

## Female Elders

For congregations that consider female elders, the following factors are usually considered important:

1. The understanding that both male and female are created in God's image (Genesis 1:27).
  - Both men and women share the same *identity* at the foundational moment of creation.
  - On what basis—aside from biology—can we create differences between men and women?
  - Furthermore, both men and women share the same *functions* at creation—namely, exercising rule (Genesis 1:26, 28) and being fruitful (Genesis 1:28).
2. The revelation that the Holy Spirit has been poured out on all flesh, regardless of age, gender, class, and ethnicity (Acts 2:17-21; Joel 2:28-32; Romans 10:11-12; Galatians 3:28).
3. The affirmation that the Holy Spirit gifts everyone in the church in various ways for the “common good” of the church (1 Cor 12:1-31, esp. v. 7).
  - Is there any indication in the text that the Spirit's gifts are limited or distributed by gender?
  - Do we have women who already serve as elders, but we don't call them elders?
  - Do we have some women who are more gifted in the fruit of the spirit (Gal 5) than some men?
4. The evidence of multiple examples of female leaders in Scripture:
  - Prophets (Miriam, Huldah, Anna, 1 Cor 11:5, etc.)
  - Judge (Deborah in Judges 4:4-5)
  - Queen (Esther)
  - Sages (the wise women of Tekoa and Abel in 2 Sam 14:1-20; 20:14-23; the mother of Lemuel in Proverbs 31:1)
  - Builder of cities (Sheerah in 1 Chr 7:24)
  - Teachers (Priscilla in Acts 18:26, etc.)
  - Deacons (Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2; 1 Tim 3:11)
  - Coworkers and laborers (1 Cor 16:15-16): “be subject to such ones”
5. The idea that women should not “exercise authority” is based on a mistranslation of *authenein* (1 Tim 2:12), which is better translated as “to be bossy.”
6. The reason that the New Testament describes elders as men is because the culture at that time was patriarchal.
7. The experience that women exercise authority in many ways in contemporary culture.
  - Does it make sense to say that women can be judges, senators, and mayors throughout the week, but they cannot lead on Sunday mornings?
  - If one believes that men—by their very nature—should rule over women, then shouldn't one also oppose these careers (even voting) for women?
8. The realization that Scripture contains cultural expectations of gender that we no longer follow (e.g., levirate marriage and head coverings).
  - Given the mutuality between male and female at creation and in Christ, does it make sense to understand male headship as a cultural expectation, which does not apply to our context?