

OPERATION TEACHING TOOLS

IPHC

Ecclesiology:

The Study of the Church

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Ecclesiology

Introduction

I. Defining Terms

- A. Ecclesiology is the theological term for the study of the church.
- B. This word is taken from the Greek word *ἐκκλησία* translated as “church in the New Testament.
 - 1. Only in James 2:2 is the New Testament church referred to as a synagogue. In every other place, the New Testament writers wanted to distinguish the gather of New Covenant believers from the gathering of Old Covenant people.
 - 2. Originally, *ἐκκλησία* was used in the Greek society to describe “the assembly of the competent citizens of a city-state.”¹ This word was adopted by the early followers of Jesus to describe their communities.
 - 3. Verlyn Verbrugge writes that “Paul understand *ἐκκλησία* as the living, assembled congregation . . . neither the significance of the place nor the numerical size of the assembly determines the use of the term. What counts is the presence of Christ among them, Christ’s revelation of himself to them, and faith nourished by him.”²

II. What is the Church?

- A. These notes will not discuss the practical issues of local church ministry but rather the theological concept and universal principles of the Church at large.
- B. Even though we recognize the value of the Old Testament in understanding the nature of the Church, we will focus our study on the New Testament teaching. However, we will often look back to the Old Testament as the foundation of the New Covenant.
- C. In the New Testament, we see that Jesus prepared his disciples for the church (Matthew 16:18; 18:17) but the church was launched on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).
- D. The church can be described in five broad statements:
 - 1. The Church is the gathered community of God’s people for worship.
 - i. Scriptures to Consider
 - a. Acts 4:23-32; 13:1-3
 - b. Hebrews 10:19-25
 - ii. God’s people gather together for a purpose. The Church is not just a fellowship group (although fellowship is important). There is a higher purpose for which the Church gathers.

¹ Verlyn D. Verbrugge, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 170.

² *Ibid*, 172.

- iii. In the Old Testament, the Tent of Meeting was placed in the center of the camp (Numbers 2:17). Not only did this placement demonstrate the priority of God in the community, it also served as a reminder that God was present in their midst. When the people gathered to worship, God's presence was there and celebrated.
 - iv. The ongoing gathering of God's people empowers the community to fulfill God's mission. Thus, the church should give priority to worship rather than performance.
2. The Church is a place where the people of God find identity.
- i. Scripture to Consider
 - a. Colossians 3:1-17
 - b. 1 Peter 2:4-10
 - ii. A personal relationship with Jesus is not the great conclusion of faith but the great beginning of the Christian experience. It is the induction into a gathered community of God's people who assist one another in becoming and creating what God wants them to become and create together.
 - iii. The Church is not a collection of individuals but a community a people bound together in common identity and activity.
 - iv. Based on Peter's description of the church in the passage above, we see that the identity of the New Testament Church "is to be understood as the fulfillment of the promises and hopes given to Israel. They come together as living stones in a spiritual house and serve one another with different gifts as God's grace is revealed to them."³ The Church is not an alternative people of God but a continuation of the people of God established by God in the Old Testament.
3. The Church is a source of nourishment for God's people.
- i. Scripture to Consider:
 - a. Acts 2:42-47; 12:5
 - b. 1 Corinthians 5:4; 11:17-34; 12:28; 14:12, 26
 - c. Ephesians 4:11-16
 - d. James 5:14
 - ii. The Old Testament Temple was a place "designated to nourish Israel in its missional identity and role to spread God's glorious presence throughout

³ Ibid, 173.

the entire cosmos.”⁴ In the New Covenant, the Church continues to serve as of nourishment for the New Covenant people of God.

iii. The nourishment found through the church includes:

- a. Teaching/Preaching
- b. Corporate Prayer
- c. Sacraments (Baptism, Communion)
- d. Discipleship
- e. Discipline
- f. Fellowship

4. The Church is also a teacher of ethics for God’s people.

i. Scripture to Consider:

- a. Philippians 3:17-21
- b. 1 Timothy 3:14-15
- c. 2 Timothy 4:1-5

ii. Christopher Wright states that God’s mission will be carried out “by the existence in the world of the community that will be taught to live according to the way of the Lord in righteousness and justice (ethics).”⁵

iii. Jesus did not give us a comprehensive list of ethical requirements but offered a perfect example of how the people of God should live. The Church continues this example of Jesus but in contextualized ways relevant to the surrounding culture and society.

iv. Within the church, the people of God find their way of life.

v. The Church is an alternative community. This creates tension in terms of engaging the culture without accommodating the culture. The Church must not damage its witnesses about God in order to appease a pagan culture. This witness is much more than a verbal declaration but a lifestyle characterized by the work of God and the fruit of the Spirit lived out in word and deed.

vi. Many churches value numerical growth rather than growing disciples. The crowds are there but the transformation is not. This is not a true expression of the New Covenant church. The true church transforms lives spiritually and ethically.

vii. Edmond Clowney writes, “The church, according to Scripture, is not a religious club, a voluntary association of like-minded Christians who

⁴ Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 56.

⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), 369.

cultivate friendship and engage in joint projects. It is rather the institution of Christ and of the Spirit, formed by his power and governed by his Word.”⁶

5. The Church is a witness.

- i. Scriptures to Consider
 - a. Ephesians 3:10
 - b. 1 Peter 2:11-12
- ii. The people of God are witnesses but together the church is also a witness to the world concerning the things of God.

E. Biblical Analogies or Metaphors for the Church

1. As with many other issues, the Bible often teaches about the church in metaphors. These symbols are not to be taken literally but are designed to vividly convey a concept.

2. The Church is the Body of Christ

- i. Scriptures to Consider:
 - a. 1 Corinthians 12:27-28
 - b. Ephesians 5:30
 - c. Colossians 1:18-24
- ii. This image is intended to teach believers that the Church (together) is the place where unity with one another and with Jesus is more fully realized. As Jesus said in Matthew 18:20, coming together in the name of Jesus is powerful.
- iii. The unity of the church should be deeply experienced and not easily broken.
- iv. Referring to Galatians 3:28, Edmond Clowney writes, “God’s presence makes us his people; the presence of Jesus constitutes the church as his temple, built of living stones, joined to him as God’s elect Stone.”⁷ Even though ethnicity may divide, Christ unites and to be united to Christ is to be united with all those in Christ.
- v. The image of the body also teaches us that “the Lord stands over his church . . . which is completely dependent upon him.”⁸
- vi. Finally, this image clearly teaches us that the identity of the believer individually and the church collectively is forever connected to Jesus.

⁶ Edmond P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995), 58.

⁷ *Ibid*, 46.

⁸ Vebrugge, 172.

3. The Church is the Bride of Christ

i. Scriptures to Consider

a. Acts 20:28

b. Ephesians 5:23-29

ii. This image is intended to teach believers that ultimately, the Church belongs to Jesus. We do not exist for our own purposes but we live in loving submission to the vision and plan of our Savior.

iii. This image of the church is also related the idea that the church is a family.

F. The Reformation and the Church

1. Edmond Clowney reports that the reformer's three marks of a true church were "true preaching of the Word; proper observance of the sacraments; and faithful exercise of church discipline."⁹
2. While these three issues do not include the total activity and responsibilities of the church, they are agreed to be vital to the church to that extent that if the church should lack one (or more) of these elements, it is not considered to be a true Christian church.

⁹ Edmond P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995), 101.

The Church in the New Testament Adapted from Dr. Rollin Grams

The New Testament does not give us a step-by-step guide to planting or leading a church. We do not have an order of service in Scripture but we do have some discussion of the essential elements of the true Church. Below, we examine a few of those essential elements:

1. The Gathered Church as a Community for Worship

In 1 Corinthians, Paul speaks often about the gathered people of God. We can say that when Christians gather as the church—as opposed simply to Christians gathering together—this is a spiritually constituted gathering. Thus Paul can say, ‘When you come together as a church’ (1 Cor. 11.18). The phrase ‘When you come together’ appears five times in this passage about the celebration of the Lord’s Supper or Eucharist (1 Cor. 11.17-34). This is not just a fellowship of believers or a discussion of spiritual things—it is an intentional coming together as a church (or assembly)—as the people of God. When Christians have tea together, or when Christians have a spiritual discussion with other Christians or non-Christians, this does not constitute a ‘gathered church’.

What Paul says about the gathered Church is that something happens in this context that is very serious, and serious consequences can follow if people behave in ways contrary to the practice of worship. If the Lord’s Supper is, among other things, a celebration of the unity of believers, but the Supper is actually celebrated with disunity (some persons asserting their status over others), then divine judgement will follow. Paul says that some are sick and some have even died as a result of the Corinthians’ sinful performance of this practice (1 Cor. 11.30), for they eat and drink judgement against themselves (v. 29). This letter, 1 Corinthians, involves several other passages that speak of the ‘church’ as a spiritually gathered assembly, but the actual phrase, ‘When you come together,’ appears one other time in 1 Corinthians—in 1 Cor. 14.26:

When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.’ Once again, ‘coming together’ involves Christian worship. So, the question needs to be raised, ‘When mission activity focuses on the formation of communities of Christian worship (as it must), what are the characteristics of this worship?’ Indeed, the result of mission is worship, but we seldom see or experience the spiritual depth of what this meant for Paul in many churches.

2. The Gathered Church as a People of Divine Authority, Judgement, and Forgiveness

One aspect of the gathered church is that its gathering is in and with the power of the Spirit and the presence and authority of Jesus Christ. This authority may involve judgement. In 1 Cor. 5, for example, the gathered church constitutes a judicial assembly. Paul can even join it in spirit when he is physically absent (1 Cor. 5.3)! Paul says, regarding rendering judgement on the man in question, who is living with his father’s wife,

When you are assembled, and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord (1 Cor. 5.4-5). In this passage, the gathered church is said to be a gathering ‘in the power of our Lord Jesus.’ This appears to be a general notion in the early Church, since we find the idea in Matthew and in John as well. In Matthew, Jesus teaches his disciples to exercise judgement in the gathered church because their gathering involves the presence and authority of Jesus in their midst:

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Mt. 18.20).

The risen Lord also speaks of the authority to forgive and render judgement in John’s Gospel: If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20.23).

Since the English reader is unable to determine whether 'you' is singular or plural in this verse, he or she may well think that this involves some individual—one of the disciples or someone with ecclesiastical authority—forgiving or retaining someone's sins. However, the word is in the plural, and once again the notion is that gathered believers who have been given the Holy Spirit have an authority to render judgement.

Paul, Matthew, and John seem to be saying the same thing, and this understanding apparently arose from Jesus himself. Thus, applying the language of John on this matter to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5, one might say that Paul is recommending retaining the sinner's sins because he is unrepentant. In that case, as also in Mt. 18, the result is exclusion from the community of believers. In 1 Cor. 5, however, sending the person out into the realm of Satan 'for the destruction of the flesh' is both the rendering of judgement and itself a redemptive act. Indeed, in both Mt. 18 and 1 Cor. 5, judgement of a sinner is an action that is part of a redemptive process for the individual and a cleansing process for the believing community, God's holy people. There is a slight difference, though. In Mt. 18, exclusion is the final act after a series of attempts to redeem the individual sinner. In 1 Cor. 5, however, exclusion is yet another redemptive action, since only by excluding a sinner can the sinner realize that he or she is in reality apart from the community of Christ and headed to eternal separation from both believers and God. Only then is there hope that the person, now handed over to the realm of Satan, will repent and be willing to destroy or let God destroy his or her 'flesh'—the sinful passions and behaviours. Were a church to permit such an unrepentant sinner to remain in its midst—as happens regularly today—the sinner would not realize that his or her behaviour is sinful, would not realize that he or she was in danger of eternal judgement, and would sully the purity of God's holy people.

3. The Church as a Cleansed People Gathered to Celebrate the Feast of Christ's Passover

Indeed, 1 Cor. 5 makes the additional point that the gathered community, the church, is a holy assembly. They are God's holy people, but they are also a gathering of God's holy people when they come together, having cleansed and readied themselves to partake of Christ their Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5.7). Some see the church as a hospital in which sinners are in various stages of cure but, in general, simply forgiven sinners. There may be repentance and forgiveness, but there is very little aspiration to holiness, and there is likely no belief in the transformation of the sinner through the resurrection power of Christ at work in us (Rom. 6). Some see the church as a field in which wheat and weeds are growing side by side. This image may be combined with one of the most misinterpreted texts in all of Scripture: the passage where Jesus says that his disciples should not judge lest they be judged (Mt. 7.1). That passage is warning against hypocrisy; it is not stating that sinners should not be judged. After all, Mt. 18.12-20 lays out a process for bringing judgement in the church! Jesus' parable of the wheat and the weeds in Mt. 13.24-30 states that the field is the world, not the church!: the parable is about why God does not bring judgement here and now into the world and is not at all teaching on how to handle unbelievers in the church! And some understand the church to be an audience in which believers and unbelievers ('seekers') passively or actively participate in singing and listening to a talk or watching some performance on a stage. This is not worship, it is a performance.

4. The Church Gathered for Prophetic Words and Spirit Filled Worship

While unbelievers may be present in a gathered community at worship, their experience of the Spirit-filled community, says Paul, is that they come to understand what is being prophetically said to them. Thus, they are reproved and called to an account by the prophetic word spoken to them by believers with the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 14.24). This, once again, is a community that, in gathering together 'in church' (not a building but the people of God; 1 Cor. 14.19, cf. vv. 28, 35), experiences the prophetic word and power of the Spirit. Paul says, After the secrets of the unbeliever's heart are disclosed, that person will bow down before God and worship him, declaring, "God is really among you." (1 Cor. 14.25).

This presence of the Holy Spirit in worship involves a 'filling with the Spirit' in the gathered community's worship. Paul describes this in Ephesians as singing 'songs and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in our hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,' and being subject to one another in fear of Christ (Eph. 5.19-20).

Conclusion

The local church is, in the theology and experience of the early Church, so much more than what we often take it to be. We see it as a building—it is not: believers do not ‘go to church,’ as one of my beloved professors used to say repeatedly, they ‘are the church’! We also often see the church as a campus that runs various programmes. The result of such a way of thinking is that the church is thought to be successful if it has numerous, smoothly run programmes for various groups—a Sunday School programme, a youth ministry programme, a worship programme, and so forth. The ‘programme church’ might grow very large—having programmes causes growth—but such churches inevitably struggle to establish community. More seriously even than that, the programme church fails to establish itself as a gathered and spiritual community of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Indeed, in many cities around the world today, the successful church is thought to be the large church, and the large church is a church defined by its programmes.

How very, very different this is from Paul’s understanding of the church as a gathered assembly in the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit. The local church is, first, a worshiping community, where worship is practiced and experienced as an expression of the power and presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Imagine the gathered Church as a Spirit-filled assembly overflowing with spiritual worship in songs, thankfulness, and mutual submission creating unity among believers across the social divisions of the world. Imagine gathering together on a Sunday morning with the express thought that we are forming in our assembling together a Spirit-gifted body (1 Cor. 12) where Christ and the Spirit will be encountered and where ministry will take place. Imagine an understanding of the local church’s gathering that involves the fear of Christ, a holy awe as we encounter the very presence of God. Imagine understanding our gathering in such a way that judgement may be rendered and sins forgiven or retained. Imagine understanding the gathered church as a prophetic community where unbelievers will fall under conviction of their sins, repent, and find forgiveness—rather than made to feel comfortable with their coffee mugs and light entertainment from the stage. Imagine all this as the result of mission—the gathered people of God. Paul did. Matthew did. So did John. In fact, it seems that Jesus did as well!

Ecclesiology

Church Discipline

- I. The issue of Church Discipline is often neglected or misunderstood. Yet this is a primary work of the church and its leadership. This section of the notes will examine both the theology and practice of Church Discipline.
- II. Scriptures to Consider
 - A. Old Testament Example of Discipline in the Community of God's People – Leviticus 4
 - B. New Testament Examples and Models of Discipline in the Community of God's People:
 1. 1 Timothy 1:18-20
 2. Mark 11:15-16
 3. Acts 5:1-10
 4. 1 Corinthians 5
 5. Matthew 18:15-17
- III. Inappropriate Response to Sin within the Community of God's People:
 - A. Hiding sin (Joshua 7)
 - B. Ignoring sin (1 Samuel 2)
 - C. Decreasing the seriousness of sin (1 Samuel 15)
- IV. A Plan for Church Discipline
 - A. A person has sinned against you personally or his/her sin has been made known to you or the church.
 - B. Step 1: Personal Confrontation
 1. Maintain Privacy – Give no public attention to the person or sin. Begin with prayer.
 2. Do Thorough Investigation - Evidence must be established. The evidence may show guilt or even innocence.
 3. Give Discipline – If the evidence shows guilt, the Pastor must exercise his discipline by confronting the sin and showing the consequences. Practical plans of action will be different in each situation.
 4. Expect Confession and Repentance – The guilty person must be willing to confess their sin to the offended and to God and then repent of that sin. At this point, this may not need to be public.
 5. Plan for Reconciliation and Forgiveness – This is the ultimate goal of the Church discipline. The Pastor's responsibility is now to see that forgiveness takes place and that the person fulfills a process of reconciliation. If this happens, the process is over.

6. However, if a person guilty of sin refuses to confess and repent in a private, personal confrontation, there is a second step we must follow.

C. Step 2: Small Group Confrontation

1. Organize a Small Group – The issue remains private but now we must involve one or two other leaders to help bring repentance and reconciliation.
2. Share Information – The accuser and the accused present their evidence and explanations to the group.
3. Make a Decision – If the group agrees that the evidence shows guilt, they must join the Pastor in exercising discipline by confronting the sin and showing the consequences.
4. Expect Confession and Repentance – The person must be willing to confess their sin to the offended and to God and repent of that sin.
5. Plan for Reconciliation and Forgiveness – Once again, this is the ultimate goal of the Church discipline. The group of leaders will now help the Pastor to see that forgiveness takes place and that the person fulfills a process of reconciliation. If this happens, the process is over.
6. If a person guilty of sin refuses to confess and repent after a group has met together and agreed on the course of action, there is a third step to follow.

D. Step 3: Church Confrontation

1. Involve the Church – At this point the Pastor and his group of leaders must take the issue to the entire church leadership or board.
2. Share Information – The accuser and the accused present their evidence and explanations to the church leadership.
3. Make a Decision – If the church leadership agrees that the evidence shows guilt, they must join the Pastor in exercising discipline by confronting the sin and showing the consequences.
4. Expect Confession and Repentance – The person must be willing to confess their sin to the offended and to God and repent of that sin.
5. Expect Reconciliation and Forgiveness – Remember, this is the ultimate goal of the Church discipline. The church leaders will now help the Pastor to see that forgiveness takes place and that the person fulfills a process of reconciliation.
6. Unfortunately, even at this point some will refuse to repent and be reconciled. At this point Jesus offers a fourth step.

E. Step 4: Treat the Guilty as an Unbeliever

1. If a person refuses to heed the word of the Pastor and leaders of the church, they are demonstrating a refusal to also heed the word of God. Such people are now

considered unbelievers. Their actions show that they are not walking with God but rather running away from Him. This step has both negative and positive aspects.

2. Negative Aspects

- i. Separation – At this point either membership suspension or expulsion may be necessary. Expulsion is for extreme cases.
- ii. Removal from leadership – The person should be removed from all positions held in the church, even from helping with music.
- iii. Public explanation – Removes the opportunity for confusion and gossip.

3. Positive Aspects

- i. Relationship Building – Ongoing counseling and attempts for repentance and reconciliation should continue if possible.
- ii. Love and Forgiveness – The person should, like all unbelievers, should still be able to feel the love and concern of the church.
- iii. Church involvement – Sinners are welcome if attendance doesn't cause ongoing disruption.

V. Conclusion

- A. The church is not just an instrument God uses to bring unbelievers to repentance. The church is also an instrument God uses to discipline and reconcile believers who are fallen into sin.
- B. Therefore, we have an obligation to carry out this pastoral responsibility.
- C. The motivation is always LOVE. Paul affirms this in 1 Cor. 5 and 1 Tim. 1:18-20. We do everything out of love (Prov. 3:12 and Heb. 12:7-10).
- D. Do not fear church discipline. It will actually make your church stronger.
- E. Hold yourself accountable and do not compromise the Word of God.
- F. Church discipline is not mob justice.
- G. Show no favoritism (Leviticus 19:15).
- H. Not an option, an obligation.

Ecclesiology

Women in Church Leadership

- I. There is much debate among Christians about the role of women in church ministry. Historically, the IPHC has also affirmed and promoted the full participation of women in the ministry. Here we will examine the issue.
- II. Women in Creation
 - A. God Originally Established Equality Between Man and Woman (Genesis 1:26-29)
 1. Both were created in and contain the image of God
 2. Both given rule over the Earth
 3. There was an order of creation
 4. No division or subordination in the Garden of Eden
 - B. Created Order (Genesis 2:4-25)
 1. Adam was created first
 2. Eve was created as a partner, co-worker, and helper for Adam
 3. Adam's status as first in created order indicates a level of leadership in the family.
Yet Adam recognized the importance and equality of Eve (Gen. 2:23-24)
- III. Women in The Fall
 - A. The Event (Genesis 3:1-13)
 1. Eve was first targeted by the serpent but no reason for this is given in scripture.
 2. Eve admitted being deceived by the serpent (Gen. 3:13)
 - i. She was deceived into believing that eating the fruit would make her life better
 - ii. She was still responsible for her own sin of coveting and disobedience
 3. Adam was not deceived but chose to disobey by eating the fruit along with his wife.
 - i. Adam knew the source of the fruit (Gen. 3:6, 12) but he ate anyway
 - ii. Adam would not take responsibility but attempted to shift blame
 - B. The Curse (Genesis 3:14-19)
 1. All women were given punishment in the following ways:
 - i. More painful childbirth
 - ii. Subordination to men
 - iii. Physical Death
 2. Women were also give a promise that God would use them to give the world a Savior (Gen. 3:15)
- IV. Women in the Old Testament
 - A. Both women and men are seen as being both faithful and unfaithful to God, for example:
 1. Abraham and Sarah

2. Isaac and Rachel

B. Just as God used men, God also used women to accomplish His will, for example:

1. Rahab, a citizen of Jericho who aided the Israelites into victory (Joshua 2)

2. Deborah, a judge of Israel who led in the defeat Israel's enemies (Judges 4-5)

3. Esther, a wife who saved the entire Jewish nation from destruction (Esther)

V. Women in the Gospels

A. Jesus taught women even though neither the Jewish nor the Roman culture did not actively do this. (Luke 10:38-42)

B. Jesus respected women (Mark 12:41-44)

C. Jesus healed women (Luke 8:43-48)

D. Jesus defended women (John 8:2-11)

E. Jesus honored women (Matthew 26:6-13)

F. Jesus reached out to women to help better their lives (John 4:1-42)

G. Jesus commissioned women as the first to proclaim the resurrection (John 20:17-18)

H. The Bible never depicts Jesus beating women, abusing women, or forbidding them to minister

VI. Women in Acts

A. Women were present with the disciples in the upper room praying (Acts 1:14) and received the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-3)

B. The prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28-32) was fulfilled in Acts 2 – God's spirit was poured out on all flesh, including women

C. Tabitha (also called Dorcas) was seen as an important figure in the church (Acts 9:36-41)

D. Mary, the mother of John Mark, facilitated a church meeting at her house (Acts 12:12)

E. Lydia helped Paul start the church at Philippi (Acts 16:11-15)

F. Priscilla (wife of Aquila) was seen as an influential figure in the church

1. After the introduction of this couple in Acts, whenever you see their names mentioned together, her name is mentioned first possibly emphasizing she was the prominent leader in the family's ministry (Acts 18:18, 19, 26; Romans 16:3; 2 Timothy 4:19 – in 1 Corinthians 16:19 Aquila's name appears first)

2. Acts 18 also indicated she was involved in the teaching of Apollos when they offered him further instructions/teaching about Christianity.

3. See more about this in the discussion below.

G. Acts 21:9 mentions the four daughter of Philip (a Christian family) who had and used the gift of prophecy

VII. Women in Pauline Literature

A. Paul makes it clear that we must not discriminate against women (Galatians 3:28) because in the eyes of God there is equality among all people.

- B. Paul writes that every believer (including women) is a vital member of the body of Christ and has a function to perform (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12).
- C. Phoebe, a lady, is described as a deacon in the church in Cenchrea (Romans 16:1). See discussion below for me details.
- D. Junias, a female relative of Paul, is described as “among the apostles” (Romans 16:7)
- E. Paul also named and honored many women as church leaders in his letters including:
 - 1. Priscilla (Romans 16:3)
 - 2. Mary (Romans 16:6)
 - 3. Chloe (1 Corinthians 1:11)
 - 4. Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2-3)
 - 5. Persis (Romans 12:12)

VIII. Key Women to Consider

A. Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2)

1. What we know about Phoebe with certainty:

- i. She is a believer from Cenchrea.
- ii. She was traveling to Rome and Paul wanted the church to receive her and help her.
- iii. She has been a great help to many other believers, including Paul.
- iv. Phoebe is never mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament.

2. What we may assume about Phoebe based on the text:

- i. She was a lady of wealth. The terminology used to describe her is similar to the way “benefactors” were described in Greek and Roman literature.
- ii. Resided in a port city, perhaps a business lady like Lydia in Acts 16.
- iii. She may have been the letter carrier for this letter. Paul relied on personal letter carriers (see 1 Thessalonians 3:2) to deliver his letters to the churches. Robert Mounce is sure of this when he writes, “Phoebe is undoubtedly the person carrying Paul’s letter to the church in Rome.”¹⁰
- iv. She was a leader in the church (see discussion below).

3. Phoebe, a *διακονος* of the church in Cenchrea.

- i. Phoebe is described as a *diakonos* in the Greek. This is a significant term for understanding her identity.
- ii. *diakonos* is used 29 times in the New Testament, mostly by Paul (8 usages in the Gospels and the 21 by Paul).
- iii. In Romans the word is used four times:
 - a. Romans 13:4 (used twice)

¹⁰ Mounce, 272.

- b. Romans 15:8
- c. Romans 16:1
- iv. Other uses by Paul
 - a. 1 Corinthians 3:5
 - b. 2 Corinthians 3:6; 6:4; 11:15 (twice); 11:23
 - c. Galatians 2:17
 - d. Ephesians 3:7; 6:21
 - e. Philippians 1:1
 - f. Colossians 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7
 - g. 1 Thessalonians 3:2
 - h. 1 Timothy 3:8, 12; 4:6
- v. *diakonos* was a word that saw a transformation in meaning through the Greek language.
 - a. As Verlyn Verbrugge writes, the word “first meant to wait at tables; this was expanded to mean to care for household needs, then to serve generally. The first meaning involved personal subjection, which was considered unworthy and dishonoring for a free man. But when used in the third sense it could denote service for a cause, e.g., for the good of the community or for a god. As such, it was an honorable task, a fitting occupation for a free man.”¹¹
 - b. Based on this understanding and the usage we see in the New Testament, this word was used to denote someone of both service in the church but also in leadership. This is seen especially in 1 Corinthians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; and 1 Timothy 3.
 - c. C. G. Kruse writes, “In several places in the Pauline letters the word *diakonos* is used of individuals who exercise a special function within the church. Phoebe is described as a deacon . . . However, the Pauline letters give no indication concerning the exact nature of the service to be rendered by these appointees.”¹²
- vi. This description of Phoebe should have implication for our understanding of the role of women in public ministry. We will discuss this further below. A good summary is compiled by Craig Keener when he writes that Phoebe is “apparently a person with administrative responsibility in the early church, but which in Paul’s letters usually refers to a minister of God’s

¹¹ Verbrugge, 136.

¹² C. G. Kruse, “Servant, Service,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 870.

word, such as himself. He also calls her a ‘helper’ of many, a term which is normally referred in antiquity to patrons, some of whom were women. As a patron, she would own the home in which the church met and hold a position of honor.”¹³

B. Priscila and Aquila

1. Who are they?

- i. Aquila and Priscilla were residents of Rome before meeting Paul but were driven out of Rome by Claudius. This occurred in 49 A.D. because of quarrels that broke out within the Jewish community in Rome between Jews who believed in Jesus and those who did not. They fled to Corinth.
- ii. In Acts 18:2, we first see this couple mentioned in Scripture. Immediately after arriving in Corinth, Paul finds this Jewish couple whom he recognizes to be of great potential. It is possible that this couple were already believers before Paul met them.
- iii. Paul worked alongside Aquila and Priscilla in the field of tentmaking. Paul was trained in this skill and used it to earn a living for himself in Corinth (1 Corinthians 9:15-18). He made tents through the week and taught on the Sabbath in the synagogue or in the marketplace.
- iv. When Paul left Corinth after about 18 months of ministry, he took Aquila and Priscilla with him to Ephesus where he left them to start the ministry while he traveled on to Jerusalem and Antioch before returning on the third missionary journey.
- v. While in Ephesus, they met a traveling minister named Apollos who was familiar with John’s Baptism and preached the gospel. Aquila and Priscilla instructed him more in the way of Jesus and eventually sent him to Corinth to help in the church there.
- vi. At some point after Paul left Ephesus, the couple seems to have returned to Rome and were involved in the church in their former home.

2. Priscilla First?

- i. It is notable that Paul mentioned the wife’s name first. This is also the pattern in the book of acts. When Luke introduces the couple in Acts 16, he uses the husband’s name first but in every other instance in the Scripture the wife’s name is mentioned first.

¹³ Craig S. Keener, “Men and Women,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 589.

- ii. Name order was important for Luke. At the beginning of the first missionary journey in Acts 13, Luke places Barnabas' name before Paul in several instances to indicate the Barnabas is the leader of that team (see also Acts 14:12). However, as the story progresses and Paul gradually becomes the leader, the name order shifts to Paul's name ahead of Barnabas.
- iii. This name order could indicate that in terms of active ministry, Priscilla was the more involved member of the family. However, F. F. Bruce explains this simply as a matter of "she was the more impressive personality of the two."¹⁴

C. Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16)

1. Although a minority of scholars have tried to claim that this is two men working together on a ministry team (like Paul and Barnabas) the majority see this as it is literally found in the Greek, a married man and woman like Aquila and Priscilla. Their names are mentioned nowhere else in Scripture.
2. They were somehow related to Paul and they believed in Jesus before Paul. The old Paul (before Christ) may have hated them for their faith but the Christian Paul counted them as "outstanding."
3. They had been in prison with Paul. We are not sure where this took place. Paul imprisonments were brief up to this point (remember, this is at the end of the third missionary journey and before the imprisonment of Paul in Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Rome).
4. They are named as "outstanding among the Apostles." This is why many have tried to explain away the feminine name Junias as masculine since no other women in the New Testament is listed among the apostles.
 - i. It is clear from Ephesians 4 that Paul saw a place in the church for apostles outside the foundational apostolic group of the 12 plus Paul.
 - ii. Even though Paul recognized others as apostles, he did understand that there was a differing in the level of authority between foundation apostles and others that followed (see 1 Corinthians 15:5-8).
 - iii. The term apostle (αποστολος) simply means "sent one" so Andronicus and Junias may be seen as a missionary couple who went to help start new or fledgling works.
 - iv. The identification of a women in this position is significant.
 - a. Even Douglas Moo, who does not see Scriptural support for women teaching men or having authority over men, admits that "Romans

¹⁴ F. F. Bruce, Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 251.

16:7 does, indeed, prove that women were ‘apostles’ in the early church.”¹⁵

- b. Keener writes, “‘Junia’ itself is clearly a feminine name, but writers inclined to doubt that Paul could have referred to a female apostle have proposed that this is a contraction for the masculine name ‘Junianus.’ But this contraction does not occur in our inscriptions from Rome and is by any count quite rare compared to the common feminine name; the proposal rests on the assumption that a woman could not be an apostle, rather than on any evidence inherent in the text itself.”¹⁶

IX. Women in Ministry

- A. Douglas Moo writes that there are three things about which we all should agree concerning women in the New Testament:¹⁷

1. “Women made up a significant part of the early Christian church.”
2. “Women were given the same access to God that men enjoyed (Galatians 3:28; 1 Peter 3:7).”
3. “Women engaged in significant ministry.”

- B. Millard Erickson writes, “Although in a minority, at all times of biblical history there have been women who occupy positions of leadership and influence.”¹⁸

- C. Even though some verses in Romans seem to be very positive and unrestrictive regarding women in church leadership, we must read this in conjunction with the other passages that Paul wrote regarding women in the ministry:

1. 1 Corinthians 14:33-35
2. 1 Timothy 2:11-15

- i. Extreme interpretations of these texts:

- a. John Chrysostom (347 – 407, Bishop in Turkey) – “The women [Eve] taught once, and ruined all. On this account therefore he saith, let her not teach. But what is it to other women, that she suffered this? It certainly concerns them; for the sex is weak and fickle, and he is speaking of the sex collectively.”¹⁹

¹⁵ Moo, 509.

¹⁶ Keener, 589.

¹⁷ Moo, 505.

¹⁸ Erickson, 564

¹⁹ William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 263.

- b. Erasmus (1466 – 1536, Catholic Church Reformer) – “Eve was deceived first when, believing the serpent and beguiled by the enticement of the fruit, she disregarded God’s command. The man could not have been taken in either by the serpent’s promises or by the allure of that fruit; only love for his wife drew him into a ruinous compliance.”²⁰
 - c. P. C. Spicq (modern theologian) – “A women will always be more easy to deceive than a man, that is why the Apostle does not permit women . . . to teach in the church.”²¹
- ii. A moderate interpretation of this passage affirms that women are equal with men in value, dignity, and intelligence. However, based on God’s created order, men and women serve in different ways. Men are assigned the role of leading in both the home the church. Women can and should be active in the church serving in roles that benefit the church but do not involve publically teaching men in religious studies or exerting authority over men in the church.²²
 - iii. A liberal interpretation (here liberal refers to freedom) – Craig Keener – “Paul . . . provides a short-range solution and a long-range solution. The short-range solution is [women] should not take ruling positions as teachers in the church. The long-range solution is: Let them learn. Again, Paul affirms their ability to learn, and he proposes educating them as a long-range solution to the current problem. That they are to learn “quietly and submissively” may again reflect their witness within society (these were characteristics normally expected of women), but it should be pointed out that this was the way all novices were supposed to learn.”²³ Thus, Paul’s restriction only refer to uneducated women and thus would not apply to many modern women who have had the same (and sometimes more) education as men.
3. We must not allow our understanding of theological issues to be formed based on one scripture alone. We should seek to find all that the author and the Bible has written about the topic in order to have balance in our views. Erickson writes that in

²⁰ Ibid, 265.

²¹ Ibid, 267.

²² See George W. Knight III, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 140 – 141.

²³ Keener, 591.

Romans 16 “Paul’s conception of the usefulness of women in ministering” should “qualify those passages where he seems to restrict their activities.”²⁴

D. Three Views on the Role of Women in the Ministry

1. Highly Restrictive – The role of women in the work of the church should be limited to that which reflects her role in the home: assisting in supportive roles and child care. The women that Paul commends in Romans 16 were excelling in these roles. Paul may have been generous in his appreciation but remained restrictive in his view of women in the church.
2. Moderately Restrictive. A woman may be allowed to serve in various positions of leadership as long as she is not primarily teaching or leading men in the church. AS seen in Romans 16, it’s appropriate for women serve in leadership or teaching positions alongside of their husbands or in administrative bodies (such as a member of a board or committee).
3. Unrestrictive – Although the church recognized the lack of education and abilities of women in the early days, Paul instructed women to learn. This was for the purpose of liberating women from this limitation. Romans 16 shows us that God calls women just as he calls men. Both are made in God’s image and have the same Holy Spirit. God’s leaders are determined by calling, not gender. Women should be obedient to the calling given them by God.

E. Questions to Ask:

1. If you lean towards a more restrictive view of women in the ministry you must ask why do you accept this restriction in light of Romans 16? It is based on a view of women that is not supported by Scripture? We cannot use Scripture to sustain a mindset that is opposed to the word of God.
- 2.If you lean towards a more unrestrictive view of women in the ministry you must ask why do you accept this freedom in light of 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2? Is your acceptance based on a mindset that is formed more by the current culture than the Word of God? We cannot pick and choose what we read based on how it harmonizes with our culture.
- 3.These questions are not designed to attack your viewpoint but rather to challenge your thinking.

²⁴ Erickson, 566.