

# Complementarianism at WEFC

## A Scriptural Review

SESSION 1: APRIL 11<sup>TH</sup> 2021

# Syllabus

## Course Description

A study of the complementarian nature of WEFC, referencing Scripture and the doctrines of the body of Christ and the local church pertaining to local church governance. A brief overview will be provided of related theological terms, concepts, and key biblical passages related to the role of men and women in the church.

## Course Outcomes

Introductory understanding of key terms and themes (remember and understanding phase)  
A desire to dig deeper into God's Word

## Course Materials

Bible

## Course Work

Listen, ask questions and engage in discussions.



Yikes!

# Let's Start with Core Beliefs and Affirmations

## God

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

## The Human Condition

We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

## The Work of Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

## The Church

We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

## The Bible

We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

# Regarding the Church:

**God has entrusted the office of Elder to biblically qualified men and that God has entrusted the office of Deacon to biblically qualified men and women.**

**This position is based on our understanding of the totality of Scriptural teaching.**

**This position is reflected in our church history, in our current bylaws, and in our proposed revised bylaws.**

# Elders

Qualities: 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

## What do elders do?

1. Guard and Teach the Truth (1 Tim. 3:2; 4:11-16; Titus 1:9; 2:1)
2. Lead the church (1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13)
3. Ministry of Prayer (Acts 6:4; James 5:13-15)
4. Shepherd (1 Peter 5:2; Hebrews 13:7, 17)

# Deacons

What about Deacons? (Philippians 1:1)

They are an extension of the ministry of the elders who seek to care for the various needs of the church body – spiritual and physical (Acts 6)

Qualities: 1 Timothy 3:8-13

What do deacons do?

Serve the needs of the church (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:13)

# Key Definitions



**Biblical Interpretation**

**The local Church**

**Complementarianism**

**Egalitarianism**



# Definitions: Biblical Interpretation

Discover the original meaning of the text and bridge the gap between the time Scripture was written and today's culture when interpreting the text. The goal is not to allow our own coloring of the text to distort the original meaning.

**Biblical interpretation** includes approaches and questions within four major contemporary methodologies:

- **Textual criticism** examines the text and its manuscripts to identify what the original text would have said.
- **Source criticism** searches the texts for evidence of original sources.
- **Form criticism** identifies short units of text and seeks to identify their original setting.
- **Literary criticism** focuses on the literary structure, authorial purpose, and reader's response to the text through methods such as rhetorical criticism, canonical criticism, and narrative criticism.

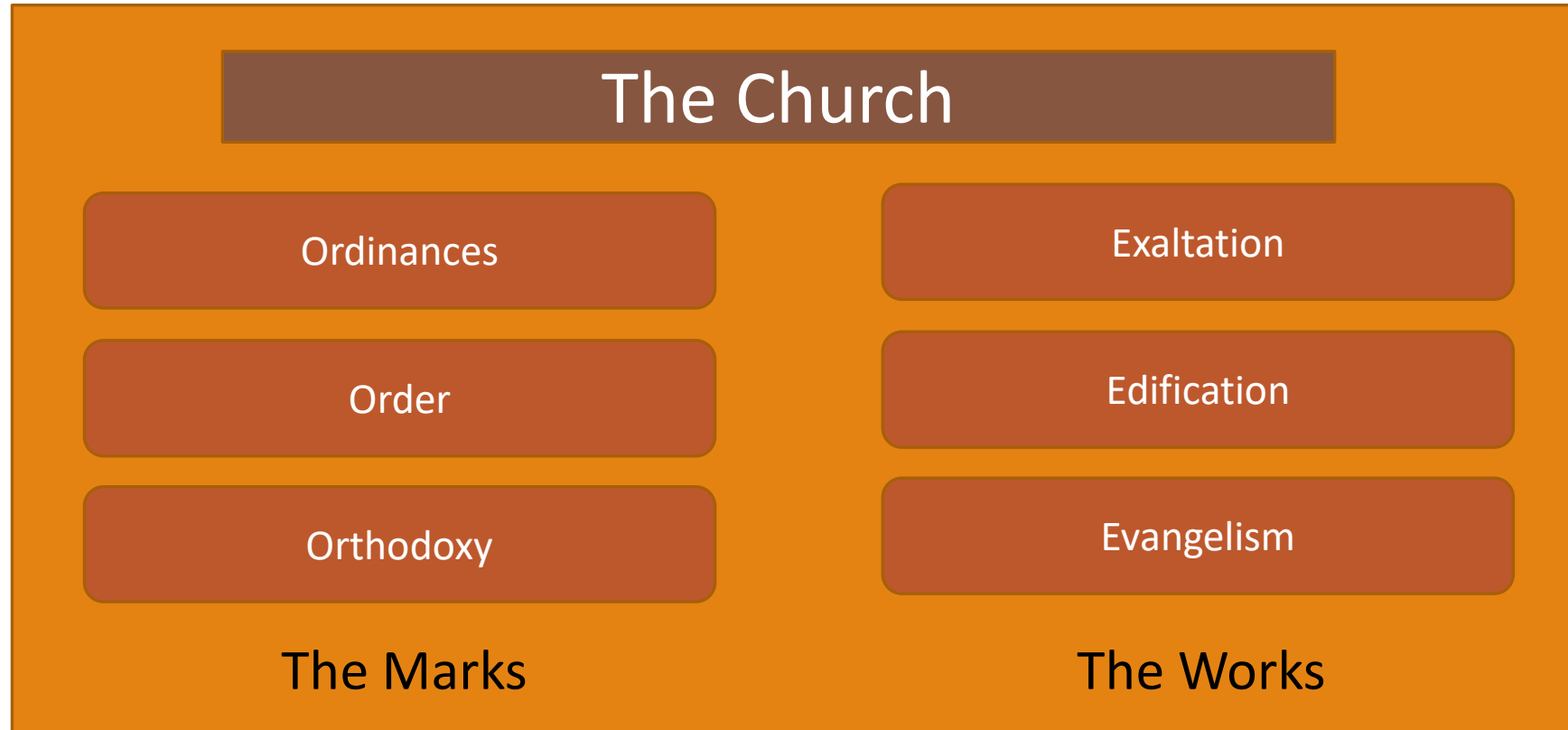
\*R.C. Sproul's lectures on the principles of biblical interpretation.

# Definition: The Local Church

## The local Church

A people who belong to the Lord Jesus, the presence of Christ on earth.

The local church has essential “marks” and essential “works.”



# Definitions

## Complementarianism

The first tenet of complementarianism is that men and women are equal in personhood. There is no difference in worth. Rather, proponents of complementarianism believe that men and women have separate, though equal, roles in marriage, family life, and the church.

This view holds that masculinity and femininity were created by God as meaningful distinctions indicating different roles that, when embraced, will lead to the best possible spiritual wellbeing for believers.

The word “complementarianism” derives from the word “complement” just like complementary colors work well together. Men and women are a beautiful whole.

## Egalitarianism

In Christianity, egalitarians agree with complementarians that men and women are equal in worth. However, egalitarianism goes further to state that men and women are considered equal in role assignment as well; there are no gender restrictions on what roles men and women can fulfill in the church, home, and society.

This view holds that the teachings and attitudes of Jesus and the New Testament abolished gender-specific roles.

The word “egalitarianism” is derived from the Latin root

### Complementarian

People	Denominations
Alistair Begg (Pastor)	EFCA
Rosaria Butterfield (professor, author, speaker)	Free Reformed Churches of NA
Don Carson (Professor)	Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Kevin DeYoung (Pastor)	Christian and Missionary Alliance US
Tony Evans (Pastor, Author)	Orthodox Church in America
Wayne A. Grudem (Founder CBMW)	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
Mary Kassian (Professor, Author)	Presbyterian Church in America
Tim Keller (Pastor, Author)	Roman Catholic Church
George W. Knight III (Professor)	Southern Baptist Convention
Andreas Kostenberger (Prof., Author)	United Reformed Churches in NA
John F. MacArthur (Professor)	Free Church of Scotland
C. J. Mahaney (Pastor)	Presbyterian Church of Australia
Albert Mohler (Professor)	
Douglas Moo (Professor)	
Dorothy Patterson (Professor)	
J.I. Packer (Professor, Author)	
Dorothy Patterson (Professor)	
Jackie Hill Perry (author, poet, bible teacher and hip-hop artist)	
John Piper (Pastor, Professor, Author)	
Seminaries	Organizations
Bethlehem College and Seminary	9 Marks
Cincinnati Christian University	CBMW
Dallas Theological Seminary	Desiring God Ministries
Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary	Family Life Today
Liberty University	The Gospel Coalition
Midwestern Seminary	Truth for Life
Phoenix Seminary	
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary	
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary	
Talbot School of Theology	

### Egalitarian

People	Denominations
F. F. Bruce (Professor, Author)	Assemblies of God
Tony Campolo (Pastor, Speaker, Author)	Church of the Nazarene
Gordon Fee (Theologian)	Episcopal Church
Mimi Haddad (Head of CBE)	Mennonite Church
Mike Herzog (Pastor)	Methodist
Roberta Hestenes (Professor)	Moravian Church
Mary E. Hunt (Co-Founder WATER)	Presbyterian (PCUSA)
Craig S. Keener (Professor)	Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
Catherine Clark Kroeger (Co-Founder CBE)	Salvation Army
Sara Moslener (Professor, Author)	UCC (United Church of Christ)
Philip Barton Payne (Theologian, Author)	United Methodist
Tom Noble (Professor)	Wesleyan
Les and Leslie Parrott (Authors, Professors)	
Laura Rossburt (Pastor)	
Ron Sider (Activist, Author)	
Christy Sims (Abuse Counselor)	
Timothy C. Tennent (President, Asbury)	
N. T. Wright (Bishop, Author, Theologian)	
Calvin and Lisa Wulf (Spiritual Directors)	
Seminaries	Organizations
Asbury Theological Seminary	CBE - Christians for Biblical Equality
Fuller Theological Seminary	Faith Feminisms
Iliff Theological Seminary	Her.menuectics
Luther Seminary	The Junia Project
Nazarene Theological Seminary	Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual
Perkins School of Theology	Truth for Life
Southern Methodist University	
Spring Arbor College	
St. Paul School of Theology	
Evangelical Lutheran, Mennonite	

# Beliefs: WEFC Aligns Complementarian

## Complementarianism

Complementarianism is usually characterized by:

- Men and women, equal in worth, have distinct roles in marriage, family, and church leadership. Belief that only men should hold church leadership positions over other men. Biblical headship is established in the garden and applies to marriage and to the church. Women are gifted by the Holy Spirit and may hold positions that do not place them in authority over men (1 Tim 2, 3).
- A patriarchal view of the family, with the father as the head (1 Peter 3:1-7). The view that a man should love his wife as Christ loved the church, and a woman should submit to her husband as the church submits to Christ (Eph. 5:22-33).

## Egalitarianism

Most egalitarians would agree to the following:

- Men and women can both hold church leadership positions (Gal. 3:28).
- Spouses have equivalent roles regarding responsibility for the family.
- Marriage is a partnership of two equals submitting to one another.
- Roles should be ability-based and not gender-based (1 Tim 2, 3).

# Agreement: Affirmations of Equality

The three great equalities between men and women that are affirmed in Scripture.

1. Men and women alike are created in the image of God; thus, with regard to their personhood, they are equal.
2. A second great equality of men and women is their access to God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son and by means of the Holy Spirit.
3. A third great equality of men and women is that, as Christ-followers, both are given gifts of the Holy Spirit.
4. Abuse of power is sin. Leadership is Christ centered and servant hearted (1 Pet. 5:3)

# What is the EFCA's position on women in ministry and credentialing?



“The EFCA does not ordain women, which is a general conference decision (1988) based on our understanding of the biblical text (cf. Gen. 2; Gen. 3; 1 Cor. 11:3-16; 14:33b-36; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:11-15; 1 Pet. 3:1-7). This is stated explicitly in our Ministerial Credentialing in the Evangelical EFCA of America booklet under the Certificate of Ordination (p. 5, V.C.): “This credential is designed for qualified males who serve in pastoral ministry in the local church whose primary ministry responsibility is preaching and teaching the Word.”

Women can and do serve in vocational ministry, and the EFCA recognizes this by offering a Certificate of Christian Ministry (cf. Ministerial Credentialing in the Evangelical EFCA of America, p. 4, V.B) to those engaged in vocational ministry. (This certificate is available for men and women who are in a qualifying ministry and are not ordained.) These are the only official statements regarding women in ministry made by the General Conference of the EFCA. Regarding questions about women in leadership in the local church, women usually do not serve as an elder in the EFCA, as most EFCA churches recognize that the biblical qualifications for the pastor (serving vocationally in this capacity) are the same qualifications for all other elders as well (serving in a non-vocational capacity).

Our official EFCA policy for those ordained also becomes the policy of many/most EFCA churches, even though there is no official EFCA policy for local churches. However, it must also be stated that because of our congregational form of church government, the local church is free to make its own decision on this matter.”

# How is Complementarianism reflected at WEFC today?\*



## **Article I Section 2:**

Pastors: WEFC pastors are male and “he shall seek membership in the Evangelical Free Church Ministerial Association, and if not so licensed or ordained shall seek license or ordination with the Evangelical Free Church of America within 5 years if possible.”

## **Article II Section 6:**

Deacons: “The eight deacons shall be men and serve three-year terms, commencing July 1 following their election in April.”

## **Article II Section 7:**

Deacon Executive Board Members’ Responsibilities: “In the absence of the senior pastor and the ministerial staff, or when they are unable, a deacon shall lead the public worship and meetings. The deacons shall also assist the senior pastor and the ministerial staff in administering the Lord's Supper.”

## **Article II Section 12:**

Church Chairman and Vice Chairman: “The Executive Board shall nominate a Church Chairman from current or prospective Deacons to be elected by the church. The Executive Board shall select a Vice-Chairman from current or prospective Deacons.”

## **Article III Section 2:**

Spiritual Care Committee: “The Spiritual Care committee shall consist of the Chairman, three Deacons and the Senior pastor. They are responsible for the doctrine of the church, the discipline of all church members and staff and the personal care of the Pastoral Staff.”

## **Article VI Section 3**

Deaconesses Committee: “The deaconesses' duties shall be to prepare the elements for the Lord's Supper, help with Baptismal services and assist the senior pastor, ministerial staff, and deacons in their work.”



# Complementarianism at WEFC

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SESSION 2: APRIL 18<sup>TH</sup> 2021

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**What does the Bible teach regarding His Church?**

# The Offices of Elders and Deacons in the Church

## Elders

Qualities: 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

1. Guard and Teach the Truth (1 Tim. 3:2; 4:11-16; Titus 1:9; 2:1)
2. Lead the church (1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13)
3. Ministry of Prayer (Acts 6:4; James 5:13-15)
4. Shepherd (1 Peter 5:2; Hebrews 13:7, 17)

## Deacons

Qualities: 1 Timothy 3:8-13

1. Support the ministry of the elders
2. Care for the various needs of the church body (Acts 6)
3. Provide practical, spiritual and physical care (Acts 6)

**The Elders and Deacons work together to assure that everyone is loved, shepherded, cared for, and sharing their gifts.**

*Acts 6:1-7. Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup> And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables." <sup>3</sup> Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. <sup>4</sup> But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."*

*<sup>7</sup> And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith*

# Regarding the Church Offices:

**God has entrusted the office of Elder to biblically qualified men and that God has entrusted the office of Deacon to biblically qualified men and women.**

**This position is based on our understanding of the totality of Scriptural teaching.**

**This position is reflected in our church history, in our current bylaws, and in our proposed revised bylaws.**

# WEFC is One Family, One Church

## With Shared Concerns:

- **All are Loved and Cared For**
- **All are Involved**
- **All are Heard**
- **All are working together advancing His Kingdom using their God granted Gifts of Ministry and Care**



**The Elders and Deacons work together to assure that everyone is loved, shepherded, cared for, and sharing their gifts.**

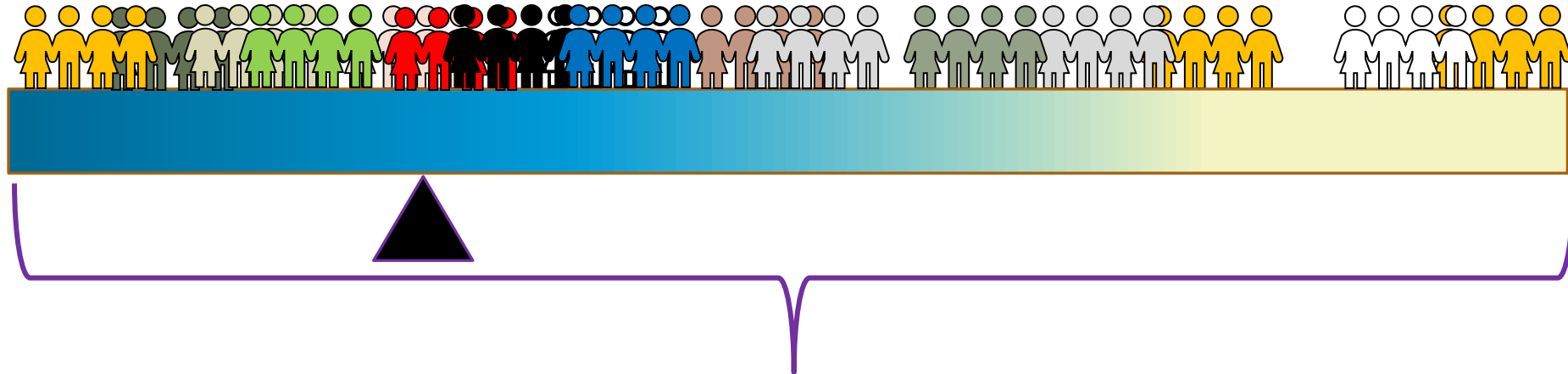
# Beliefs: WEFC Complementarian Orientation

## Complementarianism

God created man and woman equal in value and personhood, and equal in bearing his image, but that both creation and redemption indicate some distinct roles for men and women in marriage and in the church.

## Egalitarianism

God created man and woman equal in value and personhood, and equal in bearing his image, but that both creation and redemption indicate no distinct roles for men and women in marriage and in the church.



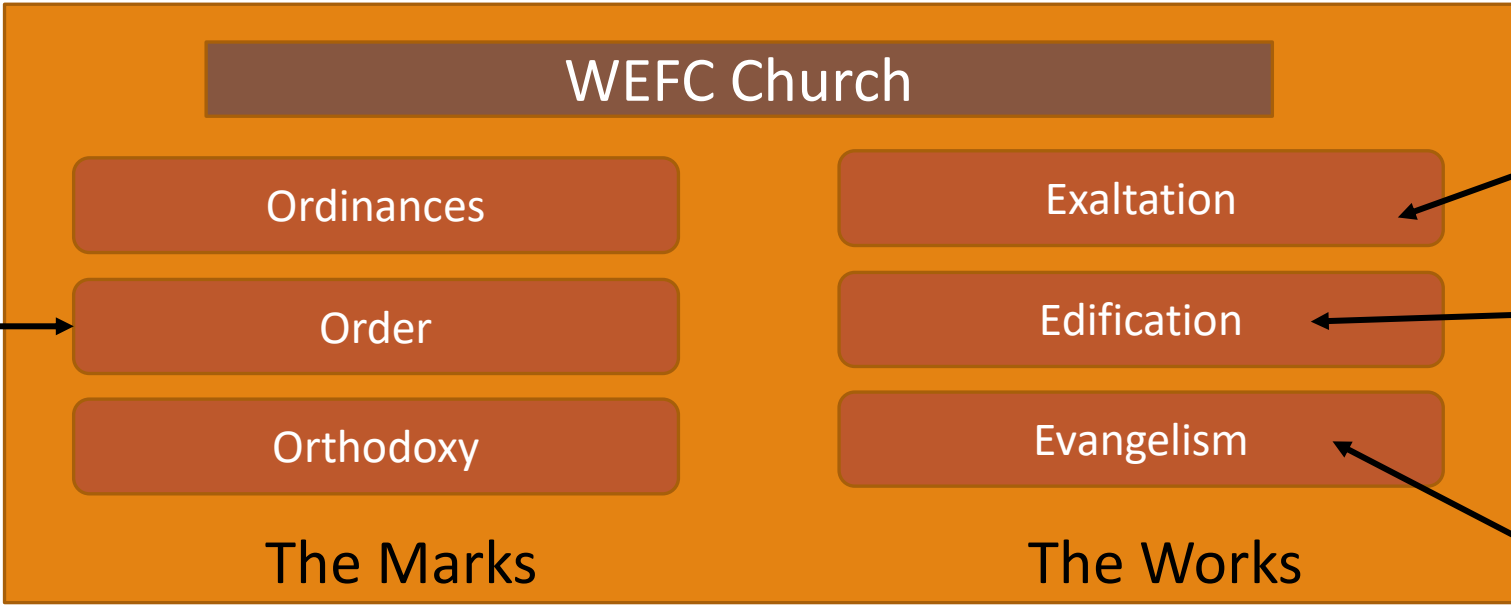
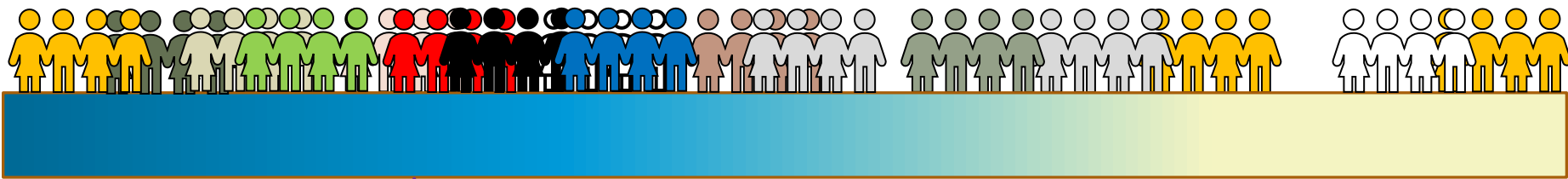
As Brothers and Sisters in Christ; ALL are loved All are accepted  
*“For the body does not consist of one member but of many.”*  
1 Corinthians 12

# Beliefs: WEFC is One Family One Church



Complementarianism

Egalitarianism



As we structure our governance

We can Glorify God

We can Love one-another and build one-another up

We can proclaim the Gospel to others



# Can Women Serve as Elders?

## 1 Timothy 2:8-15

*<sup>8</sup> I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; <sup>9</sup> likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, <sup>10</sup> but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. <sup>11</sup> Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. <sup>12</sup> I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. <sup>13</sup> For Adam was formed first, then Eve; <sup>14</sup> and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. <sup>15</sup> Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.*

- Paul bases his argument on the order of creation of Adam and Eve.
- The command applies to all churches for all time and transcends cultures and societies.
- This applies to men and women as they were created by God at the beginning, and it is not due to sin or the fall.
- The means by which the beauty of manhood and womanhood as God created them is manifested in the life of the church.

**WEFC believes that God has entrusted the office of Elder to biblically qualified men.**

\* Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology. Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020).

# Can Women Serve as Elders?

## 1 Timothy 2:8 through 3:7

*<sup>8</sup> I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; <sup>9</sup> likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, <sup>10</sup> but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. <sup>11</sup> Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. <sup>12</sup> I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. <sup>13</sup> For Adam was formed first, then Eve; <sup>14</sup> and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. <sup>15</sup> Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.*

### Qualifications for Overseers

***3** The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. <sup>2</sup> Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, <sup>3</sup> not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. <sup>4</sup> He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, <sup>5</sup> for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? <sup>6</sup> He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. <sup>7</sup> Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*

- The elder qualifications are gender specific (see also [Titus 1:5-9](#))

**WEFC believes that God has entrusted the office of Elder to biblically qualified men.**

# How is the WEFC Position Supported Throughout Scripture?



## Biblical Themes Supporting Complementarianism

### Creation:

[Genesis 2:18](#)

“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”

### Marriage:

[Ephesians 5:21-33](#)

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,”

### Church Leadership:

[1 Timothy 2:11-13](#)

“Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve;”

**God created men and women to have separate, though equal, roles in marriage, family life, and the church.**

# Biblical Support for Complementarianism

## Genesis 2 – Biblical principle of male-headship:

- 1) The order of creation (see [1 Cor. 11:8 and 1 Tim. 2:13](#))
- 2) God gives instructions to Adam granting responsibility to protect and guard his wife.
- 3) Eve was created to be Adam's helper (see [1 Cor. 11:9-10](#))
- 4) Adam's naming of Eve.

## Genesis 3:1-7 – Adam is held responsible for the sin.

Eve was tempted and deceived and sinned first.

God approaches Adam, not Eve, as the one ultimately responsible for the sin.

The New Testament teaches that the line of sin in the human race begins with the headship of Adam (see [Rom. 5:12ff; 1 Cor. 15:22; 1 Tim. 2:14](#)).

**The Issue is About Responsibility *NOT* Capability**

# Biblical Support for Complementarianism

## [Ephesians 5:21-33](#)

Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the Church and gave himself up for her (vs 25-33).

Wives are to respect the headship of the husband as the church submits to Christ (vs 22-24).

Male leadership in the family means male leadership in the church ([Eph. 5:21-33](#); [1 Tim 2:8-1 Tim 3:7](#)).

**Trinitarian Analogy** – The Trinity presents an analogy to the male/female relationship, as God designed it.

God is one in essence and three in persons equal in divine essence but distinct in function.

Their distinction of function is marked by an intrinsic relation of authority within the God-head, by which the Son is subject to the Father, and the Spirit to the Son.

Given the Trinity, Paul states *“But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.”* [1 Cor. 11:3](#)

**Reflects the truth and beauty of God’s created order, God’s Triune nature and Christ’s relationship to the church**

# Biblical Support for Egalitarianism

## Galatians 3:28

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

- Paul Jewett calls this verse “the Magna Carta of humanity”
- CBE bases its position that “the Bible, properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of men and women” on this passage
- Groothuis\* states that this is “probably the most important” passage “of all the texts that support biblical equality.”

### 1. [Gal. 3:28](#)

One of God’s purposes through redemption is to abolish false and sinful distinctions that separate men and woman into classes or into a hierarchy. Christ brings a paradigm shift in relationships.

### 2. [1 Cor. 12:7-11](#)

God distributes His gifts to His people as He so wills, but one’s gender is not a factor in His giving any particular gift to a person. Since God’s spiritual gifting is gender-neutral, it follows that men and women alike are equal in their exercise of gifts in the church.

3. NT Wright presents **John 20** (Jesus is raised from the dead, and the first person he meets is Mary Magdalene) as a key passage regarding women in ministry and claims that this clear text nullifies the “unclear” prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:12.

4. Cultural context is a driving approach to biblical interpretation.

\* Rebecca Groothuis’s *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality*

# Complementarian Response\*



1. The inerrant Scripture never contradicts itself and does not affirm two mutually exclusive positions on the same issue.
2. God's purpose in creating men and women with role distinctions was established in the Garden, prior to the fall (Gen 2).
3. The allegedly contradictory passages (e.g., Gal. 3:28 versus 1 Tim. 2:12) address different matters (oneness and unity in Christ; the role of women in the church); The arrival of Christ, and the new covenant, changes the relationship between men and women in regard to unity not equality; We all have equal worth, yet a distinction exists in function and role.#
4. Judith Gundry emphasizes that Paul's viewpoint in Galatians 3:28 is that "equality does not presuppose all-out sameness (dissolution of femininity or/and masculinity) but sameness with respect to sin and with respect to the way of salvation."^
5. Concerning John 20, complementarians agree that both men and women should share the gospel without respect to gender. John 20 is not contrary to complementarian teaching.

\* Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

# Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology. Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020).

^ Judith Gundry, Theologian and Research Scholar at Yale Divinity School.

# Can Equality and Role Distinction Coexist?

Yes: Role and ultimate worth are never equated in Scripture:\*

“The last will be first” (Matt 19: 30; John 13: 16; cf. 1 Pet 3: 1– 7; Luke 7: 28).

The church as Christ’s body teaches: “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body” (1 Cor 12: 12). This was done “so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other” (1 Cor 12: 25; cf. Rom 12: 4– 5).

The Suffering Servant himself is not worth less than those he served.

In God there is an eternal division of roles, but the three members of the Godhead are coequal, of equal essence.

“God chooses people according to his own purposes; he calls people, but not according to their good or bad works.” (Romans 9:11-12) The issue is responsibility not capability.

What matters is repentance from sins, entrance into the kingdom, and the living out of one’s salvation as a regenerated human being of equal worth with all members of the same body, regardless of role.

\* William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles, Volume 46, Word Biblical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2000), 269.



# Can Women Serve as Deacons?

**Important caveat: The deacons of the church must operate like deacons, not elders.**

## **The Deacons (In the Proposed New Bylaws)**

**Section 5.01: Purpose:** Deacons assist the Elders in caring for the congregation by developing ministries to meet the physical and practical needs of those within the church and the surrounding community.

### **Article 5, Section 5.02: Duties and Responsibilities**

Deacons shall oversee and develop church ministries in accordance with the needs of the congregation.

Such ministries may include, but are not limited to:

- **Caring Ministry:** Identify and oversee the physical and practical needs of the congregation
- **Visitation Ministry:** Oversee care for the sick, the homebound, the elderly and those in need
- **Helps Ministry:** Oversee the practical tasks entailed in the ongoing program of the church such as: setting up communion, assisting with baptisms, ushers and greeters
- **Mercy Ministry:** Identify and oversee the meeting of physical and economic needs inside and outside of the church. This includes overseeing the appropriate distribution of the Deacon Fund.
- Deacons may perform other duties as requested by the Elders.

# Biblical Support for Women Deacons

- Unlike the role of elder, nowhere does Scripture forbid women from serving as deacons (1 Tim 2:12). That is because the role of deacon is not a role of authority. Instead, as the word deacon implies, it is a role designed to serve and care for the needs of the church body.
- In 1 Timothy 3:11, the word ESV translated “wife” is also the word for “women.” Of the nine times Paul uses that word in 1 Timothy, every other time it is translated as “women” - see especially 1 Timothy 2:9 – which has the exact same grammatical construction.
- Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2 is referred to as a *diakonos* - “servant” or “deacon.” In the Greek the word is masculine and not feminine, which is odd if not referring to an office. Furthermore, to be called a *diakonos* of a specific church implies that Paul is referring to an office
- Very early in church history, we see women serving in the role of deacon
- Role of deacon finds its roots in Acts 6:1-7 and it is a ministry that seeks to meet the physical and practical needs of the congregation. This has long been served in our church through the caring ministry, which has often been led by women. The deacons in our proposed bylaws are tasked to oversee the care needs of the church and the ministries of hospitality. We believe this ministry would be best served if men and women would serve in this capacity.

**WEFC believes that God has entrusted the office of Deacon to biblically qualified men and women.**

# Biblical Support for Women Deacons

## 1 Timothy 3:8-13

### Qualifications for Deacons

<sup>8</sup> Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. <sup>9</sup> They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. <sup>10</sup> And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. <sup>11</sup> Their wives [or women] likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. <sup>12</sup> Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. <sup>13</sup> For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

- The deacon qualifications (very next paragraph after elder qualifications) are gender neutral

**WEFC believes that God has entrusted the office of Deacon to biblically qualified men and women.**

# 1 Tim. 3:1-13 Structure and Flow of Thought

- <sup>1</sup> The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.
- <sup>2</sup> Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,
- <sup>3</sup> not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.
- <sup>4</sup> He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive,
- <sup>5</sup> for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?
- <sup>6</sup> He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.
- <sup>7</sup> Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.
- <sup>8</sup> Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain.
- <sup>9</sup> They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.
- <sup>10</sup> And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.
- <sup>11</sup> Women likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.
- <sup>12</sup> Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.
- <sup>13</sup> For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Tracing these structural clues helps crystallize the flow of thought:

- qualifications for elders (vv. 1–7)
- general qualifications for deacons (vv. 8–10)
- specific qualifications for female deacons (v. 11)
- specific qualifications for male deacons (v. 12)
- summary for all deacons (v. 13)

Matt Smethurst, *Deacons How They Serve and Strengthen the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 139-146.

# Biblical Support for Women Deacons

## Phoebe Was a Deacon

### Romans 16:1-2

*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant [diakonos] of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. (Rom. 16:1–2)*

- Though many interpret diakonos informally (e.g., a servant-hearted person), there are better reasons to believe that the word signals the formal position of deacon.
- Phoebe is called a diakonos of a specific church “of the church at Cenchreae.” This one-church designation is even more striking when we consider the expansiveness of Phoebe’s ministry: she belongs to the church in Cenchreae; she is serving Paul in Corinth; and she will likely carry the letter to Rome. Yet despite this service to churches across the Roman Empire, Paul tethers her diakonos status to a single congregation.
- Finally, Phoebe is called a “patron” (ESV) or “benefactor” (NIV) in verse 2, indicating that she regularly supported, perhaps financially, those in need. This task, as well as serving as a courier or envoy to Rome, would fit naturally with a diaconal position.

Matt Smethurst, *Deacons How They Serve and Strengthen the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 139-146.

# Regarding the Church Offices:

**God has entrusted the office of Elder to biblically qualified men and that God has entrusted the office of Deacon to biblically qualified men and women.**

**This position is based on our understanding of the totality of Scriptural teaching.**

**This position is reflected in our church history, in our current bylaws, and in our proposed revised bylaws.**

# Affirmation of the Spiritual Gifts of Women

*Women's contribution to the mission of the church is not just "important" or "vital" or "critical." Women are "essential and indispensable" to the church's mission and ministry.* Jen Wilkin of The Village Church

Women should indeed:

Preach the gospel message (Matt. 28:1–10);

Pray and prophesy in the church (1 Cor. 11:5) because they are made partakers of the prophetic gift (Acts 2:17–18, citing Joel 2:28–29; exemplified by Philip's four daughters, Acts 21:9);

Exhort and admonish the members of the church (Col. 3:16); correct and train underequipped leaders (exemplified by Priscilla, Acts 18:26);

Associate with the apostles (exemplified by Junia[s], Rom. 16:7);

Serve as deacons (1 Tim. 3:11; exemplified by Phoebe, Rom. 16:1–2);

Host the church in their homes (exemplified by Lydia, Acts 16:13–15, 40; and Nympha, Col. 4:15);

Labor side by side with male leaders for the cause of the gospel (exemplified by Euodia and Syntyche, Phil. 4:3).

However, spiritual gifts and church office are different issues.

All of these opportunities are expanded and reflected in the new proposed Constitution and Bylaws.

# Syllabus

## Course Description

A study of the complementarian nature of WEFC, referencing Scripture and the doctrines of the body of Christ and the local church pertaining to local church governance. A brief overview will be provided of related theological terms, concepts, and key biblical passages related to the role of men and women in the church.

## Course Outcomes

Introductory understanding of key terms and themes (remember and understanding phase)  
A desire to dig deeper into God's Word

## Course Materials

Bible

## Course Work

Listen, ask questions and engage in discussions.