

We desire to be entirely biblical in all we do at Abundant Life. The teaching of the New Testament is clear that the office of pastor is reserved for males only. As the Apostle Paul is about to deliver the qualifications of a bishop in 1 Timothy 3, he sets up this discussion at the end of chapter 2, where he appeals not to culture but rather to creation itself as establishing God's structure of male headship (authority), in this case, pastoral authority. But there is a difference between authority and leadership.

A woman is not to hold pastoral authority or teach as one in pastoral authority. In this context, she is to "not speak" and "learn in silence." But the context in which Paul says this is part of the larger discussion of pastoral authority. He does not mean a woman under no condition may ever speak to the body, but only that she may not speak as one in authority. We know that Paul is not speaking of any and all situations, as another text where he deals with headship and authority is 1 Corinthians 11, where Paul does not forbid the women from "praying" and "prophesying" (which is publicly sharing divine revelation, in this case from God's written revelation). He doesn't rebuke her for doing it at all but only says that she may not do it with her head "uncovered," meaning usurping her authority which is her husband or pastor. He does not forbid her from doing it. Clearly, Paul assumes there are times when a woman will, and he is writing to put commands on how a woman is to "pray" and "prophesy" (preach/teach) publicly in the body. He is saying to both men and women in 1 Corinthians 11 to stay submitted to their "head."

I assure you we are trying to be biblical and not merely "cultural" in our approach. I genuinely believe we are Scriptural in how we view the role of women in the church. There are two extremes that I don't think are biblical. One would be the view I was raised with in my theologically conservative background that taught that women could basically only teach kids or other women. (In addition to bringing the casserole to the Sunday school potluck haha!) I think this is a misapplication of the biblical teaching on male headship and was founded more in conservative church tradition than New Testament doctrine. Now the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme in our new politically correct "make war on the evil patriarchy era," which now includes ordaining women to pastoral ministry and even lead pastors.

These are not "competing" texts but rather "completing" texts. When we consider the whole counsel of the New Testament, it is clear that a woman may not speak as one in authority, but she may speak as one under authority. For this reason, the AL leadership team has no problem with women on occasion addressing the body in a mixed assembly of men and women. It will not be something that occurs often but occasionally, especially for days like Mother's Day, a specific sermon series, or sermons that are especially addressed to women.