

BORN TO SERVE: CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN PASTORS

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Liberal Studies.

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## DEDICATION

I am dedicating this thesis to my beloved mother, Loree Middleton. Although she has passed away, her words of wisdom that she gave me during her life continues to drive me to pursue things with all diligence.

Thank you, Mother.

To my loving and patient husband, Apostle Henry Foster. I dedicate this thesis to you as a testament to your acceptance of women pastors and a passion to see the Christian church embrace the call to serve, rest upon women as well as men. I honor you and thank you for all that you have done to mold this position.

It's not how fast you run, but do you make it to the finish line?

*The spirit of the finisher.*

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## ABSTRACT

This research attempted to develop a resource for women desiring to move past negative Christian attitudes toward women pastors and preachers. The two main ideas considered in this research was the Christian church and society's role in the development of the attitudes and the church's actions taken to support them. These two concepts have the ability to either promote or hinder women in ministry to pursue what they believe they were born and called to do. However, too often, it is latter that has occurred. The hinderance is expressed different ways, which were explored as part of this project.

It was concluded that the Christian attitudes toward women pastors have varied throughout the existence of the faith. It is the negative attitudes that have had a significant impact. Faced with these opposing views, women have turned from their calling or making the choice to pursue it difficult. In some instances, women have even considered leaving the church. These negative attitudes promote gender inequality, which affects not only adult women but also young girls as they see and experience.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Can you recall as a child how you were told that some things were for girls or boys or for men versus women? For example, girls play with dolls while boys play with cars. I know that I do. Who knew that this would be a means to help distinguish males and females and perhaps a contributor to gender inequality. Personally, I remember seeing boys being chastised for playing with or doing anything that remotely looked like a girl or what was deemed as something that a female would be doing. This difference established between girls and boys has become a means for parents to teach their children the roles or societal norms for their own gender. This is not an uncommon practice for parents and other people in the child's environment, resulting in a "gendered" situation or environment where emphasis is placed on a specific gender through societal norms and attitudes. In general, the Christian church has served as a means for men, women and their families to learn about their identity, their roles, and how they are to live their lives. This is done using the historical information contained in the Bible. It is also done through the teaching of how to apply the scriptures to one's life. Just as parents are instrumental in teaching roles or societal norms, the Christian church is also a source for gender role definition and attitudes toward each gender.

Both men and women are born to serve. Unfortunately, their service is sometimes viewed differently based on their gender and Christians understanding of scriptures and gender roles. The role of women and their service appears to be the most challenged and controversial of the two genders. Thus, this thesis will explore how Christian attitudes towards women's service as pastors can have an impact on their willingness and ability to serve. I understand that there are other religions and faiths where women are feeling or experience gender inequality as well.

However, I chosen for this manuscript to address the area of my faith, which is the Christian faith. Thus, it will exclude attitudes towards men pastors. It will also exclude gender inequality experienced by non-Christian women. Although, I will briefly look at societal norms, my primary focus will be in the context of the Christian church body and more specifically within the Protestant aspect (which is made up of several different denominations).

I am a Christian; and I also identify myself as one born to serve. In addition, I am a woman pastor. This thesis topic has been an interest of mine for long time. In my profession as a pastor, I found myself faced with pastoring people who had come from various backgrounds and teachings. Each parishioner (church member) brought and continues to bring their own understanding about the role of women in the church and a personal position as to whether they believe that women can and should be in leadership. Unfortunately, some have accepted the patriarchal-defined ideas about women and rejected serving under a female pastor or with women leaders. This is one effect of gender inequality. The promotion of the distinct roles seems to stem from the very beginning of history as we know it. This is not a situation isolated to my church but rather it is a common problem in the Christian body. It can be found in church member homes and member-to-member relationships. It also can be witnessed in religious education and literature, in which case a set of scriptural references are used to impose the concept that women should not be accepted as pastors. As a result, we find women who struggle as pastors. This struggle is the result of the lack of receptivity and the belief that women are usurping authority over the male, which is not allowed according to scriptures. This scriptural application is done with misunderstanding and possibly even fear. Therefore, women are not allowed to speak.

When these women attempt to speak out against the gender inequality or pursue what they were born to do, then they are labeled as feminists. Here, the term or view of a feminist is used negatively. A feminist in this context is viewed as a trouble-maker who is trying to upset society with her (as it is usually assumed that a feminist is female only) unruly or unnatural ideology. This is for the most part far from the truth. The Christian feminists that I have encountered, including myself, have a desire to see unity in the Christian body, promotion of gender equality, and women achieving what they were born to do without hindrances. In the end, I want to help women pastors embrace being born to serve as pastors but also aid in eliminating gender inequality in my own church and hopefully elsewhere.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE BIBLE AND THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

When considering the topic of Christian attitudes toward women pastors (and preachers), it is important to review or discuss the role of women. First, it is necessary to review the role in the context of the Bible. This is necessary because the Bible is supposed to be the basis or foundation upon which Christians live their lives. It should be elevated above what society defines as its norms. Afterwards, the church is a place where Christians do not only learn but execute many of the principles and activities as defined in the Bible. The church is one of several places – others are school, work, and home, to name a few – where Christians get to carry-out the direction and plan of God according to what they receive and understanding from scriptures. If there is a definition of the role of a woman, the first place that a Christian should look is in the Bible. After looking in the Bible, it becomes critical that they study what they have read and seek God for understanding. This is critical to prevent error in their interpretation and/or application.

What was the role of a woman in the Bible? When looking at the role(s) of women and whether they were born to serve, one could begin with the book of Genesis and the Garden of Eden. In chapter one of this book, it is explained how God made mankind (both male and female) and gave them dominion over everything (Genesis 1:26). Furthermore, He gave both male and female a joint responsibility to work together as they “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28). He created both male and female together, which means Eve was not an after-thought (Genesis 1:27). Therefore, they both were in the mind and plan of God from the very beginning. One could conclude that they both were created (given birth or life) for work or service.

Throughout the Bible, women are depicted primarily in the role of a family member – such as wife, daughter, sister, widow and/or mother. Women often appeared to be acknowledged in relationship to their husband, father, brother, and/or children. Some women also identified by other means like prostitution or specific needs or traits. Examples of the well-known women that fit this image include Eve (wife of Adam), Lot’s daughters (in Genesis, chapter 19), Miriam (sister of Moses and Aaron), Rahab who protects the spies (in Joshua chapter 2), Ruth (the widow of Elimelech in chapter one of the book of Ruth) and Mary – mother of Jesus. In addition to these roles, women were highlighted as servants or helpers. Examples would include the women that followed Jesus and helped those who aided in the spreading of the gospel/early church. From these examples, one could conclude that the role(s) of place of women were their homes and work in the church.

What kind of church work or role could they have? It is unclear as to how women received or performed church work. For the purpose of this effort, I will group church work into two main categories – leaders and members or laymen. The laymen category will not be the focus of this paper. However, gender inequality can be found in this group. My focus, as indicated already, is on women leaders, with an emphasis on women pastors. With regards to female leaders, few are highlighted in the scriptures. However, this does not mean that they may not have been more, but we must utilize the information that most Christians have accessible to them which includes a small population of women leaders. These women leaders can be found in the Old and New Testament of the Bible. In the Old Testament, very few women are highlighted in a manner where readers could conclude that the women in leadership were accepted. In my opinion, such acceptance helps to breed positive attitudes toward women in leadership. Some of which may have served as leaders indirectly – such Rahab (highlighted in the book of Joshua) –

or held what may seem as significant roles like that of a prophetess. Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, is one of the first documented prophetess. She served along with her two brothers - with Moses at the helm and Aaron as the high priest. Another prophetess was Huldah, the wife of Shallum (as recorded in 2 Kings chapter 22 and 2 Chronicles chapter 34). Huldah was visited by King Josiah's priest who had been ordered to "go and inquire of the Lord" (2 Kings 22:13). The priest appears to go to Huldah without hesitation and returns with a response from the Lord via Huldah. Afterwards, the king executes a plan based on the response to try to help himself and countrymen (2 Kings chapter 22).

Deborah would be another example of a woman who was accepted in a leadership role. Her role was a judge and prophetess, which was a highly esteemed role in her culture and community. Men accepted her, including those in leadership themselves. She was viewed as such a prominent figure that her presence was requested during execution of a specific task set before one of the commanding officers of the troops. Deborah was the only woman judge that we are aware of. What is astonishing is how she was accepted even before there was ever a women's liberation movement. In fact, women in ministry were affirmed in the Christian Church "long before the role of women became a secular or liberal agenda" (Keener, 2015). Deborah was not seen as too strong or one who was domineering. Rather, she was viewed as an essential help that was needed to execute the plan of God, which was see deliver a victory to the Israelites (Judges, chapters 4 – 5). Again, one can only wonder why after her leadership were more women accepted in leadership roles. One reason was because the societal norms had not changed. She was one-woman leader amongst one group of people on the earth. These examples were pre-Christianity.

What has been the role or place of women in the Christian Church? Prior to the Christian Church becoming an official organization, women were involved in various aspects of Biblical history. For example, one of the Prophetesses mentioned in the New Testament is Anna, who had the opportunity to serve at the temple and was shown that the Messiah, Jesus had been born. Just as described when looking at women's role in the Bible, we find that they still have a role in the home and a relationship linked to their family. However, we see varying roles or places for women in the early Christian church. In the early Church, women served in various roles – such as disciples, deacons, pastors and apostles (Kroeger, 1988). There were women amongst the disciples that followed Jesus Christ. In fact, “women were the last disciples at the cross and the first at the empty tomb” (Kroeger, 1988). There is Mary the Mother of Jesus, who has been viewed as a leader among the female disciples of Christ as she served as an example for before them. Another Mary followed Jesus as a disciple and could witness and carry the news of His resurrection to the rest of His disciples. Records of this are captured in the writings of Matthew, Mark and Luke, which “all record that a significant group of women had followed Jesus in his Galilean ministry, and that they were present at his execution—when the male disciples were conspicuously absent” (Kroeger, 1988). Women were present during the ministry of Jesus and “then later the Pauline mission was energized by the presence of women leaders” (Bridges, 1998). Examples of this can be found in the different letters written by Paul, who affirmed and supported women in ministry (Keener, 2015).

As the New Testament church developed (as seen in the book of Acts), the early Church, who remembered the actions of Jesus and watched the work of church leaders, like Lydia and Phoebe. Lydia was a Gentile business woman. After embracing the teachings of Paul, she opened her home to him. This would occur more than once. She also opened her home for Christians to

gather and be taught (Acts 16:40). Due to her contributions, she would be used to define a place in time, in which women in leadership was valued; and began to be referred to as the “Lydia phase” (Bridges, 1998). However, she was not the only woman to open her home up for Christians to gather. Other women also opened their homes to support the spread Christianity and growth of the “church”. In the book of Romans (a letter written by Apostle Paul), Paul introduces Phoebe to the church at Cenchrea (chapter 16, verses 1-2). In this text, she is referred to as a sister and a deacon. Her being referred to as a deacon was significant. The significance is that it helps to demonstrate the acceptance of a woman serving in a role that had been also given to a man – such as Stephen in the book of Acts chapter 6, which is where the first deacons were selected.

Several women even served as leaders some of these house churches in various cities of the Roman Empire. Some of their names – such as Priscilla, Chloe, and Apphia – have been also recorded within the New Testament and other historical writings. (Kroeger, 1988). Priscilla is also acknowledged in the book of Acts, chapter 18. She is mentioned along with her husband but listed before her husband. Although it is unclear as to whether Paul viewed her to have more or less value than her husband in ministry, some researchers believe that by listing her name first that her ministry work was quite notable (Liefeld, 1987). Either way, Paul acknowledges her as a “fellow worker” and as one who risked her life for the ministry (Liefeld, 1987). Later, in the New Testament, we are exposed to the four daughters of Philip, who appear in Acts 21:9 as additional examples of prophetesses as well (Kroeger, 1988). Other women who are mentioned as having served in the New Testament included Tryphena, Tryphosa, Mary, Persis and the mother of Rufus. These women are mentioned in the book of Romans, chapter 16 by Apostle Paul.

As stated earlier, women held leadership roles in house church settings and were called elders by some. Catherine Clark Kroeger (1997), in her research, highlights how several of the 2nd century missionary trips included women. She found it worth noting that these women did not accompany the apostles because they were wives but rather they were active participants in the ministerial service as colleagues. Although their role may have been to ministry to housewives, they were still minister partners. Their role was significant in during these trips because through them that the Gospel “penetrated also the women’s quarters without any scandal being aroused” (Kroeger, 1988). Although it was not uncommon for women to assist and accompany the apostles during their mission trips, it was also not uncommon them to be an apostle or a pastor. One notable and controversial apostle was Junia. She became controversial as things began to change regarding the view of a woman’s place in ministry. Junia was one of the early Christian church’s female servants and leaders (Romans 16:7). She served along with Paul and was an example of God’s plan for men and women to work in unity in ministry. In the book of Romans, Junia is mentioned as one of the apostles. All these women were acknowledged as hard workers or key contributors in the cause of spreading of the Gospel. Thus, it would seem clear that Paul himself had little to no issue with women serving in ministry or in leadership roles. This is especially notable since the women of Rome experienced varying degrees of gender inequality at the time of Paul.

As the Christian church grew, the varying of degrees of gender inequality continued. Our country’s religious make-up is the approximately 76 percent of Christian (CIA, 2015). American Christianity had its beginning with the immigration of Europeans to this country. Today, America is a country full of diverse groups. Yet, the diverse groups have struggled through the years with several injustices, including gender inequality. At a high level, these groups differ in

various dimensions – such as by race, education, language, cultures and religion. Within Christianity, there are different branches – of which Protestantism is one – and denominations. Despite the different Christian branches or denominations – such as the Lutheran, Methodist, and Pentecostal, few have not been affected by gender inequality and have possibly contributed in some way to the attitudes toward women serving in ministry and women pastors. Through their evolving doctrines and practices, women have experienced varying attitudes and degrees of access to opportunities to serve as church leaders.

During the mid-1600s, a movement in England became a vehicle to help release women into ministry. One instance of this unprecedented allowance for women to serve in leadership was supported by the founder of the Quakers, George Fox. He “believed that since the Holy Spirit dwells in men and women alike, and since it is He who rightly interprets the Bible, both genders have the same capacity to speak for God” (Grady, 2000). Quaker women would then be allowed to minister in various places. It was observed that these women could influence many both in their church and their surrounding community. Some of their societal contributions included leading “the way in the abolition of slavery and the fight for women’s suffrage and prison reform” (Grady, 2000). Throughout the years, women have made varying contributions during other movements – such as Methodism revival movement, Salvation Army and the Pentecostal Outpouring (Grady, 2000).

Amongst the Protestant churches, for instance, female roles varied. At times, some denominations embraced women in leadership roles. Yet, many churches are divided over what roles are appropriate for females to hold. For example, the Pentecostal churches are “divided over the appropriate roles of men and women” (Ingersoll, 2001). Ingersoll also learned at the differences between black and white church congregations. She observed that both church

populations have the same challenges as it pertains to gendered situations. (Ingersoll, 2001). According to *Baptist and Methodist Faiths in America*, written by Julie Ingersoll, some congregations were willing to give complete equality to men and women in church leadership (2001). Yet, some groups insisted the highest positions should be held by men. There were varying reasons but most tied to the belief that women were inferior and were biblically restricted from being in leadership roles. Some churches, however, had decided to offer leadership training and opportunities for both genders. This would afford women the opportunity to be at least prepared potentially for a leadership role. This would still not guarantee that they would be allowed to be pastors or other high leadership roles.

The Mount Sinai Holiness Church of America is one example of a church offering opportunities for women to hold leadership roles. Mount Sinai Holiness, founded by Ida Robbins in 1923, had a large representation of women amongst its leadership. Another example is the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), which does not ordain women, allowed women to hold less significant leadership roles (Ingersoll, 2001).

The Fundamentalists were another group that were outspoken regarding the role of women. The Fundamentalists have been viewed as a very conservative wing of all the religious groups. “There is evidence of early Fundamentalist support for women as pastors, women’s active involvement in ministry leadership” (Ingersoll, 2003). When needed the Fundamentalists promoted and very much encouraged women to be in leadership roles. However, after the 1940s, many were urging women to return to their homes and limiting to opportunities for women to have leadership roles. (Ingersoll, 2003).

According to Ingersoll, this decision was “in accordance with, and part of” what the overall society was doing. (2003). I would tend to agree with Ingersoll. It was during the 1940s that

more and more were moving from homemaking to working jobs previously held by men who were now World War II service men. It was the 1950s that women appeared to be encouraged to return home as these service men returned home from war. This led to an understanding challenge for the nation and both gendered situations. The society would then witness women preferring the workforce and a more of a contributing role over homemaking and childbearing. Unfortunately, this would have an effect even in the Christian church.

## CHAPTER 3

### GENDER INEQUALITY IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Throughout history, there have been various individuals or groups of people who have fought for the right to be considered or treated as equal. It would seem that the need to fight for this right (to be equal) would appear unnecessary. Yet, it is very much necessary. In fact, one of the most common fight is for the right to be accepted or treated fairly. The desire to be treated fairly and equally can be found being expressed by the young, the old, among ethnic groups, and in gendered situations. For the young, many fight for the right to be respected like their older co-workers. For older people, there is a fight to be respected and valued as the younger generations flood the job market. In addition, some fight for the right to maintain their wealth and power. For ethnic groups, the fight is one of acceptance and the elimination of biases. Similar to this fight is the fight for gender equality. As time has progressed, gender inequality appears to have become more and more evident. There is not one country and ethnic group that has not been affected by gender inequality. Another way to look at it is every country and group on the globe have contributed and/or had to address gender inequality.

Unfortunately, the church also has been an active participant in the existence and continuation of gender inequality. Its participation has involved influencing the mindsets (which includes attitudes) and behaviors of its members through scriptural and societal-based teachings and practices (e.g. who can hold positions, organizational structure, etc.). In my opinion, the most challenged group affected by gender inequality has been the female population. One example of this can be found in the attitudes toward women who serve in church leadership roles – such as woman pastors and preachers.

As a result, the Christian church has also experienced in some ways a resistance to its gender inequality. One way this resistance manifested is via the feminist movement. (McLeod-Harrison, 2015). Regardless of the tradition or form of feminism, it is a pursuit of obtaining for women the same privileges, rights and power that men have. These privileges, rights and power when obtained would reduce the unfair treatment of women and overall those in a perceived lower-class. Sometimes, people associate feminists with lesbianism and men-bashing. However, a feminist is not necessarily a negative thing to be or a hateful person. A feminist is a person that desires the pursuit of such privileges, rights and power. During my graduate studies, I realized that I was a feminist and that feminists could be any gender or age. Their focus was that of gaining privileges, rights and power for women with the end result being gender equality. It is unfortunate that Christian women who desire to promote gender equality have been labeled as a feminist in a negative way. Personally, I have seen very few men promoting gender equality viewed as a feminist and even fewer as a feminist in a negative way.

Some women pursuing the chance to serve as pastors and leaders in the Christian Church have been viewed as Christian feminists. Although they are described above, they are not women who should be associated with men-bashing or any specific sexual orientation movements. The Christian feminists primary focus is promoting and gaining gender equality in the Christian church structure. They are concerned about increasing opportunities for both the young and the old female gender to serve in their local churches and throughout the Christianity body. They often met with opposition from both men and women who have embraced the patriarchal view that women have no place in leadership roles in the church.

One key element of the Christian patriarchy that appears constant is people embracing and elevating their own level of comfort or personal interpretation over the scriptural examples

of women being accepted in ministry. The unfortunate result of this is the enslavement of women as it relates to their rights or religious freedom. An example of this point will be discussed later in this paper as the reasoning for the “Lydia phase” to disappear and the Fundamentalist encouraging their women to return to the homes. It also is no wonder why there is a mix of mindsets regarding the women serving in ministry. With the many struggles with the acceptance of women pastors, it is no wonder that Christian feminism has risen. An instance of this would be the various women’s groups and movements.

The Concerned Women for America (CWA) group, for example, worked to ensure that Christian women were well-represented in the feminist movement. The feminist movement alone did not align with the Christian beliefs. The result was its rhetoric being rejected by many Christian women. However, the founder of the CWA (Beverly LaHaye) was stirred by what she saw in the movement. Thus, she took action and started the CWA in 1979. Its overall vision is to impact the society using “education and public policy” all for Christ (CWALAC, 2018). The CWA first focused on educating women on the Equal Rights Amendment and developing prayer support (CWALAC, 2018). This appeared to be a viable avenue to use to support the need for reform in the church as it relates to women’s rights. The reasoning was to properly address the fundamental mindset that women were intended to be valued and accepted in ministry as God had intended. This effort would include women and men (that supported the feminist movement) learning what the scriptures said and meant. Later, the CWA group would shift into more of a political and legal role to tackle church and state concerns. (Ingersoll, 2008).

Catherine Clark Kroeger helps the Christian feminist cause by shining light on how the early church was taunted and criticized for attracting women among other kinds of people. One example of this was Celsus, a 2nd-century detractor of the faith. (Kroeger, 1988). Later, she

shares that “high-born Christian women” pursued the scripture and knowledge of them, both in Hebrew and Greek. This would indicate that the women were not uneducated. Kroeger’s research also provides a view about how these educated women were viewed by some men of their time. One instance of this was found in the late 300s with a circle of Roman women. These women were known to have studied with Jerome. It was said that they demonstrated such scholarship that Jerome “thought nothing of referring some church elders to Marcella for the resolution” issues requiring a methodical approach (Kroeger, 1988).

Unfortunately, the idea of women in leadership roles was rejected. This exclusion would remain “a curse both in the political and ecclesiastical sectors” for women (Bridges, 1998). As mentioned earlier, the timeframe when women’s leadership was valued began to be referred to as the “Lydia phase”. “The “Lydia phase,” as called by Linda McKinnish Bridges, was the moment in a religious movement when women can freely serve the Church. It began to “disappear as the religious leaders enforced universal male celibacy” (Bridges, 1998). According to Bridges (1998), Leo IX appeared to be “so intent on making celibacy the requirement of the Church that he ordered the wives of the Roman priests to be taken as slaves.” This would of course have an adverse effect on women serving in leadership roles or ministry in general. Afterwards, the Christian Church would find itself being more and more intentional in its efforts to remove all traces of the woman’s presence in leadership. The desired results were social acceptance and legitimacy as a masculine church (Bridges, 1998). Gaining these results was believed to be needed for the furtherance the societal power structures. “This moment of capitulation, in effect, cursed women and barred their full inclusion into the life of the Church and society.” (Bridges, 1998).

Later, it was determined by Augustine that some Christian women were “better educated in spiritual matters than many a philosopher” (Kroeger, 1988). These same women had a key part in the work of the early church. In fact, for the first few decades, women would be heavily involved in the early church activities. Women leaders would become “one of the best-kept secrets” because of the efforts to not always acknowledge their contributions and successes in Christianity (Kroeger, 1988). “Though they leave much unsaid, still, both Christian and secular writers of the time attest many times to the significant involvement of women in the early growth of Christianity” (Kroeger, 1988).

### 3.1 Society

“Women have traditionally been stereotyped as ineffective leaders” (Bridges, 1998). Some researchers and scholars believe that this stereotyping has to do with the assumption that women are fragile beings. Another belief is that there are distinct attributes of leaders that differ in men and women. In one study, both men and women were asked about the attributes of a strong leader and specific attributes related to women. (Bridges, 1998). Results showed that the respondents did not associate the attributes of a strong leader with that of women. They described women as “sex, mother, wife, soft curves and sensitive” and other terms associated to females. (Bridges, 1998). The researcher concluded “that cultural script says that we are masculine if we are not feminine. And if we are feminine we are not leaders” (Bridges, 1998). Using this research population, one could also conclude that it is the public opinion of this population that “women cannot be leaders because they do not possess the same attributes as a man. One must question, where did this concept or mindset come from? “This gender bias has been our common cultural dilemma” (Bridges, 1998). This dilemma is isolated to a single aspect

of life or environment or even culture. Rather, it crosses all social boundaries, including religion. (Bridges, 1998).

In a gendered situation, the societal norms for genders appear to be defined and presented early in a child's life. Those norms can clearly be seen various ways. These ways could include nonverbal and verbal communication. The nonverbal communication includes things such as purchasing stereotypical or gender geared items (e.g., dolls, trucks), media (e.g. music videos, gender-focused commercials/products, movie/tv show characters), and marketing ads (e.g. printed materials, online, billboards). The nonverbal messaging involves the senses and plants images about the subject. This type of messaging tends to be shared in a repetitious format to guide its watchers to a certain direction without them realizing it. It encourages viewers to adopt attitudes – likes and dislikes – subconsciously and almost effortlessly. On the other hand, verbal messaging involves spoken thoughts and opinions that are shared and sometimes discussed. It could be as simple as saying to a child or an adult that something is not for women or girls. The verbal messaging is not always accompanied with a reason but sometimes seems to imply there is a good reason otherwise it would not be said. The participants of this form of messaging are more usually more alert of the attitudes and thoughts that they are being introduced.

A type of nonverbal messaging that is not often discussed is that of re-writing or erasing the contributions of women in history. For example, some scholars seem unable to agree on the meaning of Romans 16:7 as it pertains to whether Junia was a woman or an apostle if female. Despite this debate, many maintain that Junia is not only a woman but a female apostle. Her gender went unquestioned until the Middle Ages. However, the uncertainty or debate drove a group of translators to seek the changing of Junia's gender to male resulting in the adoption of her names being changed to Junias (the masculine form of Junia). (Kroeger, 1988). In my

opinion, Junia's gender was only questioned because of the desire to prove that women could not be apostles or in such a high-ranking position in the early church. Changing this piece of history would afford support for the mindset and attitude that women are limited in how they can serve in the church.

Negative attitudes toward women could be observed in the home by husbands, in women's economic status, in the arts/drama, and philosophy. For example, in ancient Athens, husbands found their wives to be "boring and good for little" except for the caring of the home and bearing children. Their greatest contribution was to bear children that could serve in battle. Husbands found pleasure in interacting with prostitutes or companions over their own wives. Many women were either slaves or bondservants and had received little respect. Few women had any influence in society, though there were some. The lower classed Roman women also had little respect. Many of the Roman women were enslaved as well. Ancient society philosophers contributed to some of the negative views towards women in general. As time progressed, opportunities did increase for both the Grecian and Roman women. However, the opportunities were not enough to prevent or eliminate the negative attitudes toward women and specifically women pastors.

The tradition of men being the head of the household was not uncommon for homes during the 1950s and 1960s. The culture at the time seemed to promote family and men and women having and maintaining distinct gender roles. These roles appeared to provide structure, order and control. As mentioned earlier, media was one means to provide images that supported this theory. It provided suggestive images regarding women having a certain place in the home, her family and community. This place appeared to be one of softness, gentleness, passiveness, and lacking the ability to be recognized as a leader. Consider the images on tv and in the media

during the 1950s and 1960s – such as Mrs. Joan Cleaver on the television series, *Leave It to Beaver*. Mrs. Cleaver was viewed by many tv watchers as a wholesome woman who know her place. In one episode, Mr. Cleaver explains the role of women to his son. His explanation was in line with the societal or patriarchal view that women were best as homemakers and childbearing. Other similar television programming included *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and *I Love Lucy*, which both echoed the societal norms of women’s role being primarily in the home.

### 3.2 Biblical Teachings

There are a couple main teachings that contribute to the negative attitudes toward women pastors and preachers. One teaching is that women should never rule over a man. The method in which a woman is viewed to rule over a man is by serving in a leadership role. The other common teaching is that women must keep silent in the church. So, where do these thoughts, or teachings derive? There are scriptures which speak to the roles of leaders, men and women, as well as responsibilities of both genders equally. An example of this is found in the following scriptures:

“11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” (1 Timothy 2:11–13; KJV)

“34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law.” (1 Corinthians 14:34; KJV)

Christian men and women both have been found guilty of using these scriptures in support of the argument that women cannot and should teach or serve as pastors. Yet, one must ask the question is this what the writer intended. I am unable to locate another passage gets this close to or forbids

women from being pastors or preaching. Oddly enough, these do not actually say that women cannot be pastors. Ministering or pastoring are not listed here. Interestingly enough, “no denomination applies these passages literally” (Roberts, 1891). The evidence of the lack of a literal application is that many churches allow women to sing, pray and teach Sunday School (Roberts, 1891). All of these require that women are not silent. However, women are instructed to do those things that they can do, which includes being a good help meet (spouse) and being a support of women and children. The support may include teaching depending on the church/denomination, but the teaching is limited to other females – young and old.

In the article entitled, “God's Role for Women in Ministry,” Pastor Doug Batchelor, a Seventh Day Adventist, suggests that women can serve in a leadership role, but it should be limited to leading or teaching other women. Batchelor uses for his basis for this belief Titus 2:3–5. In this text, mature women are instructed to be examples for the less than mature or new Christian female converts. Their focus is encouraged to being “teachers of good things...discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (verse 2:4-5). Pastor Doug educates his readers – who consists of Seventh Day Adventists and other Christians – and his own church members that a woman’s place is partly defined by their maturity or growth in their Christian faith.

As they grow in their belief system, they are charged to disciple other women while “teaching them to exercise self-control, to be affectionate to their own husbands, to correct their children wisely, to be restrained in their passions and desires, to be modest, and to be upright in character” (2015). Doug uses this scripture to help define and communicate the patriarchal norm for women in the Christian church. In this same article, he refutes arguments or positions regarding women serving as pastors and other kinds of leaders. His attitude and teaching to

people is that women have a role in Christian ministry, but it is limited to serving women in public. In addition, he is firm in his belief that the Bible allows that women to share the gospel with men but not in public. He ascribes that the condition by which women can do this is “if 1) it is done with the husband’s permission; 2) it is done discreetly; and 3) it is done in a way that avoids the appearance of evil” (2015). It is unclear as to what his scriptural basis is for women only being allowed to share the Gospel in private. Interesting enough, Batchelor does not discredit the presence of women in the Bible. He merely does not give credit to their contributions and roles that women held.

In general, gendered roles seem to be birthed out of traditions around what people understood or thought to be acceptable for males and females. Such traditions could be found in various aspects of society and the people’s home life. Societal views of women aided in how women were treated. Examples of these taught roles included women having the responsibility to care for the children and the home. Although some women did work outside of the home, it was expected that their chief role was to have children, care for the children and be homemakers. Traditionally, men were the head of households, but primary responsibility was to go to work and financially provide for the family. It would be the male – rather a father, grandfather or uncle – that would govern the temperament and direction of the home life and define what was acceptable for all members to do or be. It seemed almost unconceivable that a woman would be the head of a household though many families were without the physical presence of a male figure – father or husband.

In my church as a child, I heard pastors and others – both men and women – teach that there were roles and responsibilities for men and women. These roles and responsibilities were different and should not be confused. In addition, I watched men and women sit in separate

gender-based sections of the church. This started me to thinking why this was happening. I could not help but to think is this what God intended. This was clearly the opposite of equality. I also saw no women in key leadership roles – such as apostles and pastors. However, I knew that I was born to be one such a role. In fact, women were only allowed to serve in certain roles – teachers, church secretaries and/or some silent role. How I would achieve this was unclear to me, but I was willing to embrace it and given myself to the journey regardless of the potential attitudes toward women pastors. Oddly enough, I learned and accepted that I was born to be a pastor while still in this Pentecostal environment. However, this environment did not change while I was there. As a result, I began to pursue gaining an understanding about the scriptural basis for women in leadership roles, as well as acceptance of women in such roles.

According to some of my sources (e.g. Bridges, Roberts, Keener), many Christians misinterpreted what happened in the Garden of Eden and/or Paul's writings found in the New Testament. It is important for Christians and researchers of biblical information to carefully pursue information such as the role of women in the church or gender equality. The reason for the word of caution is because it is possible to take scripture out of context. Unfortunately, sometimes, people then try to build a doctrine or system on one scripture alone or a misunderstanding of scriptures. One example of this can be found with regards to 1 Timothy and Titus. In these two books of the Bible, Timothy and Titus received instructions about how the church should be structured and run (Melick, 2015). In these letters, the writer lays out a clear hierarchical methodology. In my church as a child, it was believed that it was in these instructions that writer of Timothy and Titus gave the church order to be a place where men and not women were to lead (Melick, 2015).

In contrast, other Christians and researchers used scriptures such as Galatians 3:28 to justify women being able to serve as pastors. It is the Galatians 3:28, a reader learns that in Christ “there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither bond nor free, nor is there male nor female” (KJV) as it relates to salvation. It further expounds one could categorize the groupings highlighted here as suggesting that ethnic, economic and gender demographics does not govern one’s ability to receive salvation (Melick, 2015). Thus, all have an equal standing or opportunities in Christ. “Readers must exercise great care, therefore, to determine the nature of the issue under discussion in order to understand and apply the message relevantly today.” (Melick, 2015). Otherwise, the information believed to be gained could misrepresent the actual intent or context, as well as miseducate those that the information is shared with. “This misinterpretation accounted for the large number of late 19th century churches that imposed silence on their women in the public assemblies” (Peifer, 2015). While other researchers challenged the practice of submission, like John Fohl’s 1893 writing, which questioned how the women were being “held in bondage” by their leaders. Fohl’s also brought up that the women not able to be acknowledged in anyway. How could this be when the women had skills and talents that the church could utilize? This would later change for some denominations but not all denominations or Christians may embrace women leaders. This change, however, really can only come with a revelation of what is the true Will of God concerning women and their role in ministry. This entails gaining knowledge and an accurate understanding of the scriptures and having willingness to accept what is learned.

### 3.3 Limiting Opportunities

For many years, women have been met with opposition when they chose to accept the call to preach or try to do the work of a pastor and preacher. This opposition has manifested in

different ways – such as limiting ministry opportunities and rejection (e.g. verbal, nonverbal). Such opposition has resulted in women either not being able to serve as leaders, having a negative impact on their esteem, changing denominations or even leaving the church. The limiting of ministry opportunities was accomplished in a number of different ways. However, the limiting of ministry opportunities is usually initiated by the church's male leadership. Yet, the church congregation – leaders and laymen – can contribute to the limiting of opportunities. One way of limiting opportunities has been through the church messaging. In this instance, with the right message, women can feel comfortable serving and pursuing leadership roles. With the wrong message, women can be bullied into rejecting their call to serve in a leadership role for fear of retaliation or painful rejection. This, of course, contradicts the posture that church should have. Retaliation, rejection and fear are not elements that encouraged in the Bible as it pertains to Christian relationships. Yet, women pastors experience them sometimes as they move along their journey to serve the church. Although the messaging could come from a male pastor or leader, it does not always. In fact, sometimes the messaging can come from other members within the church congregation.

In my own church, I have experienced varying attitudes toward women in ministry and women pastors from members – including leaders and laymen. Some members have come from other places (e.g. similar churches, other denominations) with a certain understanding of the role of women. Sometimes, their understanding is contrary to what we and the founder of the ministry teaches about the role of women or women in general. This can sometimes pose challenges when trying to execute the work of the ministry. For instance, members possessing a misunderstanding of scriptures (as they relate to the role of women) have generally elected to not work on projects where women are assigned as the leader. For those that do not refuse to work

on the projects, they have often made the team's tasks harder with their lack of submission and resistance. This, of course, can be (and has been for some) discouraging for the women in leadership roles. Although it could result in women choosing not to serve in leadership roles, it has not to date at our church. Some men left the church once I began pastor because they did not believe that women should be pastors.

Other ways that opportunities can be limited include establishing rules that affected who and how people could serve, as well as reducing the view of women. Like Leo IX (as discussed on page 15), other leaders created environment where gender inequality thrived and enforced new norms. These new norms aided in limiting the opportunities that women had. In 1094, the Celtic Church began to experience this type of church reform. This reformation would come during the leadership of Mael Maedoc Ua Morgair (Malachy). Malachy focused on changing the church's structure, which previously had entailed having men and women serving as leaders in the church. The Synod of Cashel (1101), another example, was responsible for the first attempt to require the celibacy of priests in Ireland. This church movement towards a celibate priesthood, resulted in the removal of the opportunities for women to be leaders. It also was responsible for reducing the view of a woman to "that of helper or even seductress" (Bridges, 1998). Some scholars believe this reformation effort was largely due the government and church leaders' desire to "create a legitimate institutional persona" (Bridges, 1998). It was believed that to "allow priests to marry endangered the power of the monarchy and the pope" (Bridges, 1998). Another attitude towards women pastors and leaders in general involved a fear that women are more likely to be entangled in unacceptable things, such as heresies (Liefeld, 1987). This could be possibly linked to a fear or continued anger about Eve's role in the Fall of man in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Regardless, the heresies could result in a loss of power and/or order in the

church. However, it was the leadership of women that was undermined and the attitudes towards women in leadership changed (Bridges, 1998).

The attitudes towards women pastors and leaders has varying results. As stated earlier, women can experience a fear to serve as pastors. This fear not only affects women can also affect young girls who grow up being taught that women are inferior or witness the gender inequality. Another result is that women pastors can be bitter along their journey and perpetuate an environment that still results in a lack of unity and gender inequality. This gender inequality would be more focused at excluding men or punishing men for the experiences that the woman pastor has had. Gender inequality makes unity and the work of the Christian church quite difficult. When people are at odds with each other for whatever the reason, it is hard to get them to work together or accomplish the mission of the church.

## CHAPTER 4

### WOMEN PASTORS AND EXPRESSED STORIES

The purpose of this section, “Women Pastors and Expressed Stories” is to highlight the experiences of women pastors and preachers. These women’s stories help to describe what a journey may look like for some women in ministry. The experiences include a describe of what it took for them to gain their leadership role, as well as some of the attitudes that they experienced from those around them. Exploring how women navigate through their understanding of the Biblical teachings received and the attitudes toward women pastors and preachers helped to better understand how women have been able to embrace the call to serve as a church leader. After reading a Barna Group study (2017) entitled “What Americans Think About Women in Power,” I felt compelled to do my own interviewing and exploring. In this study, I learned that the “percentage of Protestant senior pastors who are women, though still small (9%), is triple the percentage of 25 years” prior to the study being performed. This study helped me to formulate some of my questions. One of my questions was around the denomination that the pastor served in versus the denomination in which they were raised. In the study, the researchers identified that many of these women pastors lead Protestant (e.g. Methodist) churches. The data suggested that these pastors chose the non-evangelical (but still Protestant) churches that did not appear to be as comfortable with women preachers (Barna Group, 2017).

By further investigating my thesis topic with interviews and blogs, I believed that I could gain a clearer understanding of what is needed to help further prevent and eliminate gender inequality in my own church. I desired to also have information that other Christian churches or individuals could use to grow in their understanding. Like the women whose stories I desired to learn about, the Bible and church were integral in my life. Our primary relationships were linked

to the church. Although our denominations may vary, we have all been confronted with similar thoughts. I believed that we mostly likely shared experiences of resistance from some of our male counterparts and congregation members. I expected that some of us would struggle with how to do what we were born to do which is to serve as pastors and preachers. I also believe that we share the experience of having some support along our journey which helped to get us to accept the attitudes toward women pastors (and preachers).

When I was a child, our family roles were defined primarily by my mother. My mother raised nine children mostly on her own. She challenged each of us to be and do the best. She was strongly supported by my grandmother and other relatives. Yet, my mother would be the first woman in a leading role that we would see. She provided for us each day by working and ensuring that we attended school and church regularly. As a result, the thought that women could not do more than bear children and be homemakers was not a part of our in-home education.

In our church environment, children, including myself, would see men in varying leadership roles – such as pastors, deacons, ministers and so on. At that time, my church was of the Pentecostal denomination. I thought it was odd that I had not seen women in these roles. This raised questions for me as I grew older. This questioning would continue even after it began clear to me that I was born to serve as a pastor. I thought to myself initially how that could be when I had not seen any female pastors. In addition, it was taught and implied that women could and should serve their families and communities but never be the head or in a position lording over men. Despite it all, I believed that God created me to serve as a pastor.

In the end, I want to learn from these women and know what has helped them to getting to the place and willingness to serve as pastors. I am confident that there should be similarities in our awareness of gender inequality. However, I also expect there to be differences due to race,

age or other possible demographics. In my opinion, this data can only serve as a help for someone else that may be confronted with similar issues. Yet, my hope is to encourage and empower women to embrace what they were born to do and that is to serve.

#### 4.1 Research Methodology

When considering the methodology to use for my exploration of this thesis topic, I elected to use qualitative data. It appeared to be the best means to capture what I wanted to glean from the women's stories. In researching the topic of attitudes women pastors, I found that a variety of women have shared their experiences in books and blogs. The list of questions (Appendix B) was distributed in advance for some interviewees. However, most interviewees were given a brief synopsis about what my thesis was and were asked to be interviewed. I used the list of questions as a framework for each interview. The questions were geared to promote natural conversations about their experiences using questions that linked to together. Interviews were somewhat unstructured as to be flexible and make the interviewee feel comfortable. Interviewees were assured that their names would not be used but that they would be either assigned names or initials would be used. Due to the sensibility of the topic, it was necessary to offer the interviewees anonymity.

#### 4.2 Data Collection

My data was sourced from two components – blog research and interviews. For the blogs, I performed a Google search to locate blogs related to my topic. In researching the topic of attitudes women pastors, I found that a variety of women have shared their experiences on blogs (see Appendix A for blog summaries). However, not all of them provided my enough insight into their experiences and the attitudes that they faced. One blog site that I discovered is called The Junia Project. The Junia Project is a blog site named in honor of the woman apostle Junia,

mentioned earlier in this paper. This blog site is used to share a variety of topics that promote the inclusion of women in different ways in the Christian church. This includes their inclusion as women leaders – such as pastors. Blogs and other written contributions are provided by both men and women supporting the cause of the blog. However, I focused on those that could provide me with the information that I desired.

I relied on existing relationships for my interviewees. The relationships would provide me with the means to connect with women that fit the scope of my thesis. The connection for some women was through people that I had a personal relationship with. I took referrals and suggestions. While for a few, I had my own direct relationship with the women that I desired to interview. One obstacle in gathering the data via interviews was time. Most women pastors and preachers have busy lives with home, church and possible work. I found the interviewing of women serving in leadership roles to be quite helpful during this thesis effort.

My questionnaire consisted of 15 base questions designed to see if women today are or have ever experienced any issues regarding being accepted in ministry. Additional questions were added during the interviews to clear information heard from the interviewee. The questions were also designed to better understand how the participants were affected by their experiences and how have they influenced others.

The interviews were completed face to face and by phone. The original goal was to obtain at least women from different backgrounds, denominations and races to share their stories. I was able to gather stories from nine women. My interviewees consisted of one Apostle, five Pastors, one Evangelist (who had been a First Lady until her husband died), and two First Ladies. For clarification, a First Lady is a woman who is married to a man serving in the pastorate role. First Ladies are very active in ministry and usually lead women-related ministries and/or

activities, among their scope of leadership. The demographics of the group included six women of color (e.g. Black) and three Caucasian women, who reside in states such as Michigan, Louisiana and Kansas. They represent the denominations of Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (also known as PAW), Church of God in Christ (also referred to as COGIC by some Christians), Methodist, Baptist, Missionary Baptist, Holiness, and Non-denominational.

### 4.3 Summary

The shared stories – from the blogs gathered and interviews – collected as part of this project proved helpful in understanding some of the Christian attitudes and gender inequality experienced by women. The blogs were initially not something that I considered as a chance to gather women’s stories. Yet, the blogs provided different expressions and helped increase my information base. A summary of each blog is available in Appendix A. It is recommended to review the additional individual synopsis provided in Appendix A for each blog. In addition to the blogs, the interviews aided me in gleaning from a cross-section of women in ministry. The interviews proved to be a good means to have conversation about the attitudes toward women in ministry in general and then specifically women pastors. The interviewed women more than help to share their stories. This is noteworthy because not all women are either willing or able to open-up and discuss freely their life experiences, including as it relates to their Christian journey. All of stories brought to light the presence of gender inequality in some fashion across some of the Christian churches.

Listening to the women, I quickly learned that all of women had similar experiences, with some being more grievous than others. Each described their struggle with identity and the call of God. Most shared that the “call” appeared to contradict what was being taught and seen growing up. However, for one of my interviewees, the experience of negative attitudes was very limited;

and some could say almost non-existent. While, another interviewee clearly states that she believes the denomination she is affiliated with may never accept women the way God intended but she has learned by other means and additional study that God never intended for gender inequality to exist. She proceeded to say that she respectfully yet quietly looks to make a difference through interactions with people. Not all the women experienced negative attitudes in the same way. For some women, the negative attitudes were experienced nonverbally (e.g. ignoring, disconnecting from organizations and activities, etc.) and/or verbally (e.g. direct and indirect comments).

From both the blogs and interview information, I was able to see experiences and/or a common theme amongst the women. The most common experience was mostly growing up in the Christian church. The basis for their Christian learning came from the Christian church, whatever their denomination was. All the interviewed women had multiple generations to attend the same church. This suggests that more than one generation experienced possibly the same teaching about women and their roles in the church and family. For the part, the church family heritage or lineage included grandparents, parents, siblings and possibly their own families when the women became adults. This is significant because they all agreed that for the most part their attitudes toward women in ministry derived from the church. It is important to note that few women changed churches or denominations when they got older. However, several considered it when contemplating how they would be able to do the work of a pastor or preacher in an environment where such things are not acceptable.

The next common theme between the interviews and the blogs involved the mis-teaching of men and women and the need find ways to encourage gender equality without inappropriate aggression. Although their denominations varied, most of them had been taught that women

were not supposed to have authority over men. They were also taught that they were limited on what they could do in the ministry. One of the exceptions to this experience was my last interviewee who had not been taught these concepts. She was allowed to teach and preach as early as age 16. She really did not know the negative attitudes until she moved to Wichita, Kansas and watched Baptist male pastors leave a ministerial organization to avoid serving with her. Otherwise, she had no previous experience with any negative attitude towards her as a pastor or preacher. She recalls how her father, who served as pastor, did not teach anything specifically regarding women and their role. Despite this one difference, all of the women had experiences that were linked to the teaching or mis-education of Christians.

Some of their churches teach that women cannot serve in leadership roles, which would include pastors. In addition, some Christian churches teach either directly or indirectly that women are inferior and are an afterthought in creation. All, including myself, concluded that a thorough study of the scripture is much needed to understand that women are not an afterthought to God or a secondary class. At least three of the women shared the desire to see children, in particular young girls at early ages, know that they are not inferior to male counterparts in ministry. In addition, it would be equally important to teach young boys that they are not superior over their female counterparts.

Some of the ideas shared regarding ways to encourage gender inequality and the acceptance of women include having on purpose studies of the Bible passages used to suggest that women are inferior and cannot serve in leadership roles. Another method is when given the opportunity to have a dialogue about the topic resisting the temptation to fight or argue. Unfortunately, some women in ministry have found themselves fighting for their right to serve from a posture of anger and resentment resulting from the hurt of the gender inequality. Yet,

each woman insisted that this is counterproductive. Rather, it is through education and a demonstrated willingness to live and work in unity is the critical expression needed.

All these women shared a common thread which was gender inequality, which became the source frustration and identity development. The things that differed for them involved the attitudes they experienced – some were more pronounced than others), source of attitudes (e.g. from other leaders, people close to them, church members) and how they moved past the attitudes. Regardless of the differences, each of them grew into women who saw the need to advocate for gender equality and other women pastors and leaders along their journey. I found their courage and confidence that they possess to be an encouragement to others and myself.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

“Women’s leadership in the Church is not a modern, political phenomenon attributed only to the twentieth-century feminist movement” (Bridges, 1998). Their leadership can be seen in the early Christian church structure or activities. Some of these women were acknowledged and honored by those that they served with, which allows readers of the Bible to learn that women held leadership roles. Despite this, some Christian churches have elected to teach and maintain attitudes that women are incapable and forbidden by the Bible to serve in leadership roles. Yet, these same churches do not appear to be able to completely follow the Bible literally as it pertains to all of the scriptures regarding women (Roberts, 1891). An example of a situation which would pose an issue if women had to keep silent includes women being able to prophesy (e.g. Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17, 1 Corinthians 11:3-5).

In Joel 2:28, it mentions how both sons and daughters will be given the ability to prophesy. Both genders would be given an ability to do the same service. Moving into the New Testament, we find that the writer of 1 Corinthians 11:3-5 highlights the requirements for women if they are going to pray or prophesy. This scripture helps to confirm what was mentioned in Joel 2:28. Women not only prophesied, they also prayed. Both activities required that the women speak forth and not be silent. How could this be if women do not have a place in ministry as some would suggest? How could women keep silent and minister at the same time? Although prophesying is not an activity that every woman pastor will do, teaching scriptures and praying, like prophesying, requires speaking. If given the ability to pray and prophesy (which involves speaks forth things to come or something that is a mystery to the hear), how could it be that women would not be able to teach as well?

I have concluded that women are born to serve. They cannot be silent and perform the service that they were born to do. For Christians, service is believed to be assigned and given by God their creator. The service can involve sharing their gifts and talents while doing the work of the ministry. With this in mind, it is God who would initially make it acceptable for women to perform whatever their serve is that they were born to do. However, it seems as if the intent or expression of service that is highlighted in the scriptures is not always embraced by all Christians. The result of this leads to the absences of people serving – in particular, women – and a lack of unity. I mention unity because whenever people are rejected there can be no unity. The reason being is that the rejection causes frustration, division, and anger at times. Women pastors have been rejected as viable servants in the pastorate role. The rejection stems from a miseducation or mis-understanding of scriptures and other reasons, all of which I do not know.

One thing that I have learned along this journey is that women are being asked to be silent and not to serve. Women pastors are being asked to ignore the call to serve. Neither of which should occur if Christians give attention to the scriptures that highlight the contributions of women (described throughout this paper). In addition, I have learned that I do not believe that some churches understand what they are saying or doing when they uphold the 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-13 as the basis for keeping women from this role and other roles. For if churches elected to hold women to the standard of keeping silent and not contributing to the work of the ministry, they would find themselves trying to allow women to prophesy and be silent, which cannot both possibly occur at the same time. The church would have to accept one or the other. It would have to come to the realization that it misunderstood the application of the scriptures and that was more to what was said in 1 Timothy 2:11–13 and 1 Corinthians 14:34. Otherwise, it would have to embrace that God was the author of confusion, which is contrary to

1 Corinthians 14:33. I say this because how could God give woman authority in Genesis chapter one (along with man), opportunities throughout the Bible to serve in ministry and leadership roles and then decide support the removal of her place and contributions in the Christian church? He would not.

Churches have to realize that teachings and messaging methods help to plant seeds or thoughts about any topic, including gender inequality. This messaging can stem from a misapplication of scriptures and be communicated verbally and/or nonverbally. Thoughts then become attitudes, words and actions that are expressed in the society. These attitudes, words and actions could be rooted in truth, partial truth or a lie. Generally, there is a benefit to the one imposing the view or attitude. However, there can also be a negative effect on the one imposing or possessing the view or attitude. So, who mostly benefits from a gendered situation or stereotypical views of women.

In the end, the church suffers because it is missing out on the opportunities to experience all of the gifts and talents present in the congregation when it limits what people can do. Luckily, women that embrace that they are born to serve, also seem to press on despite the attitudes toward them. They find themselves even more resilient than even some of them expect. Their stories can and do aid in the fight to be seen and treated as an equal in ministry. Like the women in my ministry, I desire that they are also able to soar above the negative Christian attitudes toward women pastors (and in ministry in general) and have healthy relationships with their fellow sisters and brothers. This should allow them to be free to effectively serve. Ultimately, I desire to see an end to gender inequality in the church. Furthermore, I hope that this serves as a resource for those who desire to move pass the negative Christian attitudes toward women pastors.

Somewhat recently, I asked myself the question where do I go from this project? How do I close this journey of enlightenment to women who either feel trapped or have been released to the pastorate yet feel stifled? The struggles to advance sometimes are so overwhelming to the point that women are ready to give up on the fact that they were born to serve in the capacity of a pastor. These struggles must be addressed. Personally, I believe one way that they can be addressed is when our Christian brothers in the pastorate begin to understand Luke 9:49-51, which states:

“48 And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great. 49 And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. 50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.” (KJV)

Here, a disciple is struggling the thought that someone who had not been walking or ministering with them was casting out devils. Jesus’ response is simple but applicable to women pastors. his posture is if the person casting out devils is not against them then he is for the group. Women pastors are viewed sometimes in this manner, as if they are an outsider. Yet, if they are doing the work of the ministry (in-line with scripture) with signs following, then they should be embraced and not forbid to do what they were born to do.

Along with this Luke scripture, men pastors and congregations should give consideration to John 13:34-35, which states:

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another;  
as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have  
love one to another. (KJV)

Ultimately, my desire is to promote and see gender equality and unity throughout the Christian faith. If the male brothers can embrace these scriptures, then perhaps unity between the genders can be obtainable. It can be more than just something far off but something that we can possess together. The reason being is that every member of the Christian body (faith) is needed. Their gifts and talents are needed. Each contributes something that the body needs.

In essence, Christians should not continue to restrict women from serving in ministry or as pastors if they are doing the work in Christ's name. Women pastors are not against men pastors or any part of the Christian faith. By embracing women pastors and their contributions, men pastors demonstrate an act of love which Christians are to be known by (John 13:35). The negative attitudes toward women pastors is the opposite of this principle. Even more importantly, it is critical that we, as Christians, pursue maturity in the faith with all diligence. Hebrews 6:1a – “leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection” (KJV) – encourages Christians to move on to maturity or mature in the things of God.

After pondering the questions about where to go from here, I found myself seeing the following needed and desired next steps. My vision is to continue this journey of research. In the future, I would like to research and address the issues that women are being challenged with in other faiths – such as Islam and Catholicism. Another part of my vision and next steps involves reaching women and young girls that need what I have learned thus far. I strongly desire to pursue with all diligence writing about this subject further, as well as visiting churches and

sharing with women this revelation that they are born to serve. In addition, I desire to hold conferences and do whatever it takes to help promote gender equality.

Thus, I must pursue the call of being born to serve. This means, I must embrace serving outside of the walls of this project and even outside of the walls of my own church congregation. Face to face contact will be an important format for communicating this information. I must engage women through speaking that there is hope and addressing the inequalities in the faith. As part of this engagement, I want to hear their stories, which can further contribute to the research and shared hope. It is my plan to write a Christian book that will be available in Christian bookstores. The title of the book will be *Born to Serve: Christian attitudes towards women pastors*. Look for it.

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## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### The Blog Summaries

The first story to share is about a woman who was not only a pastor but also married to a pastor. In her blog was entitled “If They Don’t Affirm You? Preach and Pastor Anyway” written by Randi Shepherd (2017). In this blog, she shares her experience and challenges being a woman pastor. The problems described includes being slapped on her backside while having a church member address her by her first name. For some people, this may not seem like an issue, but such things do not happen with men pastors. Slapping of a behind usually occurs only in sports after a good game not after preaching. This of course is an example of sexual harassment. This does not happen to men pastors because the patriarchal view suggestions that women do not hold the same value as men. Thus, they do not receive the same treat as men. As a result, acts of sexual harassment may be viewed as okay or are overlooked as simple horseplay. Another example of her experience shared pertains to how unless a male pastor tells his congregation to call him by his first name only, church members almost never exclude the title pastor when addressing men pastors.

Another issue she shared was being approached by female church members and being told that they don’t believe in women being pastors. Both issues are not uncommon and tough for women pastors. Luckily, she believed that she was born to serve as a pastor long before she knew what the opinions of people would be. She goes on to share how she had been turned down for different leadership positions, received a number of degrading emails and told that she would never be respected because of her gender. Unfortunately, her blog does not share the attitude of her husband or how he responded to the degrading emails and other acts. What is implied is that he embraced her as a co-pastor. This can be presumed from the fact that she co-pastors a church

planted by her and her husband. This does not clearly mean though that her husband did not have his own journey of evaluating and/or changing his attitude towards women pastors. In my experience, I have seen where husbands started off rejecting the idea that women can serve as pastors and later embracing their own wives as co-pastors. However, some of them continued to maintain some form of a bias or negative attitude toward women pastors and/or other women leaders. It appeared as if they may give into the desire of their wives but had not fully embraced the thought that it was okay.

Lastly, she described how she overcame feeling compelled to always defend herself and her call to serve as a pastor. She finds different resource materials (e.g. books, etc.) that encouraged her and helped her to embrace her role without apology. Some of the materials that she read included *Four Views of Women and Ministry* and *How I Changed My Mind About Women in Leadership*. I appreciated her contribution to women moving beyond the attitudes toward women which were a list of suggestions. Her suggestions include affirming one's call to ministry, studying the scriptures to learn what is said about women, looking for a church that values women as contributors, and befriending other women pastors to develop one's support system.

The next blog was entitled "My Journey as a Female Pastor." This is blog about a women minister named Larissa Marks (2016). She describes her journey as one where uncertainty, fear and insecurity were present. She found her call (assignment) while witnessing the preaching of some female preachers. Although her current feeling is excitement about serving in ministry, this excitement did not always exist. At times, she found herself encountering people whose attitudes toward women pastors were far from being supportive. One example of this would be a man that she dated during college. He did not mind being vocal about his lack of support for women

pastors or as ministry leaders. Yet, she continued to date him. This would take a toll on her self-esteem. This is not an uncommon thing for women. The challenge becoming how will they respond or overcome the chipping away at their self-esteem and call to pastor. In her case, she would have found herself disconnecting from her boyfriend, gained people who encouraged her and learned to move past the opinions of others. When the excitement returned, she could do what she was born to do and that was to serve. She eventually would have a man in her life who supported her and women preachers. This helped as the years progressed.

An interesting blog, entitled “Becoming a Pastor Made a Woman Out of Me” written by Abigail Gaines (2014), provided different side to the attitudes toward women pastors. With the first two examples, the attitudes were mostly from others around the preachers/pastors. In this instance, the attitude was from a much closer place. Pastor Gaines is the pastor of a California Vineyard Church, which follows the Evangelical association. She is married and has five children. Her personal story shared is a testament of how women can overcome the challenge and frustrations around attitudes toward women pastors but also how they can grow as well. Like myself, she experienced God’s plan and love for her at a young age.

In addition, she grew not knowing that there would possibly be limitations placed on what she could or wanted to do. She also did not believe that God was stuck on gender the way people were. In fact, she expressed that the love she believed God had for her was a gender-neutral love that was free from the patriarchal bias. Her ministerial service was lengthy, beginning as early as her teen years. By age 30, she had been asked to serve as her church’s Executive Pastor. It would seem that she was equipped based on her previous service and education, but her challenge would reside more in herself. She shares how not long after becoming the Executive Pastor she discovers that she has an internal issue. She struggled calling

herself pastor. One would wonder how this could be when she was open to the idea that she could be or do anything. She questioned herself about where this originating from was. She then considered whether it derived from her being a woman which led her to question that neutral-love that she embraced and placed no limits on her. She felt safer as a woman without a title, an unidentified contributor. The reason being pertained to who she was and what she had to give “came in a package wrapped in long hair and had breasts” (Gaines, 2014).

In addition, she was the first woman pastor for her church. Insecurity was present, but one would have to ask the question why. Would she have had these same thoughts if she were a man? Although she does not spend time discussing the contribution of patriarchal influence on her mindset, there is such an influence present. I say this because she shares that it wasn't until she became the church's pastor that she felt the “weight of that nasty piece of glass hovering and glaring above” her (Gaines, 2014). However, as she continued to embrace what she was born to do as a pastor, she also embraced the necessity to help the church experience both masculine and feminine expressions of leadership. This helped to improve the underrepresented feminine expression of leadership that she had observed growing up.

Another blog, entitled “God Who Calls Women Pastor” written by Teanna Sunberg (2014), provided yet another look at attitudes toward women pastors. Teanna's blog helps to look at gender equality and the effect of the attitudes toward women pastors has on our daughters. It was her daughter who provoked her to consider this after her shared how her teacher said that women could not be pastors. It is unclear whether her daughter attended a private or a public school. In the public-school system where I work, I have observed teachers promoting societal norms, usually including their own personal attitudes about certain matters (e.g. race, gender, religion). So, reading what the teacher had said did not surprise me. this teacher's basis for his

comment was his belief that women were inferior. Teanna's daughter's response ("God has equipped women to be or to do anything") challenged the teacher but did not change his position. Now, what was it that Teanna could say to her daughter to address what the teacher has said about the inferiority of women and her daughter's perspective being unbiblical. Luckily, she and her family were learning to "inhabit space where we are obedient to God's call yet respectful of other opinions" (2014). This became another opportunity to further teach her daughters with the support of her husband to do the same. This does not mean that it is not challenging when you know the opposition that you may face. She later describes how even the times when she experienced joy in ministry, things were not easy or smooth.

Prayer for her daughters and herself has been a key tool used to address the times when things have not been easy. Her daughters, as she described them, are "fully feminine and often fearless to a fault" (2014). Her desire though is for them to move past the negative attitudes towards women pastors and to do what they were born to do. "Because God wants women in the pulpit, in the seminary classroom, and in the streets where freedom dies every day just as much as he wants [them] in the kitchen" (Sunberg, 2014). Sunberg's journey has been one of learning and growing as she expects her daughters' paths will be. She is very much aware of how patriarchy as formed roadblocks for women pastors and just women desiring to serve in ministry in general. For some women, these roadblocks are seemingly to be unmovable walls and ceilings. This impenetrable structure seems to be held up by the repeated communication about only men being called to pastor.

Despite this all, she is encouraged to continue being a pastor, supporting women pastors and teaching her daughters that they can do anything that God has created them to do. I felt her passion about the matter and echo the need to educate our daughters and educate them to serve as

God has called them to. Also, I believe they must be made aware of the opposition that they may face realizing that there will be those that will reject the call on their lives and try to discourage them from pursuing it. In addition, as mentioned by Sunberg, both men and women need to speak up “when they see injustice”, using “their feet, their arms, their mouths, and their minds to proclaim peace and well-being in a world where hope often bleeds in the street” (2014). It is every Christian’s responsibility to pursue gender equality and eliminate injustices within their scope of influence. One way this can be done is by not embracing the negative attitudes toward women in leadership and study to get a thorough understanding of what scriptures which are often used to discredit women’s call to pastor or leader.

“The Cracking the Stained-Glass Ceiling: An Interview with Pastor Amy Butler” was one of my favorite blogs. This pastor leads a New York city church. She is the first female pastor in the church’s 87 years of existence. She was interviewed by a member of the Equity for Women in the Church, Inc. board member. This interview provided an image of how some women react or address the negative attitudes towards women pastors. In Pastor Butler’s office are visual clues that she is not only aware that sexism exists in the Christian church body but that she does not encourage them. As interviewer, Lynn Casteel Harper soon learned, these visual clues were unfortunately necessary. Pastor Butler had experienced several difference things during her pastoral journey. Prior to this interview, she had been told that “she was “a very immature leader” and gave her the names of two “experienced” male pastors who could mentor her” (Harper, 2018). This is nothing new to her or other women in leadership roles. She has found herself being one that sees and appreciates the differences between men and women. They have different styles of leadership, but this does not mean that either is inferior.

Too often, women pastors experience the opposite. They are viewed as inferior because they are women and their style are different. Pastor Butler encourages pastors to lead the way they were created without concern about someone doing it better. Despite the suggestion to be mentored by male pastors, Butler does embrace seeking help and any training that she needs. She believes in getting wise counsel from godly mature coaches. This is important for women pastors to help them overcome the varying struggles and challenges on this pastorate journey. Other of the opportunities that will be afford to women pastors may be churches that are failing, and men pastors do not want. Women pastors need, Butler suggests, to consider these carefully, be open to the possibilities and see it as an opportunity to help where help is very much needed. This does not mean that women pastors should assume that that would be the only opportunities given them, but it may the first chance that some women will have because of the insecurities of men leaders to allow women to lead. Like Pastor Amy, I desire to see women pastors flourish. If some of the opportunities to pastor involve declining churches, then there needs to be resources in place to help them succeed.

## APPENDIX B

### The Questionnaire

#### Basic Demographics:

1. Name
2. Age
3. City and State of Residence
4. Are you married or single? If single, are you divorced or widowed? If married, how long have you been married?
5. Do you have any children?

#### Main Interview Questions:

6. What is your current denomination?
7. Is the same denomination that you were in as a child?
8. When did you first realize that you were called to serve in ministry?
9. What roles in ministry have you held?
10. What roles in ministry have you seen women hold?
11. Describe the attitudes toward women in ministry that you observed and experienced?
12. Describe the attitudes toward women pastors that you observed and experienced?
13. Do you think the teachings you had growing up had an effect on whether you accepted your call to the ministry?
14. Did your church teach about the role of women in ministry? Did church teachings include restrictions on women serving? How do you feel about that?
15. If could say anything to young girls or other women about serving in, what would you share with them to encourage or educate them?