

Introducing the Issue

Heavenly Father, the Bereans were commended for searching the Scriptures diligently, and after His resurrection Your Son opened the minds of the disciples to understand the Scriptures. Grant us a rich measure of Your Holy Spirit as we study Your word and bring us to a deeper knowledge of your truth; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen

1 Pastors, and the office in which they serve, are gifts of God to the church. Read Ephesians 4:7-13 to get a sense of how Christ has gifted His church. Note also what Peter says in 1 Peter 5:1-4. Here 'elders' (presbyters) is equivalent to pastors. Pastors do not serve under compulsion but willingly. Christ is the model.

2 There are two key texts that are especially relevant to the topic of who is qualified to be an ordained pastor. Read 1 Cor 14:33-38 and 1 Tim 2:11-15. Any credible discussion of the issue of ordination must address these Bible verses.

3 The author compares the debate over women's ordination to a chess match. Just as chess pieces are not all equal in a chess match the Bible passages employed in the ordination discussion are not all equal either. Some are more directly relevant than others. If you wanted to know what the Bible teaches about baptism you wouldn't look first at passages about Holy Communion. Discuss the importance of understanding the *relevant* texts for any topical study of the Bible.

4 One of the key passages the supporters of women's ordination claim is Galatians 3:28. Read Galatians 3:15-29, what is Paul's main concern in this section. Verse 26 says all believers are 'sons of God', why is this especially relevant to what Paul is saying? Does this section say anything directly about ordination or pastors in the church?

5 The claim is made that the texts that speak mostly directly to the issue (1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2) are no longer relevant. What are the dangers to this approach? What do the Scriptures say about themselves in 2 Tim 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:21? What does Paul say in his defence before Felix in Acts 24:14-16? How can we keep a clear conscience before God?

*God has spoken by his prophets,
spoken his unchanging Word,
each, from age to age proclaiming
God, the one, the righteous Lord.
Mid the world's despair and turmoil
one firm anchor holds us fast:
God is king, his throne eternal,
God the first, and God the last.*

(LHS 822, stanza 1)

