the church and society.
- 3- We deny that submission in marriage or the church means allowing or overlooking emotional, verbal, or physical abuse. We encourage men and women to get out of abusive situations, and we report all physical and sexual abuse to the proper civil authorities.

- 4- We deny that women are inferior to men. We reject and confront all forms of misogyny, prejudice, and violence against women.
- 5- We deny that local church elders are infallible. Church leaders, even as a group, can make mistakes, and must stay humble and teachable. Male elders must actively listen to the voices of spiritually mature women within the church family.
- 6- We deny that women are less important than men to the church.
- 7- We deny that gender is unimportant and irrelevant to God's design for creation.