Women in Leadership Ministry

A Summary of the Biblical Position of the Foursquare Church Concerning God's Grace and a Woman's Potential Under His Sovereignty and Call

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Women in Leadership Ministry

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Acknowledgements & General Introduction

I would like to thank those who had such major roles in the development of this manuscript. The members of the doctrine committee who labored alongside me provided enormous assistance. I greatly appreciate their help.

Let it be noted that, although the doctrine committee members are male, that was not by design in regard to this paper. In order to compensate for possible gender bias, a group of women, significant in both number and scope of leadership experience, was enlisted to read the first draft and offer insights and comments. I attempted to assign to that group's contributions the same credence that was given to the contributions of the doctrine committee. The applicable changes were incorporated, and the revisions are reflected in this draft. I offer my sincere thanks to those women who offered their honest observations, criticisms, and corrections of this document.

Further, a huge debt of gratitude is owed to Susan Rowe. She spent countless hours compiling research, distributing the document for proofreading, gathering and transmitting responses, and facilitating the revisions. The thorough editing and structuring of this text by Wanda Brackett has made it a much more effective document. For her labor of love we also owe heartfelt thanks.

Steve Schell
Doctrine Committee Chairman
February 2007

General Introduction

This document is intended to serve several purposes. It is, first of all, an explanation of why our family of churches believes women should serve in ministry and why they should be encouraged to rise to the highest levels of leadership. We make no attempt to write a lengthy theological defense of our position; there are al-ready many books written on this subject. This booklet is certainly theological, but written with a simple

style and with a positive tone, explaining why we believe it is both biblical and practical to encourage every woman to fulfill the calling God has put in her heart—whatever that calling may be. The contents herein are intended to be relevant to a broad audience: the board of directors and cabinet of The Foursquare Church, Foursquare churches, ministers, members. Our goal is to provide a quality document that strengthens a concept that is unmistakably important to the life of our denomination.

Further, we hope this document will allow us to explain ourselves gracefully to the larger Body of Christ; and we also hope it will allow us to release some Foursquare pastors who, because of concern over certain Bible passages, have quietly opposed women leaders. In some areas of the church, a person's stance on this issue is seen as an indicator of whether or not that person holds a high view of the authority of the Bible: anyone who releases women to lead is thought by some to be disregarding Scripture. To answer this, we will address these controversial passages with a defense that tries to reveal the meaning in a straightforward way. We realize there is room for sincere disagreement on this topic, but we want it to be evident that our position is not a compromise or an accommodation to current trends. Rather, it is heart-felt obedience to what we believe the Bible commands.

Third, we include in this document a self-examination, which provides an overview of the role women have played throughout the history of The Foursquare Church. We want to understand where we started, what happened over the course of years, and where we are now. As you read this section, it will soon be evident that, at times, there has been disparity between our belief concerning a woman's potential as a leader in ministry and the number of women who have held leadership positions.

Fourth, we suggest proposals for future action. Realizing that the number of women leaders in our movement has dropped significantly, we have suggested steps that can be taken to identify, train, and release women into leadership. It is important to note that our leaders have always embraced the possibility of women in positions of ministry leadership, but realizing that goal has been challenging. We have faced cultural obstacles beyond our control and have not always

known what positive steps we might take to change the situation. But the commissioning of this study is in itself a good-faith effort to identify tangible new steps to releasing women.

Doctrine Committee Members

Jim J. Adams
Jack W. Hayford
John A. Mazariegos
Jim C. Scott

A Pastoral Perspective

It is my privilege to be asked to prepare a preface to this booklet, one which summarizes basic statements and essential points regarding The Foursquare Church and its commitment to releasing godly leadership for ministry in Christ's Church. The goal of the contents is two-fold:

> To explain The Foursquare Church's practice of placing women in positions of leadership ministry, including senior pastor positions
>
> To provide the scriptural basis and rationale for placing women in those positions

Since the beginning of The Foursquare Church as a movement, women have always been viewed as equals to men in respect to their possible candidacy as biblically qualified servants available to serve in leadership roles; this includes serving as senior pastors, lead missionaries, and preaching evangelists. Women have also been used in teaching and prophetic roles, according to their gifts and callings. This has been not only a practice but also a widely held value among us, as it is in some other fellowships among the evangelical church community. However, because some in the broader culture of Christian churches neither believe in nor practice this concept and because, on occasion, their resistance sometimes begets uncertainty beyond their ranks, we feel that it is necessary for us to restate both our beliefs and commitments in these regards. In view of our history and our spiritual priorities through the years, what I offer here, as well as what it introduces, should be a *surprise to no one*. Further, I believe the sum and substance herewith will also be *of interest to* everyone.

A Biblical and Forthright Approach

First, you will *not be surprised* that the following document is both Biblical and forthright. Those two words have always characterized the basis and clarity of conviction you find when reading or hearing of teachings or values that are "truly Foursquare."

The very word, "foursquare," was adopted from the inception of our fellowship of churches because it so accurately describes both (a) *our spirit when we speak* and (b) *the grounds from which we teach*. By definition, "foursquare" means "to take a bold, firm stand, forthright, unwavering in conviction." So no one knowing us will be surprised to find that what is presented here is done so *boldly* and *Biblically*. Yet equally important to us is that *all* the Bible is the source of our boldness. For that reason "bold" will never be "brassy," and God's truth will always be spoken in love (Eph. 4:15).

Second, I have suggested that readers of this booklet will also find *interest* here, just as I discovered the timely freshness the contributors have given to a timeless truth. The intentionally concise format indicates their will to provide basics with clarity and to avoid belaboring a point that is so simply and clearly explained throughout Scripture. Of course, we are aware of the debate and the lengthy volumes that have been written both in support of and in opposition to the ministry privileges of women. Nonetheless, our choice has always been a positive one; we choose to present our position forthrightly and clearly and to support our position on the authority of the Scriptures, not engaging in argument or debate.

My words here, then, are to underscore that the purpose and tone of the booklet are pastoral, not polemic. Their purpose is to shepherd believers toward possibilities for serving Christ, not separate believers who dearly love Him. Similar is the goal of each member of the team that compiled this document, every one being a pastor-shepherd who joins me in trusting the truth we have presented reflects the tone of graciousness and faithfulness with which we seek to serve our own, as well as Jesus' larger flock— His Church.

Primary Values

Three primary values undergird our approach as we acknowledge God's will in calling some women to pastoral leadership. We believe that this is as appropriate, and as much to be expected, as the fact He calls men to this office. We are convinced of this because it is consistent with God's Word, His ways and His will, thus:

> Our position is based on God's Word, not human politics.
>
> Our pursuit develops within spiritual relationships, God's ways, not requirements.
>
> Our practice seeks to release spiritual ministry, God's will, not to platform gender.

Please allow me to elaborate.

Value #1—*We base our position on biblical convictions, not on cultural convention or human politics.*

The position of The Foursquare Church regarding women in ministry leadership is based on divine revelation, and is not shaped or prompted by societal opinion or winds of "political correctness." To our view, God's purposes for *all* people—male and female—are revealed in His Word. At their creation, *both* male and female were equally endowed with "dominion," and both were obligated to exercise their God-given responsibility and privilege of leadership within God's plan (Gen.1:2628). Of course, as we know, human disobedience caused that balance to be lost. Humankind was distanced from God, His will for human governance became distorted, and relational confusion was loosed upon Adam's race—all because of its separation from God's creation-order. From that time, the sole pathway to humankind's effort to recover what was lost through disobedience has been through God's loving reach and gracious gifts. Thus, to this day, the Gospel of Jesus Christ stands as God's grand and sole initiative to bring lasting answers

to every dimension of human loss and striving, including the quest to understand the distinctive place and privilege of each gender— both male and female.

God's plan is both redemptive and restorative. The cross is intended to break the power, penalty, and poison of sin and separation from God; it also makes possible a reversing of the dynamic, the impact, and the impositions that are the result of separation from God. Our acceptance of the Gospel sets in motion the recovery of a relationship with Him, and begins with the Holy Spirit's entry and indwelling. It also opens a doorway to His promised possibilities of our receiving and living in the benefits of a Holy Spirit filled life, enabling believers to become citizens in God's Kingdom and function as sons and daughters.

In giving His Son and by pouring out His Holy Spirit's fullness upon us, Father God has focused His saving and restoring objectives. He desires to restore all people, women as well as men, to His original intention for them. And God does this among those men and women who have come to Christ, those who have become newborn and Spirit-filled; He matures then calls individuals to feed, lead and serve His Church. These called to leadership are gifts from the Lord Jesus' own hand, given to "equip the saints"—to enable members of "the Body" to reach to their respective circles of influence with God's love, life, and healing power. Called and gifted leaders are pivotal to this process (See Ephesians 4:11-16.).Empowered pastor-servants are needed everywhere—needed to grow believers who move throughout the marketplace, into their neighborhoods, classrooms and offices as grace-enabled ambassadors of God's Kingdom throughout all the world.

Equal Participants

The Father's revealed plan shows that men and women are designed to be equal participants in ministry. Mary and Joseph, Zachariah and Elizabeth, Anna and Simeon—each one, enabled by God's Spirit, ministered in ways that acknowledged their gender, and yet were neither promoted or penalized because of it (Luke 1, 2). The Holy Spirit's empowerment of those individuals as the introduction of the Redeemer

was occurring was the precursor of Pentecost: On that day—with the plan of redemption now complete and the message of reconciliation now ready to be proclaimed globally, the Holy Spirit came upon early believers and immersed them in the power-flow that would launch the Church on its mission to all humankind. At that time, the continuation of God's plan to anoint and enable both genders was announced—leaping from the pages of Joel's prophecy:

> *"And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams, and on my menservants and maidservants I will pour out My Spirit…and they shall prophesy"(Acts2:17-18).*

That passage provides the foundational biblical grounds for The Foursquare Church's pastoral position regarding why and how women are given an equal place with men in leadership ministry. Those verses clearly indicate that the issue of gender was removed as heaven's protocols preempted human traditions, so that a maximum release of ministry might be realized through His people. Thus, our position of empowering and releasing women is not a response to politics, the coercions of human programs of liberation, or present trends. Rather, our position is based on the revelation of God's Word and its timeless truth.

Value #2—*Our pursuit develops within relationships, not requirements; we are constrained by God's love, not driven by human rules.*

It is abundantly evident that God's grace, bringing fullness of life and eternal hope to us through His Son, is deeply focused on birthing, nurturing, and manifesting healthy relationships—with Him and with one another. Relationship integrity, warmth, and sensitivity, all in the pure love of God, are among the highest values in The Foursquare Church. Accordingly, in affirming the potential of a woman's leadership role in Christ's Church, we make clear that we intend to violate nothing

at the primary points of our relationships, either with *God and His purposes or with God's people and His plan.*

In regard to *God's purposes*, we need to acknowledge that His plan to restore all things in Christ has many dimensions. It is very clear that Jesus came "to seek and to save" those who are lost (Luke 19:10), and it is equally true that He was "manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). The latter is critical in our world at this time. The devil is successfully separating husbands and wives from divinely ordered partnership in marriage, even when their marriages may be formally intact. Marriages, homes, and families are being ravaged by the serpent.

Needful Discernment

It is on the basis of marriage and family roles that arguments arise in regard to women in leadership ministry. Proponents as well as opponents of women in church leadership roles, commonly fail to discern between the Bible's distinguishing between what God has to say about *women* in general and what His Word teaches about *wives* in particular. For example, no distinction is made in the human potential or vocational freedom of either men or women (Galatians 3:28). But regarding the domestic responsibilities and roles of husband and wife, God has established marital and family leadership to the husband. The wife's relationship to her husband is clear—to be lived as it is likened to the Church's toward Christ Himself. The husband, though he is charged to lead, is directed in turn to love his wife "as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her" (Ephesians 5:22-33).

We want to affirm these values of *domestic priorities*; to discern and live them as consistently as we affirm the value of *leadership possibilities* concerning women in church leadership: The Foursquare Church's endorsement of a woman's appropriate access to a leadership role in Christ's Church in no way alters our convictions regarding the command of Christ to each married woman who is a believer. She is called to live and abide in full righteous acknowledgement of her husband's leadership, just as Sarah did; at the same time, her husband is

to lovingly honor her as his wife (1 Peter 3:6). This holds true even if she is entrusted with leadership in the Church, an equally significant point if we remain faithful to maintain a scriptural balance. These points of discernment and wisdom rightly acknowledge the husband's domestic leadership, and, rightly applied, they resolve texts sometimes used to block women from pulpit ministry (See, for example, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:11, 12.). So we honor God's order for women in the home, and release God's ordination of women in the Church, in those instances when God calls a woman to the divine task of leadership ministry. Our relational commitment to *people* mandates this.

In All Things, Charity

Our relational commitment to the whole Body of Christ mandates something else of us. In regard to the global Church—*internationally and trans-denominationally*—we hold yet an added biblical priority. While affirming our conviction and commitment on this matter, we do not want to separate ourselves from any in Jesus' Body who hold a different opinion. The commitment of The Foursquare Church to release women into leadership roles, indeed, to encourage them in that area, is an established and unalterable value that will be honored unendingly. However, we do not believe that it is our call to argue our position or to force it upon others.

Further, we are not unaware that a few within our Foursquare family have mixed or differing feelings; some have a background in a church tradition that opposes the idea of a woman's leadership in the Body of Christ. We are not ignorant of the arguments those traditions may sincerely posit, but, at the same time, we lament any narrowness of view that insists on breeding dissension among believers. We refuse to give place to such a spirit in The Foursquare Church! We want to affirm this: While we cannot entertain within the Foursquare family any public opposition to our value regarding women in leadership ministry, neither can we impose a value on human consciences. Our position regarding women in ministry is clearly a highly placed value; however, it is not included in the "Declaration of Faith," the doctrinal statement of The Foursquare Church. It is a "people value"—a biblically based relational

value that honors the equal possibility of God's calling a man or woman to serve as a faithful shepherd or leader in our fellowship. And it is in that spirit that chooses to live in the love of Christ that we affirm and assert a will to be gracious in this matter, always. The absence of this issue as a doctrine was unquestionably a choice of the writer of that doctrinal statement—a woman pastor-evangelist who, herself, chose to live Christ in a spirit of generosity, while calling succeeding generations to embrace this credo: In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity.

Value #3—*Our practice seeks to release spiritual ministry, not to platform gender; we desire to identify leadership, not achieve established quotas.*

The genius of God our Creator is witnessed in innumerable ways—stunning us as we ponder the stars and the vastness of our universe; and evoking wonder as we hold a babe in arms, finger the petal of a flower, or view a brook sparkling in the sunlight. But there is no created wonder that exceeds humankind. Based on that, I want to say this: *Let us do all we can to honor God's gift of our humanity*. Christ came to redeem each of us at the price of His life, so each person's value has already been firmly declared by God Almighty. No separate value is placed on gender. God created man and woman for partnership, and He gave them an equal role under His authority to rule, oversee, and govern the earth's created realm.

Because that realm was ruined through human failure, Jesus Christ came as the firstborn of a new breed—a "new creation in Christ." Those who are part of that new creation have been born anew to reach the dying creation of a disintegrating planet with *ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit*. When the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, those who were sent out into the world were sent without sectarian or sexist distinctions. Based on that example, The Foursquare Church is committed to impose none. Our spirit seeks to be tuned to God's, and where the Holy Spirit is there is liberty— that Spirit that recovers what humanity lost in order to release the maximum of what redemption affords for each individual.

And so we respond to God's unique gifts and callings as they become evident in individuals. Our biblical viewpoint and spirit commitment to release women into church leadership roles are not attended by an obligation to reach a given percentage to verify some humanly devised formula of sexual parity. But irrespective of gender, when we discern the call of Christ, manifestly evident in the spiritual formation of a godly leader, we joyously and willing confirm that call with thanks to God.

Conclusion

The values I have expressed here have not been arrived at recently—I have just concluded the 51st year of my ministry. This is an observation I make, not as though seniority verifies the wisdom of my words, but, I can assure you, it is enough to verify their workability. I do believe the words I have written are wise, however, because they are consistent with God's Word, but I know the proposition they affirm works, for I have seen it verified in multiplied hundreds of cases through the years and around the world—congregations, cities, and, indeed, nations impacted for the sake of righteousness by gifted, godly, and good *shepherdesses*! To witness this, while knowing how soundly God's Word legitimizes what human tradition sometime stigmatizes, not only renews my praise to God for His gifts that have no gender prejudice, but emboldens me to urge this same commitment throughout Christ's Church until He comes again.

At this time, in the early years of the 21stcentury, The Foursquare Church continues to bear witness to the New Testament message in the spirit and style of that first apostolic era. We invite the Holy Spirit to come in power, and we invite God's supernatural grace to break down the barricades of satanic strongholds and human constructions of doubt, fear, bigotry, and hate. We pray that the Spirit of God will renew and refocus in us—releasing us afresh to minister His grace until our blessed Savior comes again. And may we do that as ***one body***—one with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; one as a movement within Jesus' larger Church; and one with each other!

Pastor Jack Hayford

Part One:
Position Statements

Introduction

The publication of a booklet on women in ministry leadership is the process of a few months; however, the framing of the conceptual basis for such a document is the result of years. Throughout its history, The Foursquare Church has addressed the subject with brief statements, including the following:

1988 Board of Director's Declaration

On April 12, 1988, the board of directors unanimously passed the following declaration:

The present and historical position of the Foursquare Church affirms the biblical truth that women are called of God to roles of leadership and public ministry. We hereby reaffirm and encourage the ministry of women throughout the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

1998 Women in Ordained Ministry Leadership

The 1998 excursus for the Foursquare Church entitled "Women in Ordained Ministry Leadership" was foundational to this document. We thank the dedicated writers of that excursus for the work they did regarding the role of women in ordained ministry leadership.

2005 Presidential Announcement Regarding Women's Ministries

At the 2002 convention a resolution was passed in which the convention body directed Foursquare leadership to develop both a clearer position paper and a report regarding women in ministry. Those documents were to affirm

the commitment of our church family to embrace the place of women in public ministry leadership and to indicate the degree to which that commitment has verifiable outcomes manifest in our ranks. It is a deep concern of our president and leaders that this report be presented in this, our 2005 convention business meeting.

While it is not apparent that any action has been taken on the earlier resolution, which requested a report by the 2004 convention, there have been significant appointments made over that season of time that verify and validate our commitment in these regards. For example, not only are husband/ wife preaching teams being found more commonly in local pastorates, but women pastors have also been appointed as district supervisors (SeeChapter4.).

We are all aware of the fact that the transitions of the past year have required the preemption of time that might have allowed for the expected report to be prepared for this convention. Accordingly, and with the agreement of the parties who made and moved the original action that was confirmed by the convention, our president has indicated that completing this report is a priority for the coming year, and he has given his assurance that the earlier resolution shall be addressed prior to our next convention. On behalf of all of our constituency – men and women alike – he offers this acknowledgement of gratitude for steps of validation already manifest and expresses confidence in the forthcoming study and action by our leadership.

Our president's supportive position on these matters is known not only to most of us in the Foursquare Church but throughout the Body of Christ, where he has been an advocate for women in ministry – even in environments where his stance was not the popular view. The preponderance of our leadership is obviously favorable in these regards as well; the original resolution did not challenge that fact, but asked for clarification of our statements and a summary of evidence of our validation of that. Therefore, I ask you to receive this report as your affirmation of understanding the delay, and also as an indication of your trust in our leadership's readiness and will to advance this matter.

2005, Our Statement and Our Spirit

The Great Commission, along with the need of the dying world in which we live, calls for all the people of God, His sons and daughters, to engage the harvest using whatever gifts He has entrusted to them. Since women are redeemed, anointed, gifted, called, and loved by God in exactly the same way as men, we categorically affirm that they should be fully released to exercise their gifts for every facet of ministry in His church.

Since its founding, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel has affirmed the place of women in ordained ministry and leadership. The position of the Foursquare movement regarding ministry leadership has always been the following:

> *Anyone called by God and verified through character, spiritual experience and preparation for service or leadership, is qualified for Foursquare Church ministry in any role or office, regardless of gender, age, or ethnicity.*

This understanding has afforded women positions in all capacities in the local church, on the mission field, and at all levels of government in the Foursquare corporate structure.

The Foursquare Church has never presented this issue as an essential of the faith, but, at the same time, it is a distinctive of our movement's tradition—the atmosphere we have chosen, after searching the Scriptures, for relating to one another. Foursquare's "Declaration of Faith" clearly notes a determination to exercise "in all things charity," and we are committed to avoiding any polarization that exists in the Church at large. The following discussion, though brief, is not intended to engage in debate with any who hold differing perspectives. We simply wish to indicate that a studied view of God's Word undergirds the position taken by the Foursquare Church to release women into ministry leadership, rather than restrict them from that role.

Part Two:
A Biblical Basis for Women in Ministry

Introduction

The Foursquare Church is now, and has been since its founding, a movement submitted to the authority of Scripture. Our first article of faith unmistakably places the Bible as the foundation of all we believe, signifying clearly that we consider the Word of God to be the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. The issue of women in ministry leadership is not an exception to this value. We are proud of our history, and we deeply respect our founder, Aimee Semple McPherson; we are grateful that she invested her gifts and talents in establishing a denomination that would outlast her—something possible only because the foundation upon which The Foursquare Church was built was not Sister McPherson, but the inerrant Word of God. Our honoring of her example of godly ministry and our desire to perpetuate that example are based on a strong conviction that Sister McPherson's ministry was clearly consistent with biblical truth. We believe that the Word of God requires us to include women as equal partners in ministry with men. Our position is a matter of obedience, not compromise.

Commentary on Relevant Bible Passages

Question 1: Was the Old Covenant more generous than the New?

> To say that the culture of the ancient Near East was male-dominated would be an understatement. Although numerous women played very significant roles in Old Testament history, the truth is that only a few had positions that included providing spiritual leadership to men. Because of the cultural context out of which those examples come, passages that boldly acknowledge women leaders become all the more meaningful, especially when divine favor is shown toward their leadership. It is significant that the biblical writers felt no shame in reporting

that such women led them, nor did they hide the fact that those women leaders were empowered in their ministries by God's Spirit. No suggestion is made that these women were out of order or unauthentic in that which they ministered. In fact, the opposite is the case.

a) Miriam was called "the prophetess"(Exod.15:20) and was one of the three main leaders "sent before" Israel by God to lead the people out of Egypt (Mic.6:4).

b) Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, sat as judge of Israel, keeping the land "undisturbed for forty years" (Judg.4:4-5;31).Her assistant, Barak, deferred to her primary leadership because he recognized her gifting and calling (Judg. 4:8). In the song written to commemorate the victory gained over their enemies, Deborah wrote of how the common people were afraid to travel in their own land "until I, Deborah arose, until I arose, a mother in Israel"(Judg.5:7).

c) When Hilkiah, the high priest, found the lost Book of the Law in 621 B.C., King Josiah chose to inquire of the Lord from the prophetess Huldah, wife of Shallum, who then advised both the high priest and the king in regard to their futures (2Kings22:14-20).

d) Esther, who had become queen of the Persian Empire, saved the lives of her people through her bravery, and she also established the 13th and 14th of Nisan as a celebration of that deliverance. The Feast of Purim is observed to this day.

e) Isaiah referred to his wife as "the prophetess," showing full acceptance of her gift and calling (Isa. 8:3).

These passages lead us to explore some essential concepts. The Old Covenant is defined far more by rules and law than the New, yet it celebrates women leaders. It does not seem possible, then, to interpret New Testament passages in a way that restricts women's leadership. There seems to be no explanation to satisfactorily support the assertion that the New Covenant requires women to be silent and offer no leadership in Christian gatherings when any man is present. It is, however, logical to

expect the New Covenant to emancipate women and provide them entry to greater levels of ministry rather than to subordinate them further.

Question 2: Did Paul disagree with Peter concerning Joel's prophecy?

Joel 2:2 -31

According to Joel 2:28-31, one of the wonders accompanying the arrival of the "Day of the Lord" would be the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on God's people. Although the event would include judgment upon the unrighteous, the righteous were to anticipate it joyfully, for it would bring great blessings. And there could be no greater blessing than the unlimited gift of God's Spirit. This same theme is expressed by other prophets as well. Isaiah and Habakkuk pictured the earth immersed in God's presence "as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14). This comparison of the Spirit to liquid may be one reason that both John the Baptist and Jesus later described this outpouring of God's Spirit as a "baptism with the Holy Spirit"(John 1:33;Acts 1:4,5;11:16).Something like an ocean of God's presence would immerse believers, men and women alike, and transform them into Spirit-empowered ministers. Joel very specifically prophesied that the Spirit would be "poured out" on males and females, young and old, and he went on to say that, when the Spirit arrived in that dimension, He would enable people to operate in supernatural levels of ministry, including prophecy, prophetic dreams, and visions. This fits quite well with the theme that runs through much of the Bible–that it is God's desire for His people to become "a kingdom of priests" to fulfill offices that are authoritative by their very nature (Exod. 19:6;1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10). Joel said that God's prophetic gifts would be given to both men and women, and prophetic gifts are normally meant to be spoken so others can hear and obey. The passage in Joel goes on to describe some of the cataclysmic turmoil that will immediately precede the return of Christ (Joel 2:30,31). Joel issued a warning to people who would be living in those tumultuous

days, urging them to repent and "call on the name of the Lord," assuring them that, if they do so, they "shall be saved" (v. 32). The implication is that people will call on the name of the Lord and be saved as a result of a spirit-empowered generation, including both genders, proclaiming God's promise of salvation. According to Joel, both men and women will be anointed in the same way, with the same Spirit and the same enablement, giving both men and women the authority and the power to speak to that generation. Without pursuing the eschatology of this text any further, the point that is of particular application to our discussion is this: something remarkable will happen to God's people *before* the return of Christ (v. 31). God's people will be transformed by an endowment of the Spirit, and God will use them to extend His invitation to be saved to whoever will hear it. Afterward, the world will face the terrifying judgment of God (Joel3:12-16). With this summary of these verses of Joel in mind, let us turn to Peter's application of the same verses on the Day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:14-21

On the Day of Pentecost, about ten days after Jesus' ascension into heaven,120 believers gathered in Jerusalem for prayer in an upper room (Acts 1:13-15; 2:1). The group included women, one of whom was Jesus' mother, Mary (Acts 1:14). Upon all of these the Holy Spirit fell suddenly and powerfully, coming in a way that first produced a loud sound and then appearing visibly as flames of fire over each person's head. The symbolism of "tongues of fire" over their heads would have been meaningful to Jews who were well-versed in the Torah. That manifestation was a sign that the Spirit had chosen to abide in them, just as the pillar of cloud and fire had proclaimed His presence over the tabernacle in the wilderness (Exod. 40:34-38). The flames declared that those disciples had become living "tabernacles" in whom the Spirit dwelled. What happened next was even more remarkable. The believers began to extol the "mighty deeds of God" in foreign languages they had never learned. As they did

so, a crowd of pilgrims from many different nations gathered to observe the phenomenon. Some, misunderstanding the spiritual event they were watching, mocked the disciples as being drunk. At that, Peter stood up to address the crowd of thousands. Without the slightest hesitation, he told them what they were seeing was not drunkenness, but the arrival of the moment promised by the prophet Joel. Peter then quoted the same verses we examined in the previous section. There is no mistaking the point he made: he was announcing that the "last days" season promised by Joel had arrived (v.16).Its arrival was the reason men and women were prophesying in such miraculous fashion. Peter then went on to quote Joel 2:28-32 to prove his point and to warn the crowd that they were being given an opportunity to repent before facing the day of God's judgment. As a result, approximately 3,000 souls responded to Peter's call to repentance (Acts2:41).

Application: If Peter was inspired by the Spirit to announce, "…This is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel…" (v.16), then it is clear that, at that moment, God was beginning a new season of His work on earth. As the chronicle of the Early Church unfolds throughout the Book of Acts, it is apparent that the apostles (including Paul) did not consider Pentecost a once-for-all event; they saw it as the beginning of a new spiritual potential for all believers (See Acts 2:39; 4:31; 8:14-17; 10:44-48; 11:15-18; 19:1-7.). The Holy Spirit's equipment for supernatural ministry was being given without discrimination to all God's people: male and female, young and old alike. Moreover, that availability and inclusiveness would continue until "the great and glorious Day of the Lord…"(v.20).The dilemma these passages pose for our discussion is this: If, as some assert, Paul absolutely forbade women to speak in a gathering of believers, he would have been rejecting Peter's announcement and stating that he believed the fulfillment of that portion of Joel had *not* yet arrived. This point needs to be made firmly because, if that were the case, we would be forced to decide whether we believe Peter or Paul is correct. If Paul forbade women to prophesy in a service, then he stood in direct opposition to Peter. And if Peter's announcement was correct, then Paul must not have been inspired

when he commanded women to remain silent in a church service. Of course The Foursquare Church does not believe that there is a contradiction in the Holy Spirit's words through these two great apostles. Paul did not reject Peter's application of Joel, but fully agreed that the era of the Spirit which had begun meant that men and women, young and old, would be equally empowered for spiritual ministry. Paul's admonishments to women "to keep silent in the churches"(1 Cor. 14:34) and not to "teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet" (1 Tim. 2:12) were not a refusal to acknowledge a woman's spiritual potential; they were pastoral solutions to specific problems being faced by those to whom he wrote. In fact, the verse from 1 Timothy cannot be extracted from the surrounding verses and explicated outside of the greater context in which it occurs. Much of the content of the second and third chapters of 1 Timothy has to do with husband and wife relationships, and, because of that specific application, should not be generalized to address all male/female relationships. Paul wanted both men and women to avoid being conformed to the gender roles that had been shaped within a world system that was completely Godless. When we look more closely at those frequently cited passages later on, we will see that they were not universal commands forbidding women to exercise their spiritual gifts in public.

Question 3: Did Paul allow women to minister in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and then forbid them to minister in chapter 14?

1 Corinthians 11:2-12

It seems that confusion rather than rebellion was the reason women had stopped covering their heads in the churches of Corinth. Paul's opening affirmation, "…I praise you because you…hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you" (v.2), indicates that the churches had been trying to obey him in this matter. But it seems that they had failed in that attempt. Paul did not specifically say what caused the misunderstanding, but the women may have over-zealously applied the principle that "in Christ" believers are set free from observing religious rituals (Gal. 3:24-4:7). While the "Law" had

passed away, there were still social norms that should be respected and observed. By removing their traditional head covering, the women in Corinth made an unintentional but inappropriate social statement.

Verse 3: With the heart of a pastor, Paul asked those women to restrict some of their freedom, a theme he repeatedly applied in this letter to all believers (1 Cor. 9:19-23; 10:23-11:1). Then he listed several reasons for asking them to do this. The first reason, is the principle of "leadership." The word "head" as it is used here is best explained by Paul himself in verses 7-12. Although the word can express several basic meanings, Paul seemed to use the word to refer to that which is the *source* of another's existence; this concept includes the implication that one who comes forth from the "head" is intended to bring honor (glory) to the "head." He illustrated this by using the examples of three persons who are the "head" of someone else: Christ, Adam, and God the Father. First, Paul identified Christ as the agent of creation for Adam in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:7; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; John 1:10;1 Cor.8:6).The statement "Christ is the head of man" indicates that Adam came forth from the pre-incarnate Son and was, therefore, intended to bring honor to Him. The next reference is to the creation of the first woman, which occurred when God, through His pre-incarnate Son, took a rib out of the man and fashioned Eve. In that way, the man was the source of the woman. She was made as a partner to help him and to complete what was lacking in him (Gen. 2:20-25). Finally, this passage of Scripture points out that even Christ has a "head," God the Father. The Father begot the Son and is His eternal source, and the Son honors the Father by faithfully carrying out His part of God's plan. This last example, drawn from the Trinity, shows the proper attitude within which these relationships are to function. The relationship between the Father and Son is marked by love and mutual respect. The Son freely chooses to honor the Father, and the Father delights in honoring the Son (1 Cor. 15:28). It is Christ's attitude that Paul asked the women to emulate in their relationships with their husbands by continuing to cover their

heads with a shawl during worship services. The reason the shawl mattered will become clearer as we consider the next three verses.

Verses 4 and 5: The custom of Jewish men covering their heads with prayer shawls had apparently not yet begun in Paul's day. A man's uncovered head symbolized his acknowledgment of God as his source (v.7). A covered head would have been a disgraceful statement. This portion of the text indicates that some of the women had decided that, if men did not have to cover their heads during worship, then neither did they. Of course, theologically, they were right. But, in the culture of that day, removing their head covers was an inappropriate social statement. As a symbol of modesty, Jewish women of that time normally braided their hair and covered it with a shawl when in public or in worship (Edersheim 142).They covered their beauty to avoid attracting undue attention and as a public acknowledgment that they were married women. A woman untied her hair and let it hang freely only in the presence of her husband. In that setting her uncovered hair was a beautiful expression of marriage. But when the women of Corinth sat in church with their heads uncovered, they pressed cultural sensitivities too far. They were engaging in behavior that labeled them as immodest and single. So Paul tried to explain that, though they were free from religious ritual, they still needed to consider the effect of their behavior on others. It is significant to our discussion to point out that this verse specifically alludes to women praying or prophesying in the formal gatherings of the church; the matter-of-fact tone gives no hint of disapproval. Paul's sole concern was the social statement made by their uncovered heads. This acknowledgment of women praying and prophesying in public services needs to be kept in mind as we consider the next passage.

1 Corinthians 14:33-35

Verse 33: In chapters 11-14, Paul communicated important truths regarding Christian worship gatherings. One such truth

is that the Spirit sovereignly distributes His gifts to each believer. Another is that love should control how and when those gifts are expressed. Verse 33 includes another foundational principle: God's own personality is orderly and peaceful. Therefore, if God is really in charge of a meeting, the meeting will express His personality and will not degenerate into noisy confusion. Paul told the Corinthians that their loud tumultuous services were very different from the gatherings of believers in other cities. It seems unlikely that anyone at that time had been in more churches than Paul had, and he informed the Corinthians that they were the only ones behaving that way. If the disorderly services they conducted were truly under the Spirit's control, then it would have been logical to expect a similar disorder to exist in other churches that welcomed the Spirit's presence and work in their gatherings. Instead, the services in other cities were peaceful and well-ordered. The dignity of those churches stood as a testimony against the wildness in Corinth. The lack of order was not the unique working of the Spirit in Corinth; rather, it resulted because the church was immature and out of step with God and His people.

Verse 34: Paul wanted peace and order restored to the Corinthian services. Having just dealt with tongues and prophecy he addressed another aspect of their gatherings that was producing noisy disorder. It seems that women were engaging in some sort of disruptive questioning. We can speculate about the type of questions they posed and whether or not men and women were seated separately, but those matters really do not change the significance of this passage to our topic. If these verses were intended as a pastoral correction to noisy women, telling them to ask their questions at home, then Paul's admonition, "The women are to keep silent in the churches…"was not meant to be a censorship of women who were trying to minister properly in the services. Paul was not imposing a new law that prohibited women from making a sound in a service. The "law" referred to in verse 34 is not identified, but it is logical to infer that it is the same principle

he pointed to in 11:3-16, which was the idea of women showing respect to men. If so, then the questions being asked may well have included antagonistic challenges toward some of the men. Significant to our discussion is that this passage was not meant to stop women from making constructive contributions such as praying or prophesying; it was written to restrain a pattern of disruptive dialogue that had emerged in the first-century church. At times these verses have been taken out of context, and people ignore the fact that Paul had already acknowledged the possibility of women praying and prophesying. These verses are then used as evidence to prove that women are forbidden to participate in the spoken gifts during a meeting.

Question 4: To what extent do gender roles disappear for those who are joined to Christ?

Galatians 3:21-4:7

Paul was dismayed that certain churches he had planted in Galatia were being drawn away from the central tenet of the gospel, which is that the gift of Christ's righteousness is received on the basis repentance and faith alone. He taught that believers must abandon all hope of earning their way to heaven by either performing good deeds or religious rituals. The context of this letter indicates that self-appointed teachers had gone to Galatia after Paul left, telling the churches that Paul had misled them. In particular those "teachers" claimed that Christians still needed to observe certain practices of Judaism, circumcision being foremost. They said that faith in Christ must be supplemented with obedience to certain commandments from Old Testament Law. Paul wrote to the Galatians to correct that deception. In the middle of his theological explanation about the relationship of the Law to salvation, he made a startling remark about women. He stated that women and men were one in Christ and, as such, heirs of the same promise (v.28).

Verse 25: When a person is saved through faith in Christ, the role of the Law as a teacher in regard to salvation is finished. The teacher then hands us over to our Heavenly Father.

Verse 26: Faith in Christ brings us into an entirely new relationship with God. He becomes our Father, not in a metaphorical sense, but in a literal sense. By being joined spiritually to His only begotten Son, we become adopted sons; this position of "sonship" applies to *both* men and women. "In Christ" women stand before God (along with men) as "sons" (vv. 26; 4:6, 7). This term is not intended to disparage the position of a daughter but to emphasize the point that women are not ascribed a lesser status than men. Women are "sons" in this case because they are joined to the Son. They stand on exactly the same level as men, they inherit exactly the same promises, and they can have exactly the same types of ministry.

Verse 27: Water baptism illustrates how completely we have been placed *into* Christ. Just as we are plunged into water, we are immersed into Christ. There is a mystery here, but the concept of being "in Christ" is affirmed so often in the New Testament that the spiritual reality it points to is surely meant to be taken literally (See John 17;Rom.6;Eph.1.).Paul could accurately say, "…You…have clothed yourselves with Christ."

Verse 28: So that there would be no mistaking to whom Paul referred when he used the plural pronoun "you," he listed specific categories of people. This indicates that inclusion in Christ supersedes all other human categories. Being a Jew or a Gentile makes no difference in a person's standing before God. Coming from a high or low position in society makes no difference. Following those remarkable statements, Paul made a further declaration that applies directly to our discussion concerning women in ministry leadership: "…There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Gender distinctions do not limit a person's spiritual capacity. Joined to Christ, all inherit everything He has inherited (See Rom. 8:32; 1 Cor. 3:21-23.). All are clothed with His righteousness, and all

are equipped with His authority.

Question 5: Are women subordinated to men because of Adam and Eve?

1 Timothy 2: 9-15

Paul wrote this letter to give Timothy guidelines for pastoring the Ephesian church. Although Paul was not the first Christian to evangelize that major regional city, his was the foundational ministry that produced the explosive growth that made it a leading church in Asia Minor (Acts 18:18-21; 19:1-41). Departing from his pattern of evangelizing other cities, Paul remained in Ephesus and pastored the congregation for three years (Acts 20:17-38). He knew that after he departed those who opposed him would grow more outspoken (Acts 20:29, 30), so he appointed Timothy to pastor in his place until mature elders could be raised up. And controversy did arise just as Paul predicted. Self-appointed teachers tried to impose aspects of Old Testament Law onto the gospel. A picture of those false teachers emerges in Paul's letters to Timothy. They were theologically ignorant (1 Tim.1:6,7),they aggressively opposed essential elements of Paul's gospel (1 Tim.1:3,4;4:1;6:20,21), and they exploited their role as teachers for financial gain (1 Tim. 6:5-10). The false teachers found that some of the women in the church were a very responsive audience (1 Tim. 4:7; 2 Tim. 3: 6-9). In such an environment, church services must have had tense moments of conflict that required Timothy to correct and teach with great boldness. To help him do that, Paul reminded him of the prophecies that had been spoken over him (1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6,7). In the strongest of terms, Paul exhorted Timothy to preach the truth (2 Tim.1:7;4:1-5) and not be self conscious about his relatively young age (1 Tim. 4:12). When it was necessary for him to rebuke an older man or woman, he was to deliver the rebuke, but he was to be sure that he did so in a respectful tone of voice (1 Tim. 5:1,2).

1 Timothy 2:1-10

In this passage, Paul issued a series of instructions to help Timothy counter some of the problems he faced. First, Paul

addressed the church's corporate prayer life, which was lagging, probably because of the internal strife (2:1-8). Anger had diminished their unity. Next Paul addressed the immodest clothing and ornate hairstyles of some of the women whose behavior, whether naïve or deliberate, brought strife to the church (2:9,10). Some dressed in revealing clothing, and others wore expensive gowns and jewelry; those behaviors produced envy in other women. As their apostle, Paul commanded the women of the church to dress modestly and to avoid public displays of wealth (Rienecker and Rogers 620). He told them that the notice a Christian woman receives should not be the result of lust or envy that draws the eye, but rather the light of Christ's love shining through her as she carries out her God-given ministry. That Christ-like beauty is the "clothing" that belongs to every woman who professes reverence toward God.

1 Timothy 2:11-14

These verses have been the subject of much debate in Christian circles. Some have used them to prevent women from teaching in public gatherings. Others have reacted angrily against what the verses appear to say, accusing Paul of uninspired bigotry toward women. However, considering their historical context, these verses were probably written to silence certain women who had become aggressive proponents of legalism and to warn them of the danger they faced in rejecting Paul's gospel. It has already been clearly established that Paul did not forbid women to speak authoritatively in church. He acknowledged in his first letter to the church in Corinth that he expected women to pray and prophesy (1 Cor.11:5,13).It would be extremely odd for him to say one thing to the church in Corinth and another to the church in Ephesus. And, of course, Paul did not contradict himself with such inconsistencies. We must let the context of this passage reveal the meaning.

As was mentioned earlier, false teachers were trying to control what was being taught in the church. They, along with some of their disciples, were defying Timothy (See 1 Tim.1:3-7;18-20;2:8; 4:1-5,7;5:1,2;6:3-5,20,21.).Judging from the force of

Paul's statements, some of Timothy's greatest opposition was from women. In the liberated atmosphere of the Early Church, they apparently challenged the young pastor's authority and rejected the doctrine Paul had taught him. The culture of that day denied education to women, especially theological education, and this kept women vulnerable to deception (Spencer 84-86, 91, 94). Timothy was to be bold and insist that the women learn from him. Week by week as he taught the Word (1 Tim.4:13,16;2 Tim.4:2),they would gain the theological training they lacked. If they would "quietly receive instruction," in time there would be women teaching in Ephesus (Spencer 95).

Verse 11: This verse has traditionally been translated, "Let a woman learn in silence…" (KJV), a translation that leaves the impression that a woman is not permitted to teach in a church service when men are present. But the word some translate as "silence" does not the absence of sound. Several other Greek words do mean the absence of sound or the muzzling of the voice, but Paul chose to use none of them in this passage. The term he used, *hesuchia*, has to do more with a person's attitude than speech. It refers to people calming down and no longer arguing. The word in one form or another is used in the following passages: Luke 14:4; 23:56; Acts 11:18; 21:14; 22:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 Timothy 2:11, 12; and 1 Peter 3:4. These verses indicate that Paul actually told the Ephesian women to stop being contentious. He asked them not to join the public arguments that were going on, but to remain quiet. The final phrase in this verse, "…in all subjection" pictures someone maintaining the attitude of a "student" rather than becoming a "teacher." This all makes sense if we recall that Paul's purpose was to mediate a difficult situation, not define women's ministry potential for all other situations.

Verse 12: Paul said, "…I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise [a self-taken] authority over a man, but to be in silence [*hesuchia*]." In the flow of the sentence, the words "teach" and

"exercise authority" seem to define one action rather than two. In other words, Paul was not talking about teaching *and* authority, but teaching in a manner that uses a particular kind of authority. The kind of authority to which he referred is explained by the uncommon Greek word he chose, *authentein*. The common word for "authority" is *exousia*, and Paul used this word twelve times elsewhere in his letters. The word *authentein* is based on the personal pronoun for "self" and is used to describe those who exercise an authority that no one has given to them. Paul's goal was to keep those women from using a self-taken authority when addressing Timothy or Paul himself (1 Tim. 3:1,2; 5:17). The women were to be humble and learn from them. Naturally, Paul would not have wanted a man to teach with autocratic authority either, but that is not the situation he addressed in this passage.

Verses 13, 14: In verses 11 and 12, Paul told the Ephesian women to learn from Timothy peacefully. Of course, the implied message for Timothy was "Do not back down when strong personalities confront you." In this passage, Paul wanted to show those who are being contentious that they had been deceived. The warning he issued was based on the example of Adam and Eve because there was a striking similarity between the situation in Ephesus and the Garden of Eden. Adam was created first and had lived in Eden prior to Eve. During that time, he personally heard God speak to him forbidding him to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen.2:16,17).He had a firsthand revelation from God Himself. However, Genesis does not record a similar incident involving Eve. It is certainly possible that the topic of the forbidden fruit came up in conversation as the two humans walked together with the Lord "in the cool of the day" (Gen. 3:8), but it is also possible that Eve received her knowledge of this command from Adam rather than directly from God. This seems to be most consistent with the biblical text. It is this second understanding that turns these two verses in Timothy into a powerful warning to the Ephesian women without disparaging them as the gender more vulnerable to deception

("but the woman being deceived,"v.14).In fact, a universally applicable principle emerges in these verses, and it fit the crisis in Ephesus perfectly. If Eve received the command from Adam, then an additional level of trust would have been required of her, beyond what was required of Adam. When tempted, she had to decide if she would obey the command, but she also had to determine whether or not Adam's information was accurate. The serpent's temptation may have caused her to doubt that Adam had understood what he heard (Gen. 3:4-6). In a similar way, the Ephesian women had to choose whether or not to trust Paul's report of the gospel, which he claimed to have received directly from Christ. He said the gospel he preached was not something he had invented or something he had been taught by another teacher. He had received it by revelation (Gal. 1:11,12). Just as God first spoke to Adam, who then spoke to Eve, so God had also first spoken to Paul. Because Eve rejected Adam's report, she fell into deception and, ultimately, death. If the Ephesian women rejected Paul's report of the gospel, they would make the same mistake Eve had made. She doubted Adam; they doubted Paul. Paul had appointed Timothy as his representative and had taught him the gospel. By listening to the voices of the false teachers, the Ephesian women were being deceived by the serpent just as Eve had been. They needed to stop trying to correct Timothy and trust that he was accurately presenting the gospel that leads to salvation. They needed to "receive instruction with all submissiveness" so that they could gain a solid theological foundation. Then they could rise to the levels of ministry leadership to which God had called them. We should be careful to note that Adam and Paul were not simply representatives of men in general. They were humans selected by God to receive special revelation. Paul was not just another teacher; he was a true apostle. The analogy would not apply otherwise.

Conclusion

It may seem odd that a discussion about women in ministry leadership would devote so much attention to the question of whether or not women are allowed to speak in a church service. Yet an examination of

these passages is necessary because most of them have been used to prevent women from taking leadership roles. If women can not even speak in a service, any discussion about their authority to lead is ended. We in The Foursquare Church, a biblically based movement, are addressing these passages once again to demonstrate that they are applied improperly when they are offered as proof that women should not lead. We are fully convinced that gender does not determine the ministry capacity people can receive from God. Therefore, we rejoice when women as well as men move forward to lay hold of their full inheritance in Christ.

Part Three:
A History of Foursquare Women Leaders

Introduction

The Foursquare Church exists and thrives today because of God's grace and because a courageous woman challenged the cultural/ religious gender barriers of her day in order to present the gospel in creative and compelling ways throughout the world. Employing God-given strengths and gifts, this child of Canadian farmers rose to become one of the best-known and most influential religious leaders of the twentieth century. Aimee Semple McPherson was a role model for both men and women who sensed a calling of God on their lives to preach and teach the gospel.

Sister McPherson recognized that her femininity was a God-given tool to reach people. She loved people and consistently demonstrated a personal care and concern:

> People responded … to the motherly qualities McPherson radiated. During midnight forays into Denver's red light districts, she promised Denver's outcasts a bright future if they would be true to themselves. She embraced Winnipeg prostitutes with the assurance that she loved them and that there was hope for them in Christ. In San Francisco's Barbary Coast, she walked into a "dive," sat down at the piano, and got the crowd's attention by playing "Jesus,Lover of My Soul" (Blumhofer 17).

To accommodate the rapid growth of the burgeoning Foursquare movement, Sister McPherson appointed leaders to help carry the burden of the ministry. Early Foursquare women such as Harriet Jordan, Mildred "Minnie"Kennedy, Rheba Crawford, Anna Britton, Evelyn Thompson, and Pearl Tolliver led the way. Of the16 students graduating from the first class of the Angelus Temple Bible Training Institute, now Life Pacific College, 14 were women. In the early days of the movement, women and married couples together planted many of the "branch churches." It was not unusual for husband

and wife to share equally in leading a congregation. In some cases, the wife led with preaching and teaching in public services. According to Foursquare theologian and historian Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, a woman, Anna Britton, was probably "the most prolific planter of [Foursquare] branch churches" (Van Cleave 41).

While it has continuously recognized women as leaders for more than 80 years, The Foursquare Church is confronted today with vital questions concerning the roles, responsibilities, and callings of its women. Our founder's fundamental beliefs concerning the role of women in the church somehow seem to bear small resemblance to the realities of today's church. Likewise, statistical comparisons of leaders in our church between its founding and now evince a lack of cohesion in our doctrinal belief, our positional stance that women have full access to the possibilities of church leadership, and our current practice. Accordingly, this examination of the history of women in Foursquare leadership poses the following questions:

> How did our founder perceive the leadership roles of women in the church, and how did she encourage women to assume those roles?
> How have those founding principles evolved through the years?
> What leadership opportunities are available today for women in The Foursquare Church?

The Early Years

Although not without controversy, women leaders generally experienced equality with men in the early years of the American Pentecostal movement. Viewed as scandalous by mainline, middle class Protestantism, women pastors and ministers abounded in the early Pentecostal church (Barfoot and Sheppard 2-3).The revivals and church plantings of early Pentecost overcame the old cultural and doctrinal prohibitions of women preachers. Moreover, most of the early Pentecostals had adapted their doctrinal systems from the Arminian, Holiness, and Wesleyan churches; these groups had historically permitted greater ministry roles for women and often rejected the strict

patriarchal church leadership models of the mainline churches.

It is clear from historical records as well as from her writings that Aimee Semple McPherson believed that men and women are equal in the sight of God. She rejected the notion that women should remain silent in the church, but she went even further to embrace the idea that women *must* preach because the Lord's return was imminent. In her Acts class at L.I.F.E. Bible College, Sister McPherson declared:

> *When God anoints you to preach, here are your credential and authority, students, whether male or female: "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." When people say a woman should not preach in church, remember thus saith the scripture* (McPherson, Aimee S., Acts notes, 27).

Continuing her teaching on this subject, she expressed her belief that her former denomination had walked away from ordaining women, and she reaffirmed to her students that Foursquare must hold the line in encouraging women to preach:

> *This is the only church, I am told, that is ordaining women preachers. The [a major Pentecostal denomination] are not [any longer] ordaining women, to my knowledge ...Foursquaredom is the only work that has given such acknowledgment to women preachers, as well as men. Even the Pentecostal works in some cases, have said, "No women preachers." But I am opening the door, and as long as Sister McPherson is alive, she is going to hold the door open and say, "Ladies come!"(*McPherson, Aimee S., Acts notes, 30).

An article in The Bridal Call magazine expanded that concept further: "Before the coming of the Lord takes place there must be at least a few women preaching the Gospel – else the Scripture will not be fulfilled" (McPherson, Aimee S., Bridal Call, 7).

Changes

Sister McPherson adhered fully to the belief that preaching the gospel was paramount because of the "soon return of the King." According to

sociologists C. Barfoot and G. Sheppard, classical Pentecostal denominations have tended to pass through two phases, prophetic and priestly (4-6). In the early "prophetic" years of a Pentecostal revival, women were widely accepted in leadership roles; but as the movement became routine and regimented, a sort of "priestly" phase emerged that marginalized many women, subjugating them to specific non-leadership roles. This appears to be the case with the Foursquare church.

In the beginning years of The Foursquare Church as a denomination, several women served in key leadership positions. Though they were few in number, their influence was substantial, and they represented a sizable percentage of the leaders at that time. For example, as dean of the college, Harriet "Hattie" Jordan was the operational and day-to-day head of L.I.F.E. Bible College for many years. In those days (1924-1937), the influence of Miss Jordan was considerable. The Bridal Call reported that college enrollment grew from 300 to over 1,000 students, while "the number of churches started by students who graduated during her tenure was over three hundred"(qtd.in Van Cleave 51). Jordan also served for many years as a member of the International Board.*

There is no doubt that Sister McPherson garnered the support and assistance of highly qualified and gifted leaders, men and women alike. In 1933, women served in 3 out of every 10 executive roles in The Foursquare Church. They served as district supervisors, college leaders, camp directors, corporate officers, and board members; they also served in other positions of national significance. This percentage of senior leaders was probably among the highest in U.S. denominations of that era. By 1943, the numbers had fallen precipitously, and they have never recovered. However, 1943 also produced the highest percentage of women holding divisional superintendent positions.

Perhaps the most influential role for Foursquare women has been that of serving as credentialed ministers, including the crucial role of senior pastor. Undoubtedly, many non-credentialed women (i.e., ministers' spouses) serve the body of Christ with significant and extensive leadership. However, credentialing statistics allow a perspective and measurement of the number of women participating in pastoral

functions, a highly recognized and revered role in the Foursquare family. Until the 1940s, women accounted for an astounding 60 percent of all the credentialed ministers, licensed and ordained, in The Foursquare Church. Significant to our discussion is the fact that Sister McPherson passed away in 1944; the numbers of women in ministry leadership seemed to decline sharply after that. By 1993, only about 29 percent of Foursquare credentialed ministers were women; that figure had risen to 34 percent in 2005. During the 1930s, 40 percent of senior pastors were women; this figure dropped to a meager 3 percent by 1993, and rose slightly to 6 percent in 2005.

Conclusion

When Aimee Semple McPherson spoke or wrote about women in ministry, she clearly emphasized the roles of preaching the gospel, proclaiming healing, Holy Spirit empowerment, and the imminent return of Christ. While honoring and encouraging men and women serving in support areas, she made it clear that, in her eyes, women should enjoy absolute equality with men in terms of preaching, serving in church leadership, and fulfilling the Great Commission.

Though the Western world has moved toward ever-increasing gender parity, this trend has not been reflected consistently in The Foursquare Church in the United States. Our church certainly *permits* equal access to ministry, but relatively few women today are finding their place among the elders who lead, teach, preach, and carry on the work of the gospel. Few in our Foursquare family openly criticize the theoretical freedom of women to rise to pastoral leadership or other leadership positions in the church; indeed, many are supportive. But the process of moving from the young "prophetic" church led by Sister McPherson to that of an established church has, no doubt, compromised our ability to attract and retain women leaders and ministers in the numbers we once did. Internal and external forces, along with the lack of a compelling plan, have brought us to a place where gender equality in biblical leadership is believed and taught, but less practiced than ever before, in The Foursquare Church of the 21st century.

One thing that becomes apparent in reading this study is that our founder was absolutely right when she claimed that she released women to minister because the Bible **commanded** it. So, by the grace of God, we have been given a wonderful foundation on which to build. But when we turn to the sections of self-assessment, we realize that it is time to readdress this subject in a pro-active way. It is time to consider more aggressive steps that will help us identify women whom God is raising up and see that they have the resources they need to fulfill their call.

* The authors are indebted to Susan Rowe for her work of gathering the statistical information for this booklet.

Part Four:
Proposals for Future Action

Introduction

The development of solid proposals for the future of The Foursquare Church will require specific action steps, new behaviors, new processes, *and* the means by which to measure results in order to ensure ongoing accountability. We must move beyond good intention to intentional engagement and oversight if we are to see the outcomes for which we have been hoping and praying.

The following recommendations do not distinguish between a woman, either single or married woman, who serves in an appointed ministry and the woman who, as a spouse, serves in an appointed or non-appointed ministry. Some recommendations will, however, be more applicable to specific types of ministries.

Proposals

The development of an accurately reasoned and clearly stated theological position on women in ministry leadership

The statement must establish our fidelity to the Word of God and settle forever the reason that The Foursquare Church is committed to the partnership of women and men in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church.

The identification and removal of all hindrances and barriers that inhibit or prohibit the appointment of women to vocational ministry roles within The Foursquare Church.

These hindrances and barriers may be personal, i.e., theological concerns, inexperience, gender-specific language, recalcitrance, personal bias, or prejudice, They may also be institutional, i.e.,

matters of Foursquare polity, poor recruiting and mentoring processes, gender-specific language, or entrenched ministerial behaviors.

A singular hindrance or barrier may present itself because of our modified Episcopal government's influence on the selection of leaders. We observe, interview, select, and appoint most of our leaders. Therefore, it would seem that the criteria for the selection of denominational leaders would necessarily include a review of each candidate's commitment to the full release of women into vocational ministry. This review must focus on behaviors as well as beliefs; this is all the more important because the superintendent, the supervisor, the board of directors, or other leaders hold the power of appointment to most local ministry positions. In The Foursquare Church, a leader is, in many cases, the "gate keeper" to ministry opportunities.

A review of Life Pacific College, all partnering seminaries and Bible colleges, and all certified ministry institutes

The review must be structured and conducted in such a way to ensure that women are serving and have been welcomed as fully enfranchised members of the leadership and instructional team and that class instruction and curriculum are consistent with The Foursquare Church's commitment to women in ministry leadership.

A sincere and aggressive recruiting process that identifies potential female leaders at all stages of life

This would involve each local Foursquare church; Foursquare camps, for both children and youth; and divisional, district, and denominational activities.
This process would also provide coaching, mentoring, resources, and support as women consider how best to steward their

personal lives and calling. This recruitment process might also include scholarships to Foursquare or Foursquare-affiliated Bible colleges, seminaries, or institutes. Finally, there would also be great benefit in directed and funded internships with select pastors and congregations.

A continuation of purposeful selection and inclusion of women in every area of denominational and church leadership

This must continue for an important but often underestimated sociological reason: to establish access for their "personal networks" and to enjoy their "cultural capital" (Patterson 160).

It is more likely that subsequent generations of female leadership will largely be found within the friendship, church, professional, and relational networks of Foursquare women rather than of men; therefore, the inclusion of women in leadership circles will gradually change the culture of the movement. This will enhance and influence all aspects of ministry, including methods for attracting, selecting, and appointing women to ministry leadership assignments.

This period of purposeful selection will eventually become unnecessary as the numbers of women serving in The Foursquare Church increase and as women already serving in Foursquare ministry recommend their colleagues, associates, and friends for ministry in The Foursquare Church.

The selection of Foursquare women as well as women serving in other denominations to assume "visible" responsibilities within The Foursquare Church

This would include having women speak at conferences and conventions, and asking them to write for Foursquare publications, newsletters, and electronic documents or Web sites.

The development of relational and mentoring co-horts for women in ministry leadership

These groups can be formally developed or self-forming, and they can be based on affinity, ministry assignment, or geography. Strong leaders could also participate as desirable. Although the principal purpose of cohorts would be to serve the personal and ministerial needs of the participants in each group, The Foursquare Church would want to develop a way to collect the learning, best practices, life-lessons, and insights generated by the cohorts.

The sponsoring by The Foursquare Church of formal and/or informal gatherings for women in ministry leadership at divisional, district, and denominational gatherings

These gatherings would provide opportunities for fellowship, for building relationships, for networking, and for identifying coaches and mentors for life and ministry.

The full partnership and participation of Foursquare Women International in the life and ministry of The Foursquare Church

This partnership would include the expectation that FWI join with the president, the board of directors, and the national church in the implementation, oversight, and refinement of many of the new opportunities that result from these recommendations. However, it may prove to be advantageous to have a separate office/appointment dedicated to the intentional attracting and retaining of female leaders.

A means of measuring the success of any adopted action steps, behaviors, and processes

The success of this initiative may be variously defined, but any definition must include the most important outcome: more women serving in all aspects of the leadership of The Foursquare Church. This initiative must be measured and assessed for the same reasons and in the same ways that The Foursquare Church measures the fruit of its collective ministry and demonstrable evidences of the grace of God among us.

A Foursquare Church board approved accountability structure

This structure would necessarily interface with the measuring and assessment of outcomes and would include specific responses to situations or individuals actively undermining the commitment of The Foursquare Church to release women to serve in ministry leadership assignments.

Conclusion

It is quite obvious that some of the proposals for future action are quite easily implementable, and others will require significant processing and development. However, the goal of The Foursquare Church is to encourage and equip both men and women to be most effective in their work in the Kingdom—and that is a goal that will be pursued regardless of the effort required to achieve it.

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(Explains the gender bias in translation of nouns and pronouns, discusses gender-inclusive language)

Women In Leadership Ministry

This booklet is to assist readers toward understanding a biblical principal honored by the fellowship of The Foursquare Church. Since its very inception, this church movement has held steadfast to the priority of empowering and releasing women to serve in the church leadership roles, including pastors, missionaries, evangelists and wherever Christs calls them. This has not only been a practice among us, but a treasured and widely held value.

These pages while refusing to be contentious, demonstrate that complete equality in ministry is nothing less than heart-felt obedience to what the Bible commands.

The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (The Foursquare Church), founded by Aimee Semple McPherson in Los Angeles in 1923, is "foursquare" in the full meaning of the word: "Firm, steady, unswerving, and marked by boldness and conviction." We emphasize the four essential ministries of the Lord Jesus:
A Savior— (John 3:16, Acts 4:12)
The Baptizer in the Holy Spirit— (Mark 1:8; Acts 2:4)
The Healer—(Hebrews 13:8; James 5:14-15)
The Soon Coming King—(John 14:3; I Thessalonians 4:16-17)

The Foursquare Church, born in revival and continues to proclaim the message of Holy Spirit-filled renewal, currently has more than 50,000 churches, throughout the world, with more than 6 million members and adherents.

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