

Exploring Scripture: Women & Eldership - Session 1

Welcome to our Exploring Scripture Together groups! These gatherings are designed to be spaces of formation and encouragement where we open God's Word together, seeking wisdom and understanding about important matters in our church life. Our primary purpose is to learn directly from Scripture, allowing God's voice to guide our discussions. As we study together, we'll practice listening carefully to one another, honoring different perspectives while maintaining unity in Christ.

This is an opportunity not just to grow in biblical knowledge, but to deepen our love for one another as a church family, modeling how Christians can explore challenging topics with both conviction and kindness. Through respectful dialogue and prayerful reflection, we trust that the Holy Spirit will lead us toward greater wisdom and discernment as we seek God's direction for our community.

How to use this guide

This guide is a tool to help you reflect on some key passages of scripture relating to our area of discernment and tie them to the big story the bible is telling. Each week that we meet in our groups we'll be discussing several passages so it will be really helpful to have read those passages beforehand.

In addition, the reflection questions in this guide provide more of a deep dive you can opt to take outside our time together in our groups. **Participating in a group does not require completing all reflection, but as an encouragement, the more you engage the more you will get out of this experience.**

Our church really values the authority of scripture and we hope to grow in our love and understanding of it through these groups. As we go we hope to demonstrate some good principles of Bible reading. [Check out this document for some good tips on reading the Bible.](#)

Session 1: Creation, Fall, Restoration and God's Design for the Church

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
Creation, Fall, Restoration and God's Design for the Church	Women Breaking the Mold - Called by God Throughout Scripture	Paul's Letters - Understanding Women's Roles in the Early Church	Elders in the Early Church & Discernment

Prayer

Dear God, we thank you for the gift of your word and how you speak to us through it. We ask you to grant us wisdom and discernment as we read, meditate, and discuss with others. Make our hearts soft and teachable, and as we do this together help us grow in love for one another and in love for you. Amen.

Reading

Genesis 1-3 (Main texts this week 1:26-31; 2:18-25; 3:1-20)
Joel 2:28-29
Acts 2:17-21
Ephesians 5:18-6:9

Creation

Read Genesis 1:26-31

In Genesis 1, we find a breathtaking account of creation. In it God creates order and life day by day. The sun, moon, stars, planets, plants of every kind, and all kinds of animals are spoken into existence by God. When it comes time to create humanity, the author of Genesis changes the rhythm of the story, and these changes are significant.

How is the creation of humankind similar to and different from the creation of everything else?

What does it mean for humanity to be made in the image of God? If you're uncertain, imagine you are an artist or engineer creating a masterpiece. If you described it as "made in the image of yourself or someone else, what might you mean by that?

This first chapter in the Bible tells us that both women and men are made in the image of God. Why is this important for us to know? Do you think this should make a difference in how women and men live and do ministry together?

Sermons for reflection

[A Fitting Image - Genesis 1:26-31](#)

Read Genesis 2:18-25

Genesis 2:18-20 says there is a problem. What was the problem and why was it a problem?

In his sermon on this passage, Bobby explained the term 'ezer kenegdo' in vs 18, which refers to Eve. This is often simply translated 'helper' but contains more nuanced meaning than we might at first realize. In other places in scripture an Ezer is a strong and powerful ally, usually in a military setting, and the majority of times it is a reference to the help that God gives when God acts as our strength, our protector, or our rescuer. Kenegdo literally means "against" or "corresponding to". Put together with Ezer this shows us that woman was created to be a corresponding strength, the type of helper it was not good for man to be without - a strong counterpart - bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh.

How does this explanation of the phrase *ezer kenegdo* enhance your understanding of Genesis 2?

How do vs24-25 sum up the original relationship between man and woman in the creation story?

How would you describe God's design for humanity from the creation story in Genesis 1 and 2? How would you describe the ideal relationship between man and woman?

Sermons for reflection

[The Missing Piece - Genesis 2:18-25](#)

[The Marriage of Heaven and Earth - Genesis 2:18-25](#)

Fall

Read Genesis 3:1-20

Together man and woman disobey God in the Garden of Eden and together they face difficulties as a result. What are the implications of their disobedience? How specifically does shame affect the relationship between man and woman in Genesis 3?

Genesis 3:7 mentions that 'the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked' leading them to cover themselves. How does this new awareness and shame contrast with their relationship in Genesis 2:25? What might this tell us about how the fall damaged intimacy and partnership?

Bobby explained how Genesis 3:13-19 is a poem that sheds light on the Genesis story. And, that it is a lament - the first lament in the Bible. What is God lamenting?

Genesis 3:16-19 has been interpreted in different ways throughout church history. Some see v16-19 as prescriptive, meaning that God is prescribing or ordaining the rule of men as the proper order after the fall. Others see it as descriptive, meaning that God is lamenting the way men will misuse power over women as a consequence of the fall. Practice explaining the story of the Bible - creation, fall, restoration - from both perspectives.

Sermons for Reflection

[Healing Shame - Genesis 2:24-3:13](#)

[God's Lament - Genesis 3:14-19](#)

[A Lament for the Ages - Genesis 3:14-19](#)

Restoration

In Joel chapters 1 & 2 we read of a world in ruins and filled with mourning, a world scarred by the increasing effects of sin on the world. Halfway through chapter 2, God offers compassion and a promise to bring restoration - to push back the powers of evil and to bring overflowing blessing again.

As the blessings flow and restoration comes to the land we get the words of Joel 2:28-29 as a reminder and a promise: a reminder of the creation order, and a promise for a future when that order is restored.

In Joel's time, the Spirit's empowerment was typically associated with specific leadership roles like prophets, priests, and kings. When Joel prophesies that God will pour out His Spirit on 'all flesh' including both sons and daughters, male and female servants, he's describing something radical and inclusive that points back to creation while looking forward to restoration.

Remembering the creation story, what did God's Spirit initially empower men and women to do? How does that help you understand why Joel 2 is so hopeful?

What does the pouring out of the Spirit on both men and women say about God's plan to restore humanity?

Joel's vision is quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:17-21 to describe what he is witnessing. Why do you think he chose to share Joel's vision? How was Peter connecting the reminder and promise of Joel to the newly forming church at Pentecost? How would this help form an identity for the early church?

In both Joel and Acts, the Spirit empowers both men and women to prophesy. Prophets speak God's message with authority. How have you seen this to be true? How might this spiritual empowerment of both men and women relate to questions of leadership and ministry roles in the church? What does it suggest about how God's restoration addresses the consequences described in Genesis 3:16?

Creation, Fall, Restoration and God's Design Applied in Ephesians 5

We have been following a pattern across the big story of the Bible. Now, let's look at how it connects with the work of restoration going on in the early church.

Read Ephesians 5:18-6:9

Household codes were a common and recognized part of the Greco-Roman world at this time. They reinforced the absolute authority of the male head of household over his wife, children, and slaves. These codes sought to maintain social order through clear hierarchies. Paul adopts the language and structure of this form and speaks into it the story of restored creation. He uses something from the culture but transforms it with the countercultural message of the gospel. This is seen particularly in how he addresses those traditionally seen as subordinate and in the responsibilities he places on those in positions of authority.

Paul begins by inviting Christians to be full of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), inviting you to connect your meditation on Genesis 2, Joel 2, and Acts 2. In the terms of those passages, what does it mean to be full of the Spirit? How does that help frame what comes next in the passage? (check Bobby's helpful sermon below on this theme!)

As you look at this section, reflect on the purpose of 5:21. How might this tie together the themes of creation, restoration, and their application in household life? How might this verse inform how we engage in this process of corporate discernment together?

In Ephesians 5:31-32, Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 about a man leaving his parents and being united with his wife. He calls this 'a profound mystery' that refers to Christ and the church. What is the 'mystery'?

What new expectations does Paul place on husbands that would have been surprising to his original audience? They were certainly countercultural. If you were an original recipient of this letter, how would you receive these instructions?

How does this passage compare to Genesis 3? In what ways does this passage push back on the destructive power of shame?

Christians have understood Paul's instructions in Ephesians 5 in different ways. Some see it as establishing distinct roles where husbands have leadership responsibility and wives have a complementary supportive role. Others see it as describing mutual submission expressed in different ways according to their context, opportunity, and gifting. What evidence within this passage might support each perspective? How do both views connect to our creation-fall-restoration framework? (Answer for both!)

Sermon for Reflection

[The Spirit Filled Family of God - Ephesians 5:18-6:9](#)

Reflect

Can you think of an example of a partnership between men and women that worked especially well? What unique strengths did each person bring to the table? How did working together make them more effective than they would have been on their own?

Reflect on your own relationships (whether marriage, friendship, ministries, or work partnerships). When have you experienced the blessing of God's gift of partnership between men and women? When have you noticed effects of the fall? How have you experienced or witnessed restoration?

How might our understanding of creation, fall, and restoration influence how we structure our ministry teams and leadership functions in our church? What practical steps might help us better reflect God's design for partnership between men and women?

As we consider potential changes to our constitution regarding women serving as elders, what principles from this particular study seem most relevant to you? What questions remain that we should continue to explore together?