

The title of this morning's sermon is, *"Male Leadership in the Bible is God's Pattern (Even with Deborah)."*

On Sunday mornings we have been working our way through Luke's Gospel verse-by-verse, which we will continue doing next week, but this morning the elders decided to pause the study in Luke's Gospel for two reasons...

First, the SBC, or Southern Baptist Convention, is the largest Protestant denomination in the United States. If for no other reason than that we should pay attention to what happens within the SBC. This past week the Annual Meeting and Pastors' Conference was held from June 11th through 14th. The two main issues were the election of the next president and the issue of female pastors.

ChurchLeaders.com wrote, *"Among the most significant events from the [conference] were those pertaining to women in church leadership."*

Just yesterday I was listening to The Christian Worldview with David Wheaton. David had Mike Stone, the man running against Bart Barber for the presidency of the SBC, on the show to discuss the issue of female pastors. He said, *"Females being pastors [was] the front and center issue at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting."*

Heath Lambert, who many of us know as the previous pastor of ACBC (the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors), wrote, *"The issue garnering the most attention [at] the [conference] was the [issue] of female pastors."*

I could give you plenty of other quotes, but you get the point that the major topic at this year's conference was, if I say it simply: *"Can women be pastors?"*

Bringing this topic front and center was Rick Warren, because he decided to install women as pastors at his church, Saddleback.

Heath Lambert wrote, and please listen to this...

*"No one knew for sure how the vote would go until the meeting happened, but all doubt was removed when delegates voted to uphold the removal of Saddleback from the SBC by a vote of 88%. That very high number is even more amazing when you consider that the vote removed what had been the largest church in the SBC, led by the most famous pastor in America."*

I disagree: I think John MacArthur is the most famous pastor in America, but anyway, Dr. Lambert continues...

*"Add to that vote the fact that the SBC overwhelmingly approved amendments to the constitution and the BFM to clarify our opposition to female pastors, and the conclusion is clear."*

The BFM, or Baptist Faith and Message, is essentially the SBC's Statement of Faith. Many churches use the BFM as their Statement of Faith.

So, the SBC amended their constitution and the BFM to clearly state their position that women should not be pastors.

Dr. Lambert continued...

*"Our convention has rejected what is popular in favor of what is true. That is an encouraging sign for the future."*

End quote. I wanted to share this last part, because we see so many discouraging things happening with egalitarianism and feminism in the church. I agree with Dr. Lambert that this is very encouraging.

The second reason the elders and I decided to interrupt our study in Luke and preach this sermon today is we thought: What better Sunday than Father's Day!

So let's get into it...

Because I didn't become a Christian until my early twenties, growing up I wasn't taught many differences between men's and women's roles and responsibilities. Aside from the obvious, such as not going into the bathroom of the wrong gender or playing on the opposite gender's sports team—two things that our world is tragically getting wrong today—I didn't see men and women being treated much differently from each other.

This was even the case when I went through ROTC and then became an Army officer. Except for a few differences, such as lower requirements on the physical fitness tests, I didn't see men and women facing different expectations.

But even though I wasn't a Christian at the time, there was a nagging suspicion that men, versus women, should lead. You probably have this thought in the back of your mind too.

Why is that?

Because, as Scripture teaches, God created men to lead, and this brings us to lesson one...

### Lesson One: We see the pattern of male leadership throughout the Old Testament.

The pattern of male leadership began at creation and is maintained throughout the Old Testament.

Just take your minds to the Old Testament:

- There were patriarchs instead of matriarchs.
- The tribes of Israel were named after men.
- God wanted priests from the tribe of Levi instead of priestesses.
- God appointed kings instead of queens.
- God made all his covenants with men, and then the covenants were named after the men. For example, the covenants were with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus.

So why do we see examples of female leadership in the Old Testament, such as queens, prophetesses, and at least one judge? Are these examples of rebellion against God's design, or is there another explanation?

To answer this, let's look at each individually.

First, queens.

The Old Testament mentions three prominent queens, and they fall into two categories: evil and good.

Can anyone guess the two evil queens?

Jezebel and her daughter, Athaliah.

Jezebel and Athaliah were evil women who seized control and became tyrannical leaders:

- Jezebel instituted the worship of the false god Baal across Israel and persecuted followers of Yahweh.
- Athaliah murdered her grandchildren upon the death of her son and then seized the throne of Judah.

Clearly, neither woman serves as a good example.

Any guesses for the good queen in the Old Testament?

Esther!

Esther stands in contrast to Jezebel and Athaliah. We see throughout her life that she supported male leadership through her submission first to her adopted father, Mordecai, and then to her husband, the king of Persia.

God actually used her submission, versus her rebellion, to her husband, the king of Persia, to save her people, the Jews.

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Let's talk about priestesses...

When priestesses are mentioned, they were part of evil pagan religions such as the worship of Astarte or Baal.

There were no godly priestesses to follow, because under the Mosaic covenant, only men could be priests. The reason only men could be priests is they were the teachers, and God wanted men as the teachers when it came to teaching groups containing men and women...

**Leviticus 10:11 [The priests] may teach Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken.**

Wayne Grudem is the cofounder of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, and he wrote...

*“Think of the Bible as a whole, from Genesis to Revelation. Where is there one example in the entire Bible of a woman publicly teaching an assembled group of God's people? There is none.”*

God didn't want women teaching men, so he couldn't have female priests.

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Let's talk about prophetesses...

While there are no biblical examples of women publicly teaching men and women, women could be prophetesses, because it was not a leadership position, and it did not involve teaching men.

John Piper and Wayne Grudem are the authors of *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. In the book they wrote...

*“In the Old Testament some women were prophets, but never priests [because] the priests had the more settled and established positions of leadership in Israel. Prophecy is a different kind of gift from teaching, and when women functioned as prophets they did so with a demeanor and attitude that supported male leadership. Women who had the gift of prophecy did not exercise it in a public forum as male prophets did. The reason for this is that such a public exercise of authority would contradict male headship.”* End quote.

If we briefly consider the two prominent prophetesses in the Old Testament, we can see how their ministries not only didn't conflict with male leadership but supported it.

The first is Moses's sister Miriam. Please turn to **Exodus 15**.

After Israel crossed the Red Sea, Moses led the nation in a song of praise in **Exodus 15:1-19**.

Then Miriam did something similar, but look at the important difference...

**Exodus 15:20 Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and ALL THE WOMEN WENT OUT AFTER HER with timbrels and with dances. 21 And Miriam answered them: ‘Sing to the Lord...’”**

Notice Miriam only led the women in singing, as opposed to leading both women and men as her brother Moses had done.

So Miriam was a prophetess who led...only women.

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Conversely, consider what happened when Miriam joined Aaron in challenging Moses’s leadership...and I just want you to notice the plural words revealing they committed the same sin...

**Numbers 12:1 MIRIAM AND AARON SPOKE AGAINST MOSES...2 And THEY SAID, “Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through US also?” And the Lord heard it.**

Apparently, they thought they should have some of Moses’s authority. In response, God quickly called the people of Israel to the tabernacle of meeting, appeared in the pillar of cloud, rebuked Aaron and Miriam, defended Moses, and gave Miriam leprosy for rebelling against God’s appointed leader (**Numbers 12:4-10**).

After Moses interceded for Miriam, her leprosy was cleansed (**Numbers 12:13-15**).

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Let’s fast-forward almost one thousand years to the other prominent prophetess: Huldah. While Miriam lived during the wilderness wanderings, Huldah lived during the reign of one of Judah’s greatest kings: Josiah.

When Josiah restored the temple the Law was discovered. When it was read before Josiah, he was grieved at how far his nation had strayed from following God. He tore his clothes and sent messengers to **inquire of the Lord (2 Kings 22:13)**.

Those messengers went to Huldah, and listen to part of the verses...

**2 Kings 22:13 [Josiah said,] “Go, inquire of the Lord for me...concerning the [Law] that has been found. For great is the wrath of the Lord...against us.” 14 So [the messengers] went to Huldah the prophetess...15 And she said to them, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘Tell the man who sent you to me, 16 Thus says the Lord...**

I won’t read her whole message, but she passed God’s message along to the messengers, and then here’s the end of it...

**2 Kings 20:20 [King Josiah]...your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring upon this place.” And THEY BROUGHT BACK WORD TO THE KING.**

The significance of Huldah’s response is that she did not publicly proclaim God’s Word. Rather, she shared God’s message with the messengers and they took it back to Josiah. She exercised her prophetic ministry in a way that did not obstruct, but instead, supported male leadership.

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Numerous other prophetesses are in the Bible revealing this role was not an anomaly:

- **Judges 4:4** says Deborah was a prophetess...and we will talk more about her in a moment
- **Isaiah 8:3** says the wife of Isaiah the prophet was a prophetess
- **Luke 2:36** says Anna, who spoke about Jesus’s birth in the temple, was a prophetess
- **Acts 21:9** says the four daughters of Philip the evangelist were prophetesses

But in each case, like Huldah, there is no record of these women having the public teaching ministries of their male counterparts.

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Other women in the Bible are not called prophetesses but are recorded as prophesying:

- **1 Samuel 2:1-10** records Hannah, the mother of Samuel, prophesying
- **Luke 1:39-45** records Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, prophesying
- **Luke 1:46-55** records Mary, the mother of Jesus, prophesying

But in every instance, the women prophesied under the headship of a husband or father or, in the case of the widow Anna, the temple's male leadership.

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In discussions about male leadership, Deborah is often the first example brought up to support female leadership. For this reason, her example is worth looking at more closely.

Judges were Israel's primary rulers for almost three-and-a-half centuries. They also commanded armies, making them some of the strongest leaders in Scripture.

So why did Deborah serve as judge?

Let's try to answer this question, and it brings us to Lesson Two...

**Lesson Two: Deborah supports male leadership because (Part One) there's no mention of Deborah being appointed by God.**

Please turn to **Judges 3**.

Throughout the book of Judges, as men rise to leadership, we read verses that confirm they were chosen or empowered by God. Look at **Judges 3:9**...

**Judges 3:9** But when the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, **THE LORD RAISED UP A DELIVERER** for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

Look a few verses later at **Judges 3:15**...

**Judges 3:15** Then the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, and **THE LORD RAISED UP FOR THEM A DELIVERER**, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man. The people of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab.

This pattern continues:

- **Judges 6:14** The Lord [said to Gideon], "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel...Have I not sent you?"
- **Judges 11:29** The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah.
- **Judges 13:24** Samson...grew and the Lord blessed him. **25** And the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him.

There's this confirmation from God that he specifically appointed the judge for the role.

But with Deborah, there is no indication God appointed her to that role. Look at **Judges 4:4** to see how we meet her...

**Judges 4:4** Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

When we are introduced to Deborah, we read that she is female, and what is missed in the English translations of the Bible is a NEGATIVE emphasis that appears in the original Hebrew text.

In *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth*, Wayne Grudem writes...please listen to this...

*“Judges 4:4 suggests amazement at the unusual nature of the situation in which a woman actually has to judge Israel, because it piles up a string of redundant words to emphasize that Deborah is a woman. Translating the Hebrew text literally, the verse says, “Deborah, a woman, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she was judging Israel at the time.” Something is abnormal, something is wrong—there are no men to function as judge! This impression is confirmed when we read of Barak’s timidity and the rebuke he receives as well as the loss of glory he could have received.”* End quote.

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The next part of lesson two...

**Lesson Two: Deborah supports male leadership because (Part Two) her ministry was private versus public.**

Look at **Judges 4:5**...

**Judges 4:5 She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment.**

The people approached her privately. Just like with Huldah and other prophetesses, she did not publicly teach the Word of God. Rather, Deborah is another example of a woman limited to private and individual instruction.

Even when Deborah called for Barak...

**Judges 4:6 She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali and said to him...**

She spoke to him privately.

The next part of lesson two...

**Lesson Two: Deborah supports male leadership because (Part Three) she encouraged Barak to lead.**

Let’s note some key phrases in **verse 6**...

**Judges 4:6a She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali and said to him, “Has not the Lord, the God of Israel, commanded YOU,**

Deborah is not giving Barak an order. Instead, as a prophetess, she received a word from God and passed it along to Barak, confirming what he already should have known...that God commanded him to lead the army!

I believe for anyone being honest with the text, this verse alone settles the debate: Deborah told Barak that God **COMMAND**ED him to lead! It was an order from God for him, not Deborah, to be in charge.

**Judges 4:6b ‘Go, GATHER YOUR MEN at Mount Tabor, taking 10,000 from the people of Naphtali and the people of Zebulun.**

This is significant because Deborah was judge at the time. She was in the position typically occupied by Israel’s commander.

But rather than summon the troops herself, she told Barak that God wanted him to lead the men.

**Judges 4:7a And I (this is God) will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin’s army, to MEET YOU by the river Kishon with his chariots and his troops,**

Sisera is the enemy general. God had Deborah tell Barak that God wanted Sisera to attack him, not her. It was clearly God’s plan for Sisera to attack Barak, not Deborah.

**Judges 4:7b and I (again, God) will give him (Sisera) into your (Barak’s) hand’?”**

God clearly wanted Barak, versus Deborah, to receive the victory over Sisera.

These are confirmations that even while serving as judge, Deborah affirmed the rightness of male leadership when it came to leading God’s people, not only looking to Barak to lead but telling him this is what God wanted.

But, sadly, Barak did not step up and assume the role God wanted him to fulfill...

**Judges 4:8 Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go.”**

Barak should not have insisted Deborah accompany him into battle. Instead, he should have taken leadership of the army himself.

This is hard to read. Can we just be honest for a moment? Doesn’t this look wrong to us?

It isn’t right for a man to tell a woman, *“I will not go to battle unless you go with me.”*

**Lesson Two: Deborah supports male leadership because (Part Four) she rebuked Barak for failing to lead.**

Not surprisingly, Deborah rebuked Barak’s cowardliness. Look at **verse 9**...

**Judges 4:9 And she said, “I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman (this is not Deborah, but Jael).” Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.**

Deborah’s prophecy came true. God defeated Sisera’s army, but it was a woman, Jael, who ended up defeating the enemy commander.

Skip to **verse 21**...

**Judges 4:21 But Jael the wife of Heber took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand. Then she went softly to him (Sisera) and drove the peg into his temple until it went down into the ground while he was lying fast asleep from weariness. So he died.**

So, Jael got the victory that should have been Barak’s if he would have lead.

**Lesson Two: Deborah supports male leadership because (Part Five) her account is descriptive versus prescriptive.**

You have heard me say before that one of the mistakes we make with Scripture is taking a descriptive passage (or one that merely describes) and turning it into a prescriptive one (or one that prescribes).

This is the danger of using Deborah’s judgeship to support female leadership. Her example actually serves as a rebuke to the nation of Israel regarding the absence of male leadership.

The book of Judges and the account with Deborah and Barak are NOT presented as examples to follow. Judges records some of Israel's darkest days. It's largely a record of what NOT to do. The absence of male leadership is a strong reflection of the time.

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Think about this for a moment...

The Book of Judges is primarily about THE BREAKDOWN OF LEADERSHIP among God's people...

**Judges 17:6** and **Judges 21:25** describe the days of the judges...

**In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.**

The nation had abandoned God, and that is the context in which Deborah ended up becoming a judge.

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Later, during another dark period in Israel's history, the prophet Isaiah said...

**Isaiah 3:12 My people—infants are their oppressors, and WOMEN RULE OVER THEM. O my people, your guides mislead you and they have swallowed up the course of your paths.**

Female leadership over the nation was a sign of God's judgment!

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What application can we take away from the account with Deborah and Barak?

Women can learn what TO do from Deborah, and men can learn what NOT TO do from Barak.

Here's what I mean:

- Deborah would not take the leadership role herself, but urged Barak to lead. And women can do similarly.
- Barak would not lead, but encouraged Deborah to lead, and men can do the opposite.

Next lesson...

### Lesson Three: The pattern of male leadership continued into the New Testament.

The pattern of male leadership in the Old Testament is carried into the New Testament.

Think about this:

- The 12 disciples were men. Jesus could have chosen six men and six women, but He chose all men for these leadership positions.
- The 70 who were sent out after the 12 were all men (**Luke 10:1**). Again, though Jesus could have chosen 35 men and 35 women, but he chose all men.
- The seven deacons in Acts 6 were all men.

In the New Testament, church leaders are identified as men. Please turn to **1 Timothy 3**. Let me quickly read the qualifications for elders and listen to all the masculine words and phrases...

**1 Timothy 3:1 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, HE desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer (or elder) must be above reproach, the HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE...4 HE must manage HIS own household well, with all dignity keeping HIS children submissive.**

We see the same for deacons a few verses later. Look at **verse 11**...

**1 Timothy 3:11 THEIR WIVES likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons each be the HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE, managing their children and their own households well.**

Deacons are described as husbands with wives. Paul clearly didn't expect women to be deacons.

The only reason there's confusion about women being deacons is the word for deacon is servant, and a few New Testament women are called servants. But it doesn't mean they occupied the office. It just means they served.

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We see the same when Paul discusses elders in **Titus**. You don't have to turn there, but I'll read it...

**Titus 1:5 Appoint elders... 6 if anyone is above reproach, THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE...7 For an [elder]...must be above reproach. HE must not be arrogant...9 HE must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that HE may be able to give instruction.**

When churches appoint female leadership, they have rejected the teaching of God's Word.

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Turn to **1 Timothy 2:12**...

**1 Timothy 2:12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.**

This verse is so crystal clear, but you would not believe the way it has been twisted over the years in feminist, egalitarian churches that reject the plain teaching of scripture.

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The end of the verse says **she is to remain quiet**. Let me briefly address this by having you turn to **1 Corinthians 11:5**.

Notice this verse discusses **women praying and prophesying**...

**1 Corinthians 11:5 Every [WOMAN] who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven.**

Now before commenting on this verse, let me briefly define prophesy or let me let Scripture define prophecy. Look a few chapters to the right at **1 Corinthians 14:3**....

**1 Corinthians 14:3 The one who prophesies SPEAKS TO PEOPLE for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.**

We almost always associate prophecy with predicting the future, but here it is defined as simply speaking edifying and encouraging words.

Because prophecy must involve **speaking to others** as **1 Corinthians 14:3** says, when **1 Corinthians 11:5** says a **woman prophesies** she must not be doing this by herself.

There must be some spheres in which it is acceptable for women to **SPEAK TO PEOPLE for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation**.

We see this when women share in Sunday school or evening service.

But to be clear, this is not teaching.

So, can women teach?

Yes!

**Titus 2:3-5** commands older women to **teach younger women**.

**First Timothy 2:12** does not forbid women from having authority over other women or children. It simply forbids women from having authority over men.

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If we put these verses together we can come up with the following harmony...

Because women can pray, prophesy, and teach other women, they are not expected to **remain quiet** all the time:

- Women would be allowed to share, like you might see in our Sunday School, evening service, or home fellowships,
- Women would be allowed to teach other women and children, like you see in our Sunday School, ladies' conference, and women's studies.

But Scripture does not allow women to teach men, because it would put women in positions of leadership or authority over men, which is why it's forbidden in **1 Timothy 2:12**.

So in gatherings involving men and women, we always have men:

- Preach
- Teach
- Read Scripture
- And regarding the ordinances, we keep these to men:
  - Men deliver the communion devotion, prayer, and distribute the elements
  - Men perform baptisms

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Are there any exceptions, or another way to say it might be, what does it look like to obey the spirit of the law versus the letter of the law?

We are thankful to have women in certain positions. Here are three examples:

1. Jodi VanGelder has been the choir director
2. Amy Zumstein has run the kitchen at camp
3. Bethany Braafladt was over VBS last year, and Dorothy Criss is over it this year

They are in important positions and the elders and I try to help them. We ask them what they need and try to offer our support.

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Now an obvious question is..

*“WHY can't women be in leadership over men?”*

Before answering this, let me first say two things about the Bible's teaching on male leadership...

First, male leadership doesn't mean women are:

- less worthy
- less useful
- or less valuable

Just because women are not identical to men, does not they are not equal to men. Women have strengths that men do not have.

Second, the Bible's teaching on male leadership doesn't have anything to do with talents and gifts. Some women are fantastic teachers and leaders, and they should use their gifts in all the areas allowed by Scripture.

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Let me conclude with this...

I understand this is not an easy teaching to absorb in our gender-confused culture. Our world objects to male leadership. Feminism and egalitarianism have crept into the church, and some pastors, including even prominent ones like Rick Warren, have caved to it. But we must hold to the clear teaching of the Bible.

**Habakkuk 2:4** says, “**The just shall live by...faith**” and **Hebrews 11:6** says **without faith it is impossible to please [God]**.

One way we **live by faith** and **please God with our faith** is by embracing the Bible's teaching...even if we don't understand, or perhaps even disagree. Walking by faith means being willing to say, “*I'm going to trust and obey.*”

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If you have any questions about anything I've shared this morning, I will be up for after service and out consider it a privilege to build a speak with you.

Let's pray.