

A Biblical Response to the Draft Doctrinal Statement: The Call and Ordination of Both Men and Women to the Office of the Public Ministry (DDS)

(SUMMARY)

If we ask the question, “What does Scripture teach us about the office of the ministry?” we find that it teaches the following: (1) Christ chose the Twelve and Paul to serve as his Apostles, all of whom were men; (2) when the early church selected a replacement for Judas, the Apostle Peter insisted that this replacement could not simply be any eyewitness of the resurrection, such as Mary Magdalene, but needed to be a man (Acts 1:21–22); (3) Christ, through the Apostle Paul, then instructed the church to ordain men who fit certain God-given criteria to continue on the ministry of Christ’s word that was begun by the Apostles (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9); and (4) Christ specifically forbade women from carrying out the central function of the pastoral office, which is the authoritative preaching and teaching of Christ’s word within the church as it gathers for divine service (1 Cor 14:33b–38; 1 Tim 2:11–15).

The DDS, by endorsing Theses of Agreement VI, 1–9, acknowledges that the office of the ministry has been instituted by Christ as his gift to the church. Yet instead of then asking, “What does Christ teach us in Scripture about the office he has instituted, so that we can abide by it?” it seeks to deconstruct New Testament teaching, and to find loopholes in it that will allow for the ordination of women. Therefore it cannot be endorsed as a biblically-based doctrinal statement, as the following points show:

1. Whereas the DDS states that “The New Testament does not insist that those who hold the office [of the public ministry] must be male; they could also be female” (paragraph 21) ...

We respond: The New Testament (in 1 Corinthians 14:33b–38 and 1 Timothy 2:11 – 3:7) says the exact opposite. When it outlines the qualifications a person must have to be called to the pastoral office, it stresses that a pastor must be “able to teach,” and then prohibits women from doing the kind of teaching the office requires.

2. Whereas the DDS—in line with our culture today—treats male headship as if it is something that is akin to racism and slavery, and is inherently oppressive and misogynistic (see paragraph 17 and its commentary) ...

We respond: This reflects a failure to appreciate biblical teaching regarding servant headship.

3. Whereas the DDS uses much speculation regarding Paul’s motives and the cultural situation of his day to try to relativise Paul’s prohibition against women preaching and teaching in the church, and to say it only applied back then but not today ...

We respond: We do not need to speculate in this way. Instead, Paul tells us in Holy Scripture why he gave this prohibition. When we examine his reasons it is evident that both his reasons and the prohibition that flows from them still apply today.

4. Whereas the DDS lists many women who were involved in leadership roles in Israel and in the early church (paragraph 18) ...

We respond: It never demonstrates that any of these women were pastors. Unless these women were pastors, and were not serving in auxiliary roles instead (cf. Theses of Agreement VI, 9–10, which the DDS claims to uphold), their examples do not warrant the conclusion that women can be pastors.

5. Whereas the DDS says, “The fact that the twelve apostles whom Jesus commissioned were all male is descriptive of the preaching office at the time, but it is not prescriptive of the office for all time” (paragraph 4) ...

We respond: The Scriptures say the opposite. By prohibiting women from holding this office, and saying that this is a command of the Lord, Paul teaches us that it is Christ’s will for the preaching office to follow the pattern he set when he chose only men to be his Apostles.

6. Whereas the DDS argues that women can be ordained on the basis of (1) the creation of all people in the image of God (paragraph 3) and (2) the unity of all baptised believers as children of God (paragraphs 3 and 17) ...

We respond: The New Testament treats neither of these as sufficient by themselves to qualify a person for the ordained ministry.

7. Whereas the DDS suggests that for the LCA to ordain women would only entail a small change to its doctrine of ministry (paragraphs 1 and 2) ...

We respond: In reality it would radically alter it, by undermining its foundation in Christ’s word, and its purpose of serving Christ’s word.