

Lesson 16 — God’s Plan for Leadership and Order in the Local Church

Theme: Male leadership, women’s roles, man’s rebellion against God’s design, and modern perversions of church authority.

Goal: Show God’s pattern from Creation → Covenant History → Christ → the Local Church, and warn against the modern push to replace Scripture with culture.

Lesson Thesis

God designed the home and the church with **orderly, male-led, Scripture-governed leadership** for the good of His people. When men abandon leadership—or when churches redesign leadership using worldly models—God’s pattern is overturned and the church drifts into error.

Key Anchor Passages (NASB 1995)

CATEGORY	PRIMARY TEXTS	WHAT THEY ESTABLISH
Creation order	Genesis 2:18–24	Man formed first; woman created as helper suitable; marriage structure begins here
Fall’s distortion	Genesis 3:16	Sin produces role tension, conflict, and disorder
Headship principle	1 Corinthians 11:3, 7–9	Headship is rooted in creation, not culture
Women teaching/authority limits	1 Timothy 2:11–14	Prohibition grounded in Adam/Eve order

CATEGORY	PRIMARY TEXTS	WHAT THEY ESTABLISH
Male eldership	Titus 1:5–6; 1 Timothy 3:1–7	“Husband of one wife,” household leadership, proven oversight
Women’s honorable service	Titus 2:3–5; Romans 16:1–2	Essential work, godly influence, powerful ministry within God’s design
Assembly order	1 Corinthians 14:33–35	God is not the author of confusion; roles matter in worship
Elder oversight	Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17	Shepherd authority is real; members must respect it

1) God’s Plan and Reason for Male Leadership

A. Male leadership begins at Creation, not culture

Male leadership is not a human invention. It is rooted in God’s created order.

Creation pattern:

- Adam formed first (Genesis 2:7)
- Eve formed afterward as “a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:18)
- God built marriage under this design (Genesis 2:23–24)

Paul ties headship to Genesis:

- “The head of woman is man...” (1 Corinthians 11:3)
- “For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man” (1 Corinthians 11:8)
- “For indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake” (1 Corinthians 11:9)

Point: This is not “Roman culture.” This is **Creation order**.

B. Male leadership continues through God’s covenant history

Throughout Scripture, God consistently appointed men to carry covenant leadership responsibilities in His public work.

COVENANT ERA	PATTERN OF LEADERSHIP	EXAMPLES
Patriarchal	Male heads of households	Noah (Genesis 6–9), Abraham (Genesis 12–22), Job (Job 1:5)
Mosaic	Male covenant mediators and elders	Moses (Exodus 3–4), 70 elders (Numbers 11:16–17)
Priesthood	Male spiritual office	Aaron and sons (Exodus 28–29)
Kingship	Male rulers (Athaliah is a usurper)	Saul, David, Solomon; Athaliah (2 Kings 11)
Prophetic leadership	Predominantly male prophets	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.

Note: Women were honored and used by God, but covenant governance and public authority remained male.

C. Jesus did not reverse God’s leadership design

If God intended to overthrow male leadership, the arrival of Christ would have been the moment. Instead, the pattern is reinforced.

NEW COVENANT EXAMPLE	WHAT HAPPENED	WHY IT MATTERS
John the Baptizer	Male forerunner prophet	God continued the pattern of male covenant heralds

NEW COVENANT EXAMPLE	WHAT HAPPENED	WHY IT MATTERS
The Messiah	God sent His Son	Leadership and mediatorship expressed through male office
The Apostles	Twelve were men	Not an accident; a deliberate pattern
Acts 6 (a “women’s need” issue)	Seven men appointed	The church did not appoint women to governing authority
Elders in churches	Elders appointed in every church	Governance remains male and qualified

D. Eldership is God’s pattern for local church governance

Elders are not ceremonial leaders. They are **real overseers** accountable to God.

- “Be on guard... for all the flock... to shepherd the church of God” (Acts 20:28)
- “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls...” (Hebrews 13:17)
- “They had appointed elders for them in every church...” (Acts 14:23)
- “Appoint elders in every city...” (Titus 1:5)

Point: God’s plan is not “business leadership,” “CEO pastor,” or “committee church.” It is **qualified shepherds leading the flock** by God’s word.

Teaching Chart — Why God insists on male leadership

REASON	WHAT IT PROTECTS	WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IGNORED
Creation order establishes roles	Unity, clarity, stability	Confusion, resentment, role reversal

REASON	WHAT IT PROTECTS	WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IGNORED
Authority requires accountability	Shepherds answer to God	Power grabs and spiritual abuse
Leadership demands qualification	Proven character over charisma	Talent replaces holiness
Church order guards worship	Reverence and peace	Entertainment and innovation
Pattern protects women	Honor without burden	Women forced into roles God never gave

2) Women’s Roles: Honored, Essential, and God-Given

A. Equality of value does not mean sameness of role

Scripture teaches spiritual equality:

- “There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28)

But Galatians 3:28 speaks to **salvation and value**, not church authority structures.

B. Women have powerful, God-approved ministry

Godly women are never sidelined by Scripture. They are essential to the strength of the church and home.

Women’s ministry includes:

- Teaching younger women (Titus 2:3–5)
- Supporting the work of the saints (Romans 16:1–2)
- Hospitality and service (1 Timothy 5:9–10)

- Evangelistic influence in the home (1 Peter 3:1–2)
- Prayer, modesty, reverence, and spiritual strength (1 Timothy 2:9–10)

Titus 2:3–5 is not “demeaning.”

It is **strategic**, protecting the home and forming godly generations.

C. What women are not authorized to do (in the assembly / over men)

The limitation is not about intelligence or worth. It is about God’s order.

- “But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man...” (1 Timothy 2:12)
- Paul grounds it in creation order: “For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.” (1 Timothy 2:13)
- Assembly order principle: “As in all the churches... the women are to keep silent in the churches...” (1 Corinthians 14:33–35)

Point: A gift does not become authority.

A talent does not cancel a command.

Teaching Chart — “Can she?” vs “May she?” (Authority vs ability)

QUESTION	WORLD’S LOGIC	SCRIPTURE’S LOGIC
“Can she lead?”	Ability decides	Authority is assigned by God
“Is she gifted?”	Gifts override roles	Gifts must operate within God’s order
“Is this effective?”	Pragmatism rules	Scripture rules
“Is it fair?”	Equality = same functions	Equality = equal value, distinct roles

3) Man's Desire to Upend God's Plan

A. The rebellion is ancient: the Fall distorted roles

- “Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” (Genesis 3:16)

Sin brings **competition instead of complement**.

It produces:

- men who abdicate
- women who seize authority
- families and churches that fracture

B. Male failure is a root cause of modern role confusion

When men refuse spiritual responsibility, a vacuum forms—and someone fills it.

Common symptoms of male abdication:

- Passive husbands and fathers
- Spiritually silent men in worship and study
- No qualified men for elders
- Weak doctrinal backbone
- Churches run by personalities, not shepherds

God's answer is not “replace men with women.”

God's answer is **raise godly men**.

Teaching Chart — Abdication vs. Rebellion

SIN PATTERN	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	RESULT
Male abdication	Men won't lead, won't serve, won't grow	Disorder, drift, and leadership collapse
Female usurpation	Women pressured into authority roles	Conflict with Scripture and conscience
Congregational pragmatism	"We need someone"	Pattern replaced with convenience
Cultural compromise	"Times have changed"	Authority shifts from Bible to society

4) Modern Perversions of God's Plan (How Churches Drift)

A. The big lie: "Whatever works must be right"

Modern religion constantly argues:

- "Women can do it better."
- "We need progress."
- "This will reach more people."
- "We must adapt."

But Scripture warns against reshaping worship and authority by human wisdom:

- "In vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." (Matthew 15:9)
- "Do not go beyond what is written..." (1 Corinthians 4:6)
- "Whoever goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God..." (2 John 9)

B. Elder selection is often where drift begins

When leadership is unqualified or politicized, the church becomes vulnerable.

Common modern corruptions:

1. Selecting elders by popularity, money, or personality
2. Ignoring the “husband of one wife” and household qualifications
3. Treating elders as corporate board members
4. Elevating preachers into “CEO pastors”
5. Letting committees override shepherds
6. Installing leaders who will tolerate innovation

The result is predictable: drift into unauthorized practices.

C. Case Study Framework (Use this to teach without gossip)

(Use this as a teaching model when referencing situations like “Elder Selection... engaging a church in a call,” etc.)

STEP OF DRIFT	WHAT HAPPENS	WHAT IT PRODUCES
1. Weak eldership standards	“We just need men in office”	Unqualified oversight
2. Fear of controversy	Leaders avoid correction	Sin tolerated
3. Pragmatism replaces Scripture	“We must grow”	Innovation welcomed
4. Worship reshaped	Entertainment elements increase	Instrumental music introduced
5. Unity redefined	“Let’s partner with everyone”	Ecumenical compromise
6. Identity collapses	“Doctrine divides”	Truth silenced

D. Two major perversions connected to leadership failure

1) Instrumental music as a symptom of authority drift

When leaders treat Scripture as flexible, worship changes first.

- God requires worship “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24)
- The church is told to sing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16)
- Additions are not harmless when God specifies the action

Leadership failure turns a clear pattern into “optional tradition.”

2) Ecumenical compromise as a symptom of courage failure

When leaders stop guarding the flock, doctrine gets blurred for the sake of peace.

- “Contend earnestly for the faith...” (Jude 3)
- “Hold fast the faithful word...” (Titus 1:9)
- “Mark them... and turn away...” (Romans 16:17)

False unity always costs truth.

Teaching Chart — “How leadership drift changes everything”

WHEN LEADERS ARE...	THE CHURCH BECOMES...	THE OUTCOME
Scripture-bound shepherds	Stable and protected	Growth with holiness
Weak and people-pleasing	Politicized and fearful	Drift into compromise
Corporate-minded managers	Program-driven institution	Worldly identity
Passive and silent	Doctrinally fragile	Innovation multiplies

5) Guardrails: How to Keep God's Pattern Without Abusing It

A. Male leadership must be servant leadership

Headship is not tyranny. It is responsibility.

- “Shepherd... not lording it over... but proving to be examples” (1 Peter 5:2–3)
- “The greatest among you shall be your servant.” (Matthew 23:11)

A biblical man leads like Christ:

- with truth
 - with sacrifice
 - with gentleness
 - with courage
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B. Women must not be hindered from legitimate good works

It is sinful to “protect male leadership” by suppressing women’s rightful service.

Scripture honors women who serve powerfully:

- Phoebe (Romans 16:1–2)
- Older women teaching younger women (Titus 2:3–5)
- Women laboring in the Lord (Philippians 4:3)

The goal is not limitation for limitation’s sake.

The goal is **obedience with fullness of usefulness**.

Teaching Chart — Balanced obedience

ERROR ON ONE SIDE	ERROR ON THE OTHER SIDE	BIBLICAL BALANCE
Women pushed into authority roles	Women silenced from all service	Women serve fully in God-approved roles
Male domination	Male passivity	Servant headship with courage
Pragmatism (“what works”)	Fear-driven restriction	Scripture-driven confidence

Conclusion: What This Lesson Demands

1) Men must rise to their God-given responsibility

The crisis is not “women wanting leadership.”

The deeper crisis is **men abandoning leadership**.

2) Women must embrace God’s design without shame

Submission is not inferiority.

It is **strength under God’s authority**.

3) The church must refuse modern redesigns

The church belongs to Christ, not the spirit of the age.

- “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment.” (1 Corinthians 14:37)
- “Hold fast the pattern of sound words...” (2 Timothy 1:13)

Discussion / Teaching Prompts (Class-Ready)

QUESTION	PURPOSE
What proof shows male leadership is rooted in creation, not culture?	Anchor authority in Genesis + Paul
Why does ability never equal authorization?	Expose pragmatism
How does male abdication create pressure for role reversal?	Diagnose the real problem
What leadership failures typically precede worship innovations?	Show cause-and-effect
How can a church honor women fully without breaking God's pattern?	Prevent extremes

Memory Verses (Choose 1–2)

- 1 Corinthians 11:3
- 1 Timothy 2:12–13
- Titus 1:5–6
- Acts 20:28
- Titus 2:3–5

Appendix — A Biblical Response to the “Women Pastors” Argument

(Context + clear Scripture-based answer)

Why this keeps coming up

In recent years, a number of writers have tried to expand women's public leadership in the church by **redefining terms** instead of submitting to the plain teaching of Scripture.

A common tactic is this:

- Admit the Bible restricts **elders/overseers** to qualified men (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1).
- Still allow women to carry the **title "pastor"** by claiming "pastor" is only a *gift* and not an *office*.
- Then argue a woman can be a "pastor" as long as she is not an "elder."

That argument sounds careful.

It is not biblical.

It is a word game designed to keep a modern practice while pretending nothing has changed.

The core claim (and where it breaks)

The claim goes like this:

1. "Elders must be men."
2. "Elders shepherd (pastor) the flock."
3. "But not all pastors are elders."
4. "Therefore women can be pastors (just not elders)."

The problem is **#3 is never established by Scripture**.

The Bible never creates an independent "pastor" category that is separate from congregational oversight.

Shepherding ("pastoring") is tied to oversight in the New Testament

Acts 20:17, 28

Paul calls the **elders** of the church (v.17). Then he tells those same men:

- The Holy Spirit made you **overseers**
- To **shepherd** the church

So Scripture shows one leadership group described with connected terms:

- **Elders** (maturity/role)
- **Overseers** (oversight/work)
- **Shepherding** (pastoral duty)

There is no second group called “pastors” floating outside that structure.

1 Peter 5:1–2

Peter speaks to the **elders** and commands them:

- **shepherd the flock**
- **exercise oversight**

Same pattern again:

shepherding + oversight = elder responsibility

Not: “elders do oversight, but other pastors do shepherding.”

Ephesians 4:11 does not authorize women as “pastors” in the assembly

Some appeal to Ephesians 4:11:

“He gave... shepherds and teachers...”

And then argue:

- “Shepherd” is a *gift*, not an office
- therefore women can be shepherds/pastors

That argument fails for two reasons.

Gifts never cancel commandments

Even if “shepherding” is a gift, **a gift never overrules God’s order.**

A person may be gifted in speech, knowledge, influence, leadership, and care—yet still not be authorized to take roles Scripture restricts.

The work overlaps with teaching and authority

Shepherding in Scripture is not “friendly encouragement.” It includes spiritual guidance, correction, and direction. And Scripture directly addresses authority and teaching over men in the gathered church:

- **“I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man.”** (1 Timothy 2:12)

You cannot claim “no authority” while handing out a title whose recognized meaning is authority.

“Pastor is just a title” is dishonest in real life

In modern English, “pastor” does not mean:

- helper
- counselor
- caring woman in ministry
- women’s teacher
- children’s director

In the real world, “pastor” means:

- recognized spiritual leader
- shepherding authority
- teaching role
- doctrinal responsibility
- congregational influence

So when someone says, “Women can be pastors,” what most people hear is:

“Women can lead the church.”

That is exactly why the rebranding happens—to normalize what Scripture restricts.

Scripture honors women without violating God's design

God never treats restrictions as insults.

Women are honored as:

- co-heirs of grace (1 Peter 3:7)
- fellow workers in the gospel (Philippians 4:2–3)
- teachers of good (Titus 2:3–5)
- servants in vital works (Romans 16)
- faithful examples throughout Scripture

But **equal worth does not mean identical role.**

- “There is neither male nor female... in Christ” (Galatians 3:28) speaks to **salvation standing**, not church authority structure.
- The same apostle who wrote Galatians 3 also wrote 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14.

No contradiction exists unless someone forces one.

“Women prophesied” does not prove women preached in the assembly

Yes, women prophesied (Acts 2:18; Acts 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:5).

That does not automatically mean:

- public teaching over men in the assembly
- congregational leadership
- authoritative preaching role

“Prophecy” can include praise, exhortation, comfort, instruction—and the context determines setting and limits.

Paul's restriction remains:

- Women are not to teach or exercise authority over men (1 Timothy 2:12)

- Women are to keep silent in the authoritative judging/commanding function of the assembly (1 Corinthians 14:33–35)

So any use of “prophecy” must harmonize with those commands, not override them.

“Phoebe was a deacon” does not prove women held office authority

Romans 16 calls Phoebe a **servant** (*diakonos*).

That word often means “servant” without implying official office, unless context demands it.

Calling her a servant/helper does not make her:

- an overseer
- a preacher
- a leader over men

Helping does not equal ruling.

“Junia was an apostle” is not a solid foundation

Romans 16:7 is debated on:

- the gender of the name
- the meaning of “among the apostles”
- the use of “apostle” in a broader “messenger” sense

Even if one argued “Junia” was female, it still would not overturn:

- 1 Timothy 2:12
- elder qualifications being male (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1)

One unclear reference does not erase multiple plain passages.

The biblical bottom line

The New Testament does not support the modern separation:

- “Elders are men, but pastors can be women.”

That distinction is imported, not taught.

In Scripture:

- shepherding is tied to congregational oversight
- the office of elder/overseer is restricted to qualified men
- authoritative teaching and leadership over men in the assembly is not given to women

So the push for “women pastors” is not restoring New Testament language.

It is reshaping New Testament order.

The right solution: obey Scripture and use honest language

If a woman serves faithfully in:

- teaching children
- teaching other women
- counseling
- hospitality
- evangelism in proper settings
- works of mercy and ministry support

Call it what Scripture calls it:

- service
- teaching
- laboring in the gospel
- good works
- discipleship

But do not attach an authority-loaded title (“pastor”) to bypass the boundaries God established.

God's design is not oppression.

It is order—and it is good.

When the church keeps God's order:

- men lead as humble servants, not tyrants
- women flourish in powerful, meaningful kingdom labor
- the church remains faithful, not fashionable

That is the biblical response.
