

Acts message  
Sunday May 14, 2023  
Brian Tome

*These are the rough notes I use to prepare and when on stage. Stuff I chose not to include are also beneath the dotted line. This isn't a polished article. Typos and notes that may not make sense to you can be expected...*

Happy Mother's Day. This is a great holiday. I'm very thankful for my mother and the mother of my children. I believe there is equality between the sexes. Doesn't that mean we should get equality of holidays? Mothers get **spa days** and massages and even diamonds and Dads get... cargo shorts.

I've got **three things** I want to accomplish today. I want to encourage mothers. I want to encourage all women to see how the Bible is consistently pro woman and pro women leading. And I want to encourage all of us whether male or female to be faithful.

#### X FACTOR - WOMEN - CHOSEN

Last week we were talking about when The Holy Spirit initially came on the first followers of Christ and they were speaking in **languages they had never learned**. They did this to tell people about Jesus being the Messiah. People came to Christ through that teaching. Those were men and women who were doing the communicating. Women were preaching in languages they hadn't heard before on the day of pentecost

**Acts 1:8** *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

**Acts 2:17-18** *And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,*

Sociologists like estimate that the early church grew **50% a decade**. How and why? There were no church buildings, no internet ads, no LED panels, no viral social media posts. They did more than a guy standing on stage and talking about bible verses. They met the needs of the hurting. They loved their neighbor as themselves. They went on adventurous excursions to foreign lands where they shared their faith. And when there was teaching, it wasn't just men, it was women too. Normal ancient religions only have the men doing the heavy lifting. Christianity used **100% of their workforce** instead of only 50% which were the men.

He valued women. He **talked to, taught, touched**, and befriended women. He stood against cultural norms. Great Commission is given by Jesus to his disciples. There are a lot more apostles than are actually mentioned. Jesus didn't say, "men do the great commission but you Mother Mary and Mary Magdalene and another Mary and her sister martha and any other

woman in earshot, you stay home and just pray that it goes ok. They were all in and commissioned.

Romans 16:7 lists **Junia** as an apostle. Junia is a female name with a feminine suffix in the greek. It is like saying Patricia. Pat may be able to go either way but not Patricia.

**Acts 16:13–15 (ESV):** *And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. 14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. 15 And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.*

sold cloth to wealthy clients in Philippi, This would have required a significant capital investment.

If there was a **Fortune 500** list of most wealthy females, Lydia would have been on it. She is a leader through and through. Paul is no dummy. He has a mission that needs funded. He befriends her and stays with her. Not just at her house but **her household**. She has family there and employees. Is she widowed? Divorced? Has an absentee weenie boy husband? We don't know. All we know is that she is leading her household.

She isn't just providing a free place to meet and setting out cookies and coffee. She has a leadership position.

*Homeowners in Greco-Roman times were in charge of all groups that met under their roof.* Fee, G.D. (2005a) Male and female in the new creation. In Pierce, R. W., & Groothuis,

There are some New Testament passages that say a woman shouldn't lead or shouldn't teach. We have to respect those verses. I also have to respect the conviction of many people who want to honor their reading of the Bible and want to see roles like Elder or Teaching Pastor reserved for a woman. But I do not believe that is the arc of the Bible. If you look at my rough speaking notes, which we will give you a **QR code** at the end of our time, I've pasted at the bottom Crossroads Board Statement as how we see women in ministry.

### **Mothers Model Faithfulness**

Moms show us more faithfulness than anyone else on the planet. Faithfulness is one of the most underrated virtues in our world today. Being a mom requires faithfulness. The best example of faithfulness is a loving mother.

*But how does God define success? His measure is very different from the world's measure, and it can be summed up. In one sentence: success in God's eyes is faithfulness to His calling.” [Billy Graham “Wisdom for Each Day” p.340](#)*

This is a very **sensitive topic**. Many women don't come to church on Mothers day because they cant relate or don't want to be reminded of something that is a sore spot in their life. Some of you are dealing with infertility and are frustrated. Others have had a child but have lost a child. It is also very common for women to fall prey to the great amount of guilt that goes their way if they aren't fulfilling some sort of norm. Whether it is the norm of being a stay at home mom or the norm of being a mother who is also earning a lot of money. And then if your child isn't where you think they should be or you aren't where you feel you should be emotionally or physically you can feel as smothered as a smoldering candle when it meets a wet army blanket.

*Mom guilt occurs when a mother feels inadequate or thinks she is not doing enough for her children. It can be triggered through a woman's perinatal (prenatal and postpartum) journey. For example, a mother may blame herself for not caring for her health which led to an unexpected birthing experience. Additional triggers of mom guilt include a baby's NICU hospitalization, breastfeeding challenges, caregiving challenges to an infant, difficulties in keeping up with daily life chores, and returning to work after parental leave. Mom guilt can continue to recur as children grow older, such as feeling guilty for working full-time or for not being able to volunteer at your child's school." [Psychology Today "Mom and Dad Guilt"](#)*

There is not a one size fits all for motherhood. One thing that is common in every good mother is faithfulness. Moms reflect to their children and the world how faithful God is.

### **1) Faithful to creation**

It takes 2 humans to create life, but without a mother willing to be faithful in pregnancy and labor, there is no creation. No matter how you were conceived or born, your mom loved you from the very beginning. God loved us, his creation from the very beginning and called us "good".

**Genesis 1:27** *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.***28** *And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth..."*

Your mom loved you with her own body before you took your first poop. She probably cleaned that poop and then fed you and put you to sleep afterwards. God's faithfulness to us begins in creation and continues even today.

**Psalms 119:90** *Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast.*

Men can have a sexual encounter that lasts for a couple minutes... or less and move on with their lives with no thought of ongoing faithfulness. Not so with women. They deal with the **first trimester** of the body adjusting as they are producing blood for two while at the same time the body isn't sure what is happening so it is trying to fight off this new presence though vomiting and fever. Then there is another 6 months of general difficulty followed by massive pain in

labor. At the end of which, she has to take responsibility whether a man is by her side or not. Mothers bear an inordinate amount of burden for creation.

## 2) Faithful to connection:

LIB MOST TENDER - 35 ANNIV

**Hosea 13:8** I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of her cubs; I will tear open their breast, and there I will devour them like a lion, as a wild beast would rip them open.

**Isaiah 42:14** For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor; I will gasp and pant.

**Isaiah 66:13** As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you;

**Ruth 2:12** The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!"

There has been a lot of appropriate pressure over the past few decades for Men to be more involved with their kids. For men to be more emotionally connected to their kids. For men to be more physically affectionate with their kids. This is mostly good because historically most of us have sucked at this. But there

## GRANDMOTHER TRAIN STATION STORY

My mother used to tell me that story I think to help me to understand her more. Was she the most affectionate Mother on the planet? No but she was faithful. **No person including no mother is a blank slate.** We all have been effected by our past and we are all pushing the ball up the field a little further than the previous generation.

"If you are going to be faithful, you have to get away from the **"been there, done that"** mentality. Good moms are consistent with their connection to their kids because just like God is consistent in his love for us.

Our culture trends toward a "been there, done that" mentality. Too many people quit and walk away because they get bored, discouraged or distracted by the concept of faithfulness. Moms don't do that. Moms have "been there, done that" thousands of times and continue to do so because they are faithful to connecting with their kids.

God's faithfulness in his connection to us is what allows us to stay in relationship with him even though we mess up.

**2 Timothy 2:13** *if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.*

Moms are almost always seen as positive figures in the Bible. It is hard to think of a negative example of a Mother. And yet we don't have pictures of exactly what Moms do. **No examples**

of how they breastfeed, how they discipline, very little on how they interact with their children. Nothing of them doing arts and crafts. Mary is never seen doing finger painting with Jesus. I think the implication is that the ultimate apex of being a woman isn't being a Mother or else motherly duties would be illustrated in great detail. The ultimate apex of being a woman or a man is being a faithful follower of Christ who puts his or her head down and goes diligently and faithfully about the business that He assigns to her.

### 3) Faithful to Christ

The opposite of faithful is not doubt, its disobedience. A mother's faithfulness to her children is a reflection of her faithfulness to follow Jesus. This is especially important in a world full of people "deconstructing" their faith when things get difficult.

Mary wasn't just a woman who **provided the necessary ovaries** for Jesus to be born. She was a Mother who **did her job for all 33 years** of His life. And when He's gone she still does his job. You might think her job is to be a mother. No. Her job and a to be faithful. She was faithful to God before Jesus was born. She was faithful to God after Jesus was born and she was faithful to the move of God after Jesus died.

**Faithfulness is an endangered character quality.** Faithfulness is being present and hanging in there when it feels good and when it doesn't feel good. When it is working and when it isn't working. When you are in the majority and when you are in the minority. When you are affirmed and when you are criticized. When you have money and when you don't. When culture agrees with you and when culture persecuted you.

It seems like everyday I hear of someone new who has **deconstructed** their faith. Part of that is good. Many peoples faith has been built poorly. It includes a house of essential doctrines that are man made and not Jesus made. Many people have a faith that is only tied to their family of origin and not a Heavenly Father.

What bothers me is not when people deconstruct. What bothers me is when people deconstruct in a **public manner** in order to pull other people along with them. They can never say that Christianity got to hard for me. They can never say God was asking too much of me. They can never say, "I was bored and wanted a change." They never say there was something in the Bible I don't like. Instead, they point to perceived inconsistencies and how they are now smarter than they used to be and my implication smarter than people who are still holding on and moving forward in their faith.

Christianity hasn't all of a sudden become nonsensical. The challenges with the faith are the exact same ones today as they were 2,000 years ago. Do I want to deny myself? Do I want to make God first? Will I do so when I have very limited empirical lab worthy data?

There isn't any new archaeological find that is challenging the Bible. Nor is there any scientific breakthrough. That's why there are scientists, archaeologists, PHDs, brain surgeons and

billionaires who follow Jesus. It isn't that Christianity has become nonsensical. It is that many become unfaithful.

PEOPLE WHO ARE FAITHFUL HAVE THE X FACTOR

BLESSING BENEDICTION

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**Acts 1:13–14** *And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. 14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.*

Moms show us how Christ is faithful to save us.

*In every birth, a mother gives of herself for the sake of her child. So, because of the fall, motherhood not only reflects the generating love of God in creation, but also the regenerating love of Christ on the cross. Mothers embrace the curse so that we may be born, and Christ embraced the curse so that we may be reborn.” [DesiringGod.com](http://DesiringGod.com)*

**Isaiah 66:13** *As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.*

*Small disciplines repeated with consistency every day lead to great achievements gained slowly over time.” [John Maxwell](#)*

*There’s no way to be a perfect mother and a million ways to be a good one.” [Jill Churchill](#)*

### **A great example of faithfulness to Christ.**

Tabitha was a faithful disciple of Jesus. The power of Jesus raises her from the dead so she could continue her ministry work. Many moms need a resurrection in their spiritual, physical, family lives so they can continue their faithful work as mothers.

**2 Thessalonians 3:3** *But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.[c]* **4** *And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. 5 May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ*

**Acts 9:36** *Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas.[d] She was full of good works and acts of charity. 37 In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. 38 Since*

Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, "Please come to us without delay." **39** So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics<sup>[e]</sup> and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them. **40** But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. **41** And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then, calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. **42** And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. **43** And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.

#### **ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE:**

**Matthew 23:37** "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"

**Matthew 25:23** His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

**1 Corinthians 1:4** I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, **5** that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— **6** even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— **7** so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, **8** who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**1 Thessalonians 5:23** Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **24** He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

<https://www.regent.edu/journal/journal-of-biblical-perspectives-in-leadership/lydia-in-the-bible/>

*My mother is my root, my foundation. She planted the seed that I base my life on, and that is the belief that the ability to achieve starts in your mind."* [Michael Jordan](#)

*Doubt is not the opposite of faith, nor is it the same as unbelief. Doubt is a state of mind in suspension between faith and unbelief so that it is neither of them wholly and it is each only partly. The distinction is absolutely vital because it uncovers and deals with the first major misconception of doubt-the idea that we should be ashamed of doubting because doubt is a betrayal of faith and a surrender to unbelief. No misunderstanding causes more anxiety and brings such bondage to sensitive people in doubt. [Os Guinness "God in the Dark- The Assurance of Faith Beyond a Shadow of Doubt"](#)*

*What destroys faith is the disobedience that hardens into unbelief. [Os Guinness "God in](#)*

## **Crossroads Church Position on Women in Ministry**

### **Background**

The role of women in ministry inside the church has been debated for generations without resolution in the Body of Christ. Genuine believers filled with the same Spirit, following Jesus and having the same high convictions over the supremacy of scripture have come to different conclusions about how to interpret scriptures and, therefore, practice ministry in the Church. Crossroads respectfully acknowledges the full spectrum of belief on this issue and will strive to maintain unity. We believe the questions around “women in ministry” are a secondary issue to the advancement of the gospel itself, but that clarifying our position on this issue within our community will bring freedom to both men and women who want to serve the Lord in our midst. We understand that women have often been overlooked and underdeveloped in the Church and are committed to being a place where all Christ-followers can find the freedom to grow and fully mature in Christlikeness. We want to proactively help every man and woman realize the fullness and blessings that God has promised to them in Christ.

### **Our Convictions**

- Crossroads believes every human being is made in the image of God and that women and men are of equal worth and given equal ability to project God's image on earth (Gen 1:26-27). We reject any understanding of scripture or practice of ministry which devalues either gender.
- Crossroads believes that the order of creation established oneness, not hierarchy (Gen 2:24) and that man and woman were jointly given the command to rule and have dominion (Gen 1:28). The first indication of a hierarchical order between man and woman resulted from the entrance of sin into the world (Gen 3:16), so the subordination of woman to man does not reflect the ideal established in God's creation order. We recognize the interdependence of man and woman upon one another in dynamic oneness (1 Cor 11:11-12).
- Crossroads believes that our Triune God is made up of three distinct persons who are equal in value and operate as One God in perfect unity of essence and will. We believe that brothers and sisters in Christ are called to imitation of this ideal relationship in mutual submission and service, never lording power over or abusively forcing submission to another in the Body (Eph 5:1-21). Submission to authority in the church and culture is a Godly characteristic but authority is not limited to only men. Every person must always consider others above themselves as a reflection of Christ (Phil 2:3).



- Crossroads believes that all Christians - both female and male - have the Holy Spirit within them and therefore all have gifts to be used for ministry in the Church, the Body of Christ. The diversity of gifts is intended to lead to the wide variety of ministries necessary to maintain healthy functioning of the Church (1 Corinthians 12:1-31).
- Crossroads believes ministry callings should be based upon gifts and not gender. There is an absence of gender specification in any discussion of gifts in the New Testament (1 Cor 12:4-31; Eph 4:11). Though the Bible shows a generous and merciful God who is willing and able to acquiesce to work within imperfect cultures, we are committed to striving for this ideal we believe is presented in scripture that our identity in Christ - and not our gender- is primary (Gal 3:28).
- Crossroads believes that the specific restrictions upon leadership and speech of women in the early church was done in answer to or reflective of a specific, temporary, cultural consideration. These were wise and necessary in/for the churches being addressed (see scriptural references below) but not binding for all times and cultures.

### **Our Ministry Practice**

#### **On Women in Leadership:**

Women may hold positions of leadership at any level and type in Crossroads Church including service on the Spiritual Board of Directors and as Senior Pastor. Both women and men must only serve in pastoral leadership if they are called and gifted which must be affirmed and approved by the Board. All staff organizational leadership positions are open to both women and men.

#### **On Women Speaking, Preaching & Teaching:**

Women (and men alike) may speak or teach in any setting and to any audience at Crossroads. All individuals exercising any gift must operate under proper church authority; in line with ministry leadership and in recognition of the final authority of the Spiritual Board over how individual's gifts are best used within our community.

### **Specific Scripture References**

- **1 Corinthians 11:3.** Proper understanding of the headship ministry of Christ prevents an understanding of a hierarchical, boss-like authority relationship of man over women as some see in this passage. Christ's 'headship' is a radical, sacrificial servant-provider of life (Eph 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19). Though in English "head" refers to the positional authority of a boss or authoritative leader, it does not have that meaning in NT Greek. Of the hundreds of references in the New Testament to governmental, familial, military and even religious authorities, not one is ever designated as "head."

- **1 Corinthians 14:34-36.** These verses seem to quite severely cut off all speech of women in all churches despite their appearance in the same letter where Paul upheld public prayer and prophecy (authoritative speech) by women in churches (1 Cor 11:5) and did not limit gifts involving speech to only the male gender. There is not one clear and consistent understanding of these sections and verses: some argue that Paul's words are quoting the argument of the false teachers (as he does in other parts of the letter); some argue that these are simply outdated cultural practices; and yet others argue that it is a reinforcement of God's intentional design of men being meant to take authority over women and therefore women are to stay silent. We recognize a lack of consensus around this issue and seek to apply the fullness of scripture with wisdom in our context. Crossroads has not applied these scriptures so as to silence the teaching and/or all speech of all women in the Church. We believe doing so causes other interpretive conflicts and is inconsistent with gospel-based (and Paul-commended) freedom of participation in the life of the church.
- **1 Timothy 3:1-11.** We recognize Paul's words as the description of the character and the fruitful life of anyone truly qualified to lead in the church. Given the serious problems and disorder being caused in the Ephesian church (1 Tim 1:3-7) by false teachers, Paul restricted overseers/elders and deacons as offices for only married men. We do not view the list of qualities or the male gender (1 Tim 3:2-13) as exhaustive and/or restrictive in all circumstances and cultures. One could choose to interpret this passage as such and many do. However, to do so with consistency would also necessitate excluding not just women but also other categories of men, such as those single or widowed. Such a restrictive viewpoint would go against Paul's own status and recommendation for singleness for wholly devoted service of the Lord (1 Cor 7).
- **1 Timothy 2:11-15.** We recognize that restriction for a god-honoring purpose is an occasional necessity especially in the face of false/bad/confusing teaching. We agree that false teaching cannot be tolerated. As the context of this letter indicates, there were women speaking out of turn, as authoritative and/or teachers, who had not yet learned well enough to claim this distinction. We agree that no person should hold themselves up as an informed, authoritative teacher without accurately learning the Word of God. Paul's reference to Eve highlights this, as neither did Eve have the advantage of learning God's words directly. Due to this she should have deferred to the more directly knowledgeable person she had access to in Adam (Gen 2:16-17). The women in question should also defer and learn humbly underneath the more knowledgeable. In order to teach in our community, Crossroads holds male and female teachers to a high standard of accurately handling the Word, being called, gifted and living out the truth he/she teaches.

### **Practical Implications**

- We will continue to recognize and celebrate gender as an essential part of a human being's design. Gender is chosen by God and purposeful for our calling in the Kingdom of God.
- We will uphold equitable HR practices that ensure proper expectations, processes, and penalties.
- We will give equal pay between men and women when the position is equal, qualifications are equal and the produced fruit is equal.
- We will not tolerate any conscious or unconscious bias against women on staff (or via any suppliers).
- We will recognize differences between women and men that tend to lead to a higher percentages of certain gifts, skills and callings in each gender. However, in recognition of God's unique design of each individual, we will strive not to limit or communicate to either women or men that they should fit inside stereotypes of their gender.
- We love and celebrate singleness, marriage and parenthood alike, not holding out the fulfillment of womanhood as having a spouse or children but rather in following Christ.
- We will continue to encourage all men and all women in our church to be quick to listen and slow to speak when there are discussions about the experiences of those who are different than them (James 1:19-20).

### **Resources for individual study**

- *Across the Spectrum*, by Gregory Boyd & Paul Eddy
- *Beyond Sex Roles*, by Gilbert Bilezikian
- *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, by Wayne Grudem & John Piper
- *The Gender Agenda*, by Elisabeth Goddard & Clare Hendry
- *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, by Michelle Lee Barnewall
- Podcast <https://gravityleadership.com/podcast/026-women-men-2-scripture/>