

Men and Women's Ministry Opportunities at Candeo Church

To reflect God's beautiful design at Candeo Church, we desire to articulate and embody a theological vision of complementarianism, a vision of men and women, not only in marriage, but also in ministry, that both honors the Lord and results in human flourishing. This paper explains what we believe the Bible teaches about gender complementarity and how we live this out particularly within the ministry of Candeo Church.

Our Beliefs are Found in the Bible

Our foundation for life and ministry starts with the understanding that the Bible is God's inspired and authoritative Word. As affirmed in our statement of beliefs, we believe the Bible "... has God for its Author, salvation for its end, and truth – without any mixture of error – for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy" (Ps. 19:7-11; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). Any attempt to understand personhood and gender must begin with divine revelation and God's created order.

The Bible teaches that God created two complementary sexes of humans, male and female, to bear His image together (Gen. 1:27-28; Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6). This distinction in gender represents an essential characteristic of personhood and reflects an essential part of being created in God's image.

As outlined in Scriptures, we believe that men and women are absolutely equal in essence, dignity and value and are complementary by divine design. Gender does not merely represent a social construct but, instead, represents a reality present in every human from birth. Men and women are not interchangeable.

From the opening pages of Scripture, we find that God, in His wisdom and providence, created two complementary sexes for our good and His glory. In light of His good created order and the fact that men and women both share in divine image bearing, God desires us to embrace our genders as a gift and to have different yet complementary roles and responsibilities in the church and home. This theological view of seeing men and women equal in worth yet different in roles in the home and the church is called complementarianism and is the view we hold and feel best fits the teaching of the Scriptures. We long to model complementarianism not only in our homes, but also in all areas of church life at Candeo. These role distinctions do not arise from cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity nor are they specific in application to the churches they address. These distinctions are an integral part of God's plan for humanity, as revealed in the Scriptures. We should recognize them as God's grace to men and women, protecting, preserving and practicing them for His glory, our joy, and for the sake of human flourishing (Gen. 2:18-25; 1 Cor. 11:2-16, 14:33-35; Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).

To reflect God's beautiful design at Candeo Church, we desire to articulate and embody this theological vision of complementarianism in every part of our ministry. We want to be obedient to the Scriptures, honor the Lord, and give opportunities for men and women to flourish in their roles. This paper seeks to describe that vision by explaining what we believe Scripture teaches about gender complementarity as it relates to men and women in ministry, as well as how we humbly strive to live this out at Candeo Church.

Men and Women Serve God Together

Our desire is to help people find their greatest joy in Jesus. To see this happen, we labor to make disciples that make disciples for the progress of the gospel, resulting in vibrant churches throughout the world. We believe the Bible explicitly encourages and assumes that both men and women will be equally involved in that disciple making mission through the church. As it relates to women specifically, we see that Jesus welcomed women among His disciples, taught them (Luke 10:39) and vitally involved them in His ministry (Luke 8:1-3). Paul shows us that older women teaching biblical wisdom to younger women is a noble, beautiful, and necessary task (Titus 2:3-5). Proverbs commands young men to listen “to your father’s instruction, and don’t reject your mother’s teaching” (Proverbs 1:8, 6:20). Paul spoke of Timothy’s faith “that first lived in your grandmother Lois, then in your mother Eunice, and that I am convinced is in you also” (2 Timothy 1:5). Phoebe, a servant of the church of Cenchreae, is commended by Paul, having participated in his gospel ministry (Rom. 16:1-2). Euodia and Syntyche, two women in Philippi, contended for the gospel at Paul’s side (Phil. 4:3). Priscilla, with her husband Aquila, took Apollos into their home and “explained the way of God to him more accurately” (Acts 18:26) and we see men and women called to a ministry of “teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom” in the Colossian church (Col. 3:16). We celebrate the biblical picture of men and women serving the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ together. We rejoice in biblical examples of men and women using their gifts in the Church for the glory of God.

The Bible depicts a beautiful vision of men and women laboring alongside one another in the world and the Church for the sake of the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 12:4-31).

Spiritual gifts are not given to one gender or another. When we don’t empower both sexes to engage and use their gifts in complementarian partnership, both genders suffer,

and the mission of the Church—to proclaim the gospel and make disciples of all nations—suffers.

In light of the belief that male and female image bearers flourish in partnership, we expect that the primary relationship between Christian men and women is that of brotherly and sisterly love. We note that the Bible upholds the metaphor of siblinghood as the primary descriptor for male-female partnering in the Church. The concept that is taught in the New Testament is that the Church ought to have the kind of love for one another that is reserved for blood brothers and sisters. This uniquely Christian disposition reminds us that we ought to see each other as a family in a special sense. Therefore, the primary relationship in the local church between men and women is the relationship of brothers and sisters, united in Christ, not one gender subordinate to another. We affirm that cultivating an environment of brotherly and sisterly love is at the heart of complementarianism. These relationships should be marked by honor, care, and sacrifice for one another.

Men and Women - Equal in Worth Yet Different in Roles

We affirm that equal involvement in the church between men and women does not entail interchangeable involvement. Although men and women are portrayed as equals throughout Scripture, we believe the Bible reserves the office of elder/pastor specifically for qualified men (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Scripture calls elders to lead the church (1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:1-2), preach the Word (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9), protect the church from false teaching (Acts 20:17, 28-31; Titus 1:9), pray for and visit the sick (James 5:14), equip the saints for ministry (Eph. 4:11-12), and use proper judgment in theological and doctrinal matters (Acts 15). In shepherding, overseeing,

leading, caring for, and praying for the local church, elders practice sacrificial male headship. Therefore, although we encourage all men and women to actively participate in the life of the church, we reserve the office of elder, and the responsibilities unique to it, for certain qualified men within the church. Apart from the role of pastor/elder, we believe the Bible explicitly encourages and assumes that women will vitally serve in all other ministry roles within the Church. Based on the conclusions drawn from Scripture, we have created a list of affirmations and denials that further encompass our beliefs on gender and the roles of men and women in ministry.

Affirmations and Denials

We affirm that both men and women have been created in the image of God and are held accountable to the responsibilities that come with reflecting our Creator.

We deny that either gender has been given or is entitled to greater dignity in society, the home, the church or the kingdom of God.

We affirm that both men and women are needed and necessary for the health and ministry of the church. Godly men and women should be visible partners in the corporate life of the church, using their diverse gifts for the good of the body. Simply put, all Christians contribute to the ministry of the church.

We deny that the church can flourish without brotherly/sisterly partnership. We deny that a church can exist in which the men flourish and the women do not, or vice versa.

We affirm that the role/function of elder is reserved for qualified men. Elders are distinctly responsible for leading, teaching, protecting, and caring for the Church.

We deny that the role of elder being withheld from women diminishes their importance or their influence in the church. The indispensable help women were created to give can and should be exercised in all manner of roles/offices in the church, excepting those reserved for qualified men.

We affirm that God calls men to a unique teaching role in the church (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12), showing a beautiful leadership that God established for man at creation (Gen. 1:26-28, 2:15-25 ; 1 Tim. 2:13). These teachers should seek to draw out, be shaped by, and share invaluable wisdom and helpful insights from godly women.

We deny that God has limited any spiritual gifts to either gender, including the gifts of teaching and leadership, and we seek to help men and women express those gifts in various appropriate contexts within the ministries of Candeo Church.

We affirm that all members of the church should be in glad submission to the elders, and that all, including the elders, should be in glad and sacrificial submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the Head of His Church.

We deny that all women are subject to the leadership and authority of all men. Further, biblical submission is not indicative of subordination or inequality, as seen in the Son's submission to the Father (John 6:38; Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Cor. 11:3; Mt. 26:39).

We affirm that complementarianism, rightly practiced, will lead to the recognizable flourishing of both sexes.

We deny any version of complementarianism or theological position that leads to the subjugation, abuse or neglect of any man or woman. We strongly denounce any distorted view of scriptures that contributes to the belief that biblical manhood or

womanhood includes or permits practices such as marginalization, subjugation, intimidation, neglect or any form of abuse.

We affirm that all men and women have been created in the image of God, whether single or married.

We deny that men and women must be married to be meaningful participants in the corporate life of the church. We deny that single men possess any authority over single women. The way that they love and serve their sisters should not patronize, victimize or show force, but rather should be the fruit of brotherly love, and vice versa.

Complementarianism within Staffing and Ministry Contexts

We desire to live out and display the beauty of complementarianism, not only within our families, but also within our church staff and various ministry contexts. In coming to these conclusions and how to implement them, we recognize that some will find our position and practice on men and women in staffing and ministry far too conservative. We also recognize that others will find our position and practice on men and women in staffing and ministry far too progressive. We ask for charity from both as we humbly strive to help men and women use their gifts so that all might find their greatest joy in Jesus Christ.

Additionally, we believe it is important to note that a theological confession of complementarianism does not necessarily result in uniform complementarian practice everywhere, for all Christians. We are eager to work with brothers and sisters, churches and other ministries, who view these issues differently than we do.

As we humbly seek to understand God's beautiful purposes within complementarianism, we have sought to bring application to these truths in various staffing and ministry environments at Candeo Church.

Staffing at Candeo Church

We seek to hire both men and women for every staff role, for the health of the church, outside of the role of staff pastors. This gives both men and women opportunities to advance and grow in leadership and includes women participating in every level of our organization, from college ministry to director level leadership.

Ministry at Candeo Church

- **Weekend Services**

Every member of the church body actively participates in our weekend worship services—not just those on the platform. All roles are open to both men and women—including, but not limited to, leading in prayer, offering exhortation, reading Scripture, sharing personal Scripture application, sharing a testimony, assisting with baptism, and distributing the elements of communion—with the exception of preaching or teaching the Word of God and officiating the ordinances (baptism and the Lord’s Supper). These responsibilities are reserved for elders or elder-qualified men¹.

- **Salt and Youth**

Our youth and college celebration gatherings often include mixed-gender crowds. We have decided to have elders or qualified men² teach at the junior high age level and higher. Women are fully encouraged to exercise all roles including leading and teaching in mixed-gender crowds below the junior high age.

¹ An elder-qualified man is either A) a man who has been trained, has been vetted and meets all of the specific qualifications of an elder at Candeo Church but for non-disqualifying reasons may not be serving as an Elder (and may never be) or B) is an elder at another church but is not an elder at Candeo Church.

² A qualified man is one whose character has been vetted and who has been trained to teach with competence.

- **Equipping Contexts**

Mixed-gender teaching environments are overseen by elders and led by elders or qualified men. These men are responsible for the biblical teaching within the class but are encouraged to seek out, equip, and involve gifted men and women to assist in the leadership of the equipping class.

Expressions of assistant leadership may include leading in prayer or discussion, offering exhortation, reading or sharing personal Scripture application, sharing a testimony, and organizing class logistics.

Gender-specific teaching environments are led by individuals of the same gender—men lead men's classes, and women lead women's classes.

- **Connection Groups & Missions Teams**

Connection Group leaders—both men and women—are expected to set the pace for holiness, provide care, and facilitate content for their groups. These leaders do not carry the full weight of spiritual authority or doctrinal teaching; rather, all of our Connection Groups function under the loving oversight of our Elder Team, who carry the responsibility of spiritual authority and biblical teaching for our church.

Gender-specific groups are led by leaders of the same gender. In mixed-gender groups, men and women lead together, complementing each other in partnership and allowing them to minister according to God’s design and their distinct giftings— each contributing uniquely to build up the body of Christ.

While men and women lead together in mixed-gender contexts, this does not imply that they serve interchangeably or in identical ways. Women are encouraged to teach, disciple, and exercise leadership among the other women in the group, just as men do among the men.

We expect our global missions teams to function in a similar manner.