

# 5

## OUR INCONSISTENCIES EXPOSED

This chapter was the driving force behind the entire book, but do not be mistaken - I find no pleasure in writing this chapter. I find the inconsistent practices of many churches to be both shocking and saddening.

It is apparent that some churches are merely giving in to the pressure of allowing women more opportunity to lead, and not fully adopting the position as being biblically correct. In other words, it seems that many church leaders have chosen to try to appease the restless women, yet not turn them loose to fully do ministry. Allowing them to participate in some roles of leadership while prohibiting them from others, and yet using the same line of thought for both scenarios, is very inconsistent.

For instance, I find it odd that complementarians often refer to a text such as 1 Timothy 2:9-15 to support their position, yet at other times completely ignore it in an attempt to accommodate people. One of the more interesting reasons for such inconsistency is that some leaders sense a distinction between what they believe and what they should live. In other words, they implicitly realize that their understanding of biblical truth may at times be skewed. Thus, they sometimes practice something that only resembles what they believe.

Both good and bad can be found in such an approach. The good side is that they try to do the right thing, perhaps even at the leading of the Holy Spirit. The bad side is that the Bible, the standard of truth, is not always the basis for trying to do the right thing. The result is confusion and inconsistency.

### **Thesis 21: Women Can Speak But Not Preach**

One of the more “interesting” inconsistencies surrounding the gender issue involves terminology. Men are allowed to “preach” and occasionally women are allowed the privilege of doing the exact same thing. Only, nobody will dare call it preaching. Instead, she was allowed to “speak” or “share her thoughts.”

I’ve seen this happen so many times, at so many places, that it seems like a waste of time to even provide an example. Such double-talk is troublesome on two fronts: it’s dishonest and it’s poor theology. It’s dishonest because it pretends that when a woman does the exact same thing a man does it is somehow different.

As an example, the independent Christian Churches, of which I am a part, have an annual convention. At this convention, there are “main sessions” each morning and evening which are actually worship services. At each main session the “main speaker” preaches a sermon. In 2002, Kay Moll was one of the main session speakers. Having been present at the convention, I can testify that Kay boldly and effectively proclaimed the Word of God; she indeed preached the gospel. All who were present knew exactly

what happened. A look into the future had just passed before our eyes. Most were fine with it when they realized how gifted this person was.

Afterwards, I read of one church which showed the videos from all the main sessions to their congregation on a series of Sunday evenings. Their advertisements each week said that certain men were preaching. But when it came time to show Kay's sermon, their advertisements said that Kay and her husband were speaking in one session. The truth is that her husband came out to give a brief testimony (as someone had done in every main session that year), then she followed him by preaching a full message. Where is the honesty in saying otherwise?

And where is the consistent theology? If she is allowed to speak to both the men and the women, then why wouldn't she be allowed to preach? The Bible does not prohibit women from preaching. Therefore, if one believes she is permitted to speak to men, it only follows that she would also be permitted to preach.

Of course, the issue is much weightier than mere terminology. The primary texts in question are 1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34. The Timothy text prohibits women from teaching men and exercising authority<sup>1</sup> over them. The Corinthian text says that women should keep silent in the church, "for they are not permitted to speak."

If one truly believes these texts are applicable today in a very literal sense, then women should never address men in the church at all. In fact, they should remain completely silent. Consistency would demand that women never be allowed to speak, share her thoughts, lead worship, offer a prayer, or say anything in the church service while men are present.

I have heard people try to get around their contradictions by saying that speaking at a convention is not equivalent to speaking in the church. This is very poor theology. The church of the living God has nothing to do with the actual building. The church is where people gather to worship. When people gather together to pray, sing praises, hear the Word, etc., they have attended church. The location of such an event is irrelevant.

Furthermore, the question that must be addressed is this: "What is preaching?" Based on the terminology that people often use, there also seems to be a strange connection concerning how the pulpit plays some role in preaching. Some people are fine with women speaking, as long as they do not stand behind a pulpit during the designated sermon time.

I simply don't understand the emphasis that some place on the pulpit. It's difficult to imagine the Apostle Paul traveling with a pulpit in hand that he plopped down in the street when he preached to the crowds. Honestly, I can only think of five purposes they hold. One can put their notes on a pulpit, put a microphone on one, hold on to one, hide behind one or store a lot of junk inside of one.

Some preachers choose not to use a pulpit. Do they preach or just speak? Others, like me, tend to walk as they preach. Does it mean that while I'm behind the pulpit I preach, but when I walk away from it I do not? While these scenarios are absurd, it should be noted that such nonsense is what women have grown accustomed to hearing.

Preaching is proclaiming the gospel. Corrie ten Boom preached the gospel through her book and movie *The Hiding Place*. She shared her testimony to millions of people, and as a result, millions of lives have been greatly impacted.

I can hear some scoffers saying, “That’s not preaching. It’s just a testimony, and in written form at that.” We should think twice about such assertions. The Apostle Paul was accustomed to sharing his testimony (Acts 22:1-21; 26:1-23), and it preached quite well. In fact, his testimony, though in print, still preaches to me today. In fact, I have preached his testimony as a means to show others how they can do the same.

On August 7, 2004, Joni Eareckson Tada was on *Larry King Live*. She did some serious preaching! I wish I had counted how many times she mentioned Jesus. In doing so, she mentioned sin, the atonement, the resurrection, mercy, and many other things. She wasn’t in the church or behind a pulpit. But she was preaching!

One can call proclaiming the gospel speaking or preaching but it is essentially the same thing. We often associate preaching with more voice inflection and demonstrative action but such is not always the case. In fact, many preachers preach with less enthusiasm and/or conviction than those who make announcements. Nevertheless, if they have proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ, they have preached. Why, even the Apostle Paul said that he was “unskilled in speech” (2 Cor 11:6). The bottom line is that one either believes a woman has the right to proclaim the Word of God, or she does not!

### **Thesis 22: Permission to Teach in Some Settings**

It’s appropriate to quote the two primary texts complementarians lean upon to support their arguments. They are:

<sup>11</sup> Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. <sup>12</sup> But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. (1 Tim 2:11-12)

<sup>34</sup> Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. <sup>35</sup> And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church. (1 Cor 14:34-35)

These are forceful words which may lead one to believe that Paul prohibits women from even speaking during church. I will deal with these texts in detail in later chapters. What is pertinent to this section is that many complementarians are completely inconsistent with their interpretations of these texts, giving women permission to speak and teach under certain circumstances.

I suppose their reasoning for allowing such discrepancies is because they feel 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 is a trump card of sorts. Male leadership often uses the “headship” argument which essentially says that if they give a woman permission to speak, teach, etc., then she can do so under their authority.

The problem with a move such as this is that it places man as an authority over the Word of God. In other words, although a complementarian may be firmly convinced that the Word of God prohibits women from teaching and leading in the church, if he decides that an exceptional woman may do so, it instantly becomes permissible. The church must be watchful of people who place themselves over the authority of Scripture.

One must also ask why a complementarian would make an exception and allow a woman to teach. The answer is most often found in the fact that some men acknowledge the godliness and giftedness some women possess. They see them as valuable members of the body of Christ who can contribute a great deal to the health of the church.

This is all well and good, but as the old saying goes, “You can’t have your cake and eat it, too.” One simply can not say that women are not permitted to teach and then turn around and make exceptions. Such actions prove that men who allow such things do not truly believe that Paul’s words are intended for churches of all ages, but are more specific to the local situations he was addressing. They must deal with this contradiction in their thinking, get off the fence, and release gifted women into ministry.

There are simply too many conflicting practices that need to be corrected. Consider that women are now being allowed to teach adult classes (with men present) in some Sunday School settings. But again, if one of the primary issues is that women shouldn’t teach men, then why are churches giving in? There certainly can be no honor in living contrary to your convictions.

My point is simply that churches need to be consistent in their thinking. If they truly believe women have no place in leadership, then they should stick to their guns. On the other hand, if they believe women are allowed such activity, then they should stand up for their cause and deal with the issue.

Staton shows the inconsistent thinking churches display as they attempt to handle the issue of women training men. He asks, “Was it right for Miss Caddy or Miss Woods to teach the Bible to me when I was 18 just out of high school, but wrong for either one of them to teach me after I returned from Korea (hopefully considered a man by then)?”<sup>2</sup>

One of the most inconsistent practices is when a church (often seen in the small church) allows a woman to teach because no men in the congregation are able or willing. Once again, an exception is made. Only this time, it appears to be made out of necessity. The problem is that if something is wrong, it is always wrong. Thus, if women should not teach men, they shouldn’t do so under any circumstances. A further complication is that the female teacher may be thrown aside if a male, any male, finally makes himself available for teaching.

Curiously, women are also given permission to teach men in settings outside of the local church. For example, parachurch organizations often employ women as key leaders. Women serve as missionaries, campus ministry leaders and even college professors. Though it would never be admitted, church leaders are happy to allow this practice so that they can remove the tension from their own local assemblies.

Most know that women frequently serve as missionaries. For example, Youth With A Mission has many women leading all over the world.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, Winter says that “forty thousand of the fifty thousand home churches now in China are led by women.”<sup>4</sup>

I would like to know why churches financially support female missionaries, even with great pride, when they are aware of the fact that they often teach men in these settings. One way of trying to justify such an inconsistency is by saying that women can teach on the mission field because they are teaching “natives,” not men.<sup>5</sup> What can be

said of such a nauseating statement! If it is wrong for a woman to teach a man in America, it is wrong for a woman to teach a man in any other part of the world as well.

Furthermore, why do churches allow these female missionaries to come home and then teach their supporting churches about what their mission is accomplishing? Actually I think I know the answer. Supporting churches allow such practices because they view a female missionary as just “sharing her heart” and “informing” the congregation; she doesn’t teach. Of course, by sharing her heart and informing the congregation she does teach. Teaching is about educating, which often involves tugging at the hearts of those listening.

There is yet another issue which relates to this topic. If women are unable to teach men, why are they able to teach vulnerable children? A complementarian may simply say that the Scriptures are silent on this issue. This is a fair response, as we are not obligated to answer questions the Bible does not address.

Since, however, the issue of women teaching is up for debate, one should wrestle with questions such as this. We must ask why women would not be permitted to ever teach men. Scriptures such as 1 Corinthians 14:26 and Colossians 3:16 do not limit the teaching ministry to men.<sup>6</sup> Some would say it is simply a matter of authority; women should not teach men. Others have said women’s emotions play a key factor in their inability to lead. The conclusion for some is that women are more easily deceived<sup>7</sup> and their emotions sometimes cloud their decision making and exegesis.

If the latter is correct, it would follow that women have no business teaching anyone, for if they are deceived they could easily corrupt a young child’s mind (or another poor weak woman unable to spot fact from fiction) with heretical views. In fact, it would make more sense that they teach men who, supposedly, would know heresy when they hear it. Thus, they would not be affected by her error and could actually correct it.

Such logic leads one to believe that the only solution from women leading people astray would be that they remain completely silent in the church (as Paul said to the Corinthians in 14:34-35). Under this scenario, women should not be teaching one another, teenagers or children. This is the only conclusion which actually makes sense of a prohibition against women teaching that stands for the ages.

Of course, I’m not the only one who finds such a conclusion preposterous. Although I’m sure there must be some churches who do not allow women to speak in the church or teach anyone, I have not personally come across one. It only makes sense to conclude that Paul’s prohibitions were not timeless doctrines he set down, but rather are pointed to specific church situations.

As I wrap up this section I’m reminded of what one minister actually told my wife Lisa. He said that “some men just don’t want to be trained by women.” I think what he said sums up one of the primary reasons we have this entire debate: “Some men just don’t want to be trained by women.”

Lisa correctly pointed out to me that some men don’t want to be trained by anyone. How would the minister above deal with that? Would he say that since they didn’t want it, or thought they were above it, they shouldn’t be forced to sit under any training? And so we’ll allow women to teach others, just not me or others who might not be willing to listen - thus, our conflicting behavior.

### **Thesis 23: Volunteer Work is Permissible**

Many churches allow women to minister as volunteers in the same jobs they will not even consider them for when it comes time to hire. It goes back, at least partially, to something stated in the previous section. If a male is not available to do the job, in this case because the pay is too low, the church will often allow a willing female do the work which is needed.

Small churches that need help with their youth ministries are often guilty of such inconsistency. They will allow a woman to lead the youth group for years on end (often under the guise of a husband/wife team, though the husband often does nothing but show up). But if the church reaches the point where they can afford to hire a full-time minister, the candidate search is limited to males.

In other words, as long as a woman's position isn't official she may work her heart out. But the moment money or a title enter the picture, forget it. Most church leaders cringe at the prospect of having a woman serve in an official capacity.

This practice was brought to my attention by a female student who is going to drop out of college for this very reason. At present, she is able to serve as a part-time youth minister. But she has expressed concern to me that she is wasting her time getting a Bible college degree. She said that if the church gets into a position to hire someone, they probably won't hire her anyway - they'll hire a man.

I think there may be several issues that lead to this inconsistent practice. Some church leaders just don't believe women should serve as ministers. The problem is that they fail to understand what a minister actually is. One does not become a minister when placed on the payroll of a church. Being a minister is about doing ministry. All in the church can be active ministers who work for the kingdom of God. In other words, a paid male is no more of a minister than the volunteer female who does the very same job.<sup>8</sup>

Another reason church leaders may not want to hire a female is because then they would have to work with her in board meetings. The board meeting is an interesting dynamic where ministers, elders and/or deacons work together. A woman serving on the board implicitly communicates that she would be their equal, and that is precisely the problem for most men.

Being viewed as a liberal church is another fear some churches face. Women voluntarily serve in various capacities in many churches and so nothing stands out as unusual for the church which allows such a practice. When a church puts a woman on staff, however, it makes a statement. Such a move shouldn't "make a statement," but unfortunately it does. Most churches do not want to make a statement and be viewed as a group that is "not biblical" in their doctrine.

The witness of the church is important, but that's one of the reasons the church should not be afraid of such labels. After all, it's not the world that labels specific churches as liberal, it's the Christian community that affixes those labels. The world is already accustomed to growing equality; it's the church that is lagging behind. If we allow women to serve equally on a volunteer basis, it only makes sense that they be allowed the same privilege in a more official capacity. Removal of inconsistent practices will increase our witness, not endanger it.

## **Thesis 24: Inconsistencies Regarding Leading of Worship**

Inconsistent church modeling is demonstrated when churches have no problem allowing women to lead the musical portion of the service we refer to as worship, yet at the same time do not dare allow a women to teach a man in any setting. This can be the result of one of at least three factors. Number one, it could be because they are merely giving in to pressure (something which is difficult to respect). Number two, it may be happening because there are no men in the church who are willing and able to lead worship. Therefore, in a sense they view giftedness and calling as more important than gender, but only when it serves their needs. I've already covered this problem in detail.

The last factor is just as troublesome. It seems certain that some church leaders show very weak theological reflection by thinking women who lead worship are not teaching men. Perhaps that is the case in poor worship and praise services, but it is certainly not the case in vibrant churches where Christ Jesus is being glorified through song. A good worship leader definitely teaches a great deal to all who are present. Scripture even confirms that songs can teach. Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

Good worship leaders do not simply pick out songs for the church service. They spend time in prayer seeking God's guidance as to what the congregation needs to hear and experience through song for the upcoming service. They choose the songs and then put them in a sequence which is conducive to meeting God through the praise and worship. This is easily comparable to planning a Sunday School lesson.

Some of the greatest lessons I've learned in my Christian walk have been given through both worship leaders and contemporary Christian music artists. Not growing up in a Christian home may have adversely affected me during the church song service when I became a Christian. I felt very stupid and self conscience singing with my blare-a-tone<sup>9</sup> voice. The worship leader at the church I attended while in my early twenties wouldn't allow people like me to use such thoughts as an excuse for not singing out to our Lord. I'm so thankful for his consistent teaching that convinced me that God loved my praise regardless of whether it sounded good to human ears or not. Now I sing out and really don't care who is listening and what they think. I sing for the Lord and not for men.

The worship was the strong point of the church I mentioned above. In fact, the preaching was far from hermeneutically sound. I know what I'm about to say will sound absurd to some, but I know that back then the ministry of music helped me follow Christ more than formal preaching did. The group DeGarmo and Key consistently preached the gospel to me in a way more meaningful than anyone can really understand.

Of course, they weren't the only group that ministered to me. Groups and performers such as Petra, Keith Green, Brian Duncan, Russ Taff, Whiteheart, Amy Grant and Twila Paris did just the same. Anyone who has ever heard songs like *Sweet Victory* by Twila Paris will tell you that her ministry to them is very beneficial. Today,<sup>10</sup>

my two favorite female artists are still Margaret Becker and Crystal Lewis. I always run out to buy the latest CD that Margaret puts out. I know she is a very special individual with a soft spirit towards the Lord. She teaches me a great deal through her music.

Christian song is an expression of the Word through music. Today, some of my favorite groups are Switchfoot and Skillet. They each minister to me through their music.

I'm shocked that even during chapel at Bible college, some of the guys fail to sing out to the Lord. Those are the ones who probably fail to see that a good worship minister teaches as they lead. To be taught during worship, you have to participate. It's just like teaching anything else. If those in attendance don't really care about what is being taught, or don't attend to it, they won't learn.

Worship leaders are teachers, teachers of a heavenly activity which will endure throughout the ages. If women are allowed to teach the Word through praise and worship, they should be afforded the same opportunity in other settings. Anything less reflects a poor understanding of what really goes on during the song service.

### **Thesis 25: Inconsistencies Regarding Gift Assessments**

The inconsistencies continue with the selective use of gift assessment tools that many churches are now utilizing. While I wholeheartedly agree in gift-based ministry (or what some call "lay mobilization"), I can't help but wonder why churches are wasting their time with these tools if they aren't willing to really utilize the results.

Churches promote these tools as a way to help people identify where they are gifted and should be serving in the kingdom of God. But if the assessment identifies a woman's gift set as including leading, administration or some form of speaking (e.g., preaching, teaching, exhortation), then those who maintain that these are not appropriate ways for women to function would have to say the assessment tools are flawed. Under such a scenario, use of the tool simply becomes another source of discouragement to the aspiring female.

By using these tools and not applying them, the church issues another conflicting message. In essence, they are making promises they have no intention of keeping when they issue a test. They imply that they will be used to place people in service, but then refuse to acknowledge the results.

More serious than the belief that assessment tools may be flawed for women, is the acknowledgment that they may be correct but still ignored. As Groothuis points out, "It's interesting that we often associate gifts and callings. Yet, if a woman is gifted an immediate exception is made."<sup>11</sup>

The church needs to acknowledge this exception and ask if it is appropriate. It is not good enough to question the validity of an assessment tool solely on the basis of gender. Such a statement disrespects a great deal of Scripture that says otherwise.

Of course, most church leaders, by allowing women to teach other women or children, would say they are not ignoring the results of the assessment tools being used. But who are we really kidding? Placing limitations on the gifts of the Spirit cannot be the will of God.

In regards to gift assessment tools, churches have three choices. They can stop using them, which may slow the mobilization of people into service. They can administer them, but conveniently ignore the results, which will stifle the effort to follow the Holy Spirit's desire to use the gifts given to a church body. Last of all, they can administer gift assessment tools and actually use them to the fullest extent, which will help the church grow in maturity. Only one choice makes sense, and it's also the one which sends the right message.

### **Thesis 26: Inconsistencies Regarding Communion and Offering**

In the fellowship of Christian Churches I am affiliated with, the people remain in their pews while communion is served to them. Likewise, the offering is passed to them in the same fashion. In our circles, it is very unusual to see women stand in the aisles and pass out communion and/or collect the offering. I have often wondered why.

One reason this puzzles me is because those serving in this way do so in silence. Moreover, they are not teaching by engaging in these activities. And besides all that, the Bible never prohibits women from either of these things. While it is common for church leaders to do these activities, it's a real stretch to say these activities involve leading in the church. After all, anyone who is physically able can pass a tray.

Has anyone ever thought of the fact that women pass the same items while they are sitting in their pew? Are we to believe that standing in the aisle is actually more spiritual than sitting? Better yet, why is it permissible for teenage girls to do these very tasks on "Youth Sundays," while the women are never afforded this privilege? These are rather odd inconsistencies.

Even if one attributes some form of "authority" or "pastoral function" to these activities, there are still some inconsistencies to be noted. For instance, I have known churches to allow men who are actively involved in adultery and pornography to continue to serve communion and pass the offering plates. Yet, these same churches will not allow godly women to do so.

Our goal should be to remain biblical, and since passing communion and offering trays do not violate that commitment, there is no harm if women participate. In fact, participation in any either of these important events is a great way someone may serve in the kingdom of God.

### **Thesis 27: Inconsistencies Regarding Prayer**

As has already been mentioned, one flaw I see in complementarian theology is their failure to look holistically at the entire scope of Scripture. This is very evident in the manner in which they approach corporate prayer. For instance, I find it very interesting that, in spite of the fact that Paul allowed women to pray in public, many churches still prohibit such activity. In this, complementarians choose Paul's commands of silence in 1 Corinthians 14:34 as holding more weight than his words in texts such as 1 Corinthians 11:5. Both must be considered together.

A somewhat current trend, however, is that many churches are now allowing women to participate in the leading of prayer during service, even though they will not allow women to teach or to serve in leadership. Those who push the “be silent” button in so many other areas are often allowing women to pray aloud. This appears to be an appeasement to women, as it does not fit in with their usual convictions.

Since this seems more like a concession being made to women than a reflection of their desire to adhere to Scripture we must ask why they do so. My guess is that many church leaders view prayer as something all Christians can do; it is not reserved for leadership. Yet, the act of having people give prayers that represent the entire congregation is an act of leading. In other words, while church leaders may not see the leading of prayer as something only the clergy may do, the act is carried out by one who is entrusted with leading in this important event which draws the congregation close to the throne of God.

While God loves to hear all of us pray, it’s true that some pray more eloquently than others. In fact, those who pray well teach others about prayer. Likewise, though, many prayers reflect deficient theology.

While I would never say anyone’s prayers are poor, I would assert that some should probably not lead the congregation in prayer. I was recently at a small church of twenty where a gentleman led the corporate prayer. About a minute into his prayer, it suddenly sounded as if he was giving prayer requests, so I lifted my eyes in confusion, only to see him praying. He was supposed to be leading the church in prayer, but instead he was only offering prayers for his previously unmentioned family members. Moreover, he ended his prayer by asking the Father to help Jesus do His will. I truly believe it was the most perplexing prayer I had ever heard.

Having witnessed the same individual lead in prayer several times before, I am left to wonder why the church leaders do not allow more skilled people to lead prayer time. My guess is because no other men are willing to do so. Of course, I can’t help but wonder if there are women present who are.

I have also seen people use the public prayer format as a means to persuade those around them to some position they hold on a certain topic, or to directly scold others publicly. In other words, they were using the prayer forum to speak to those around them, rather than to God. A mature Christian would be far less likely to use public prayer for such purposes. This, too, proves that godliness and spiritual maturity are better indicators of who should lead prayer than gender.

Prayer time often becomes a teaching moment during the church service, whether in the negative sense or the positive. First and foremost, those who pray well point people to God. It would also seem that those gifted in leading prayer speak well or, at the very least, clearly express godliness through their heart-felt prayers. What is clear is that gender does not enable someone to pray well.

Prayer is an important element of the worship service. Therefore, the allowance of women leading in prayer by those who do not usually allow women to teach or lead in any other way leaves me with two conclusions. First, such leaders view prayer time as something so unimportant that “even a woman” can do it. By allowing a woman to lead prayer, they are able to provide one moment where they appear to be sympathetic to their plight. This shows that they are failing to consider what leading in prayer really means (i.e., some prayers also teach). And second, some make this allowance as

another exception to the command of “silence,” thus becoming inconsistent in their theology. Each of these lines of thought needs correction.

### **Thesis 28: Inconsistencies Regarding Baptism**

In my circles, people are baptized by immersion after they confess Jesus as their Lord and Savior. I have seen three approaches to baptism by immersion. One is that only the clergy should baptize people. Another is that only men should baptize people. And the third is that any Christian may baptize a new believer.

Like many practices in the church, this one is a derivative of theology, not exegesis. I have never heard anyone claim that a specific text teaches that women are prohibited from baptizing converts. And to the best of my knowledge, there are no Scriptures that would indicate that only clergy or men should baptize people.

The Great Commission may be relevant here. It says,<sup>19</sup> “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you [ . . . ] (Matt 28:19-20). Who would dare argue that the Great Commission does not include women? Yet it says to “go, baptize and teach.” Should we believe that if a man is not around a woman should ignore this command?

Acts 2 raises some more interesting thoughts. After Peter preached the gospel, we’re told the following in verse 41: “So then, those who had received the word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls.” The three thousand were probably just the men, as women and children were often not counted (Matt 14:21).

We know from Acts 1:14 that women were among the 120 disciples who were gathered together (1:15). Chapter 2 begins by saying “they were all together in one place” and there is simply no reason to believe the women had left. Furthermore, when Peter quotes the prophet Joel, he makes a point of including the prophetic line which states “your sons and your daughters shall prophecy” (2:17). Again, it seems likely the women were present.

My point is that after Peter’s sermon, there were probably well over 5,000 people who were baptized that very day. That is a lot of baptizing in one single day! We should not dismiss the possibility that some of the women helped baptize the new converts.

While this is merely speculation, this is actually the point. The practice of limiting who may do the baptizing arises out of one’s view of church leadership, not from any clear evidence in Scripture. If we’re to be honest, there is simply no basis for prohibiting women from baptizing new Christians.

### **Thesis 29: Marriage Practicalities vs. Marriage Teachings**

Complementarians point to texts such as 1 Peter 3:1-7, Ephesians 5:22-24 and 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 and adamantly state that husbands have authority over their wives.

Yet, research verifies that most complementarians function within their marriage as if they were actually egalitarian.<sup>12</sup>

This is rather curious and points to the fact that most men are not as adamant about their authority as some may think. A common response to my statement may go something like this, “Men know they have the authority, but they choose not to use it.”

My question is, “Why? If they have it, and it’s a God-given mandate, why would they choose not to use it?” The answer is because they love their wives too much to rule them with an iron fist. And this is precisely the problem with overstating how “men need to take their proper place in the home.” The overstated position just doesn’t work in real life. Loving husbands have no desire to rule their wives. They want a relationship with the one they love, not a dictatorship.

I listed this reason in this chapter on inconsistencies because we can’t say we firmly believe something if we do not actually show forth that belief in the way we live. It’s apparent that most people do not believe the husband is the unquestioned authority in a marriage. Most husbands welcome their wives’ opinions and, in fact, solicit their input. Granted, such behavior does not mean the man is not the authority. After all, top executives also solicit feedback from those under their authority.

I am not trying to show that husbands do not have authority (I will cover that in later chapters). I am simply showing here that even if husbands do have authority, it is not an oppressive authority that does not value the wife. Yet, that is the very idea one may walk away with after listening to some complementarians speak on this topic.

They insist that “men should take their place.” That very concept is conducive to men being domineering over women. My question is this, “Why are men being encouraged to take their place if they already have a loving relationship with their spouse?” Ultimately, by urging men to take their place at home, complementarians hope that the behavior will spill over into the church. This is the real war they wish to win; they don’t want women working in the church.

While those pushing the complementarian view want men to take charge at home, few men actually want this. They rightly sense something is wrong with such an overemphasis. The complementarian message may preach well, but in real life it just doesn’t work. And that’s because it is not the will of God for men to dominate women. Christ came to liberate, not oppress.

### **Thesis 30: Books and Curriculum**

There is something very strange about using 1 Timothy 2:12 to prohibit women from teaching, but then turning around and allowing men to teach lessons that female authors and editors have prepared. This practice says that women can’t teach, but their lessons and thoughts can be presented by a man. In other words, their materials are worthy of teaching, as long as nobody realizes the source, or as Sumner said to me, as long as a female physical body is not present to provide the lesson. The conclusion I’m left with is that the church elevates gender over sound doctrine, for although a woman’s doctrine may be sound, her being female eliminates her from standing up and teaching the very thing a man can borrow from her.

Mickelsen says, "A close look at our actual practices indicates that traditionally women can plan and greatly influence almost any church activity so long as they remain largely *invisible* or the activity is related to the usual domestic roles of women."<sup>13</sup> Thus, an invisible female author is permitted to use her gifts.

Of course, men also intentionally buy books written by women and even listen to their lessons on radio programs. Those same men, however, would often show hesitancy in listening to them preach a live sermon. Such practices make absolutely no sense at all. It's almost as if they are saying that women can do virtually anything they want, as long as it does not impact the local church; that is where the line is always drawn.

I simply don't get it. Women are not allowed to teach the very lessons they write, but a man can pick up her material and is authorized to teach it. In other words, a woman can teach as long as it's not done verbally. Where do our inconsistencies end?

### **Thesis 31: Our Inconsistent Interpretations**

At times, we're all guilty of using selective interpretive methods. It's not that we purposely read our opinions into the text, it's just that we all bring some baggage to it. All of us come to the text with presuppositions and prejudices that we must set aside for the sake of doing sound exegesis. The problem is that we don't always put them aside, and when we don't, our interpretations are often wrong.

Misguided interpretations are often the result of "proof-texting," the practice of spouting off an isolated text to prove an argument. There are two methods of proof-texting. Sometimes interpreters rip a Scripture out of context to make the text prove their point of emphasis. One can make the Holy Scriptures mean virtually anything when this tactic is employed.

Another way the interpreter may proof-text is to do sound exegesis and then fail to theologically reflect on the text. It's never enough to simply do exegesis. We must always incorporate new knowledge in with the old. There are no texts that stand in isolation; they must all be considered as part of the whole.

Proof-texting has shown its ugly head in the defense of practices such as polygamy, racism, slavery, legalism, violence and homosexuality.<sup>14</sup> While such examples of twisting the Scriptures are extreme, the same abuses have been used to teach male superiority over women.

Failing to think holistically often leads to unbalanced interpretations. For example, as previously stated, 1 Corinthians 11:5 (women pray and prophecy) needs to be considered along side 1 Corinthians 14:34 (women are to be silent). It must be admitted that, regardless of what issue is being debated, people tend to gravitate toward their favorite Scriptures that support their view. This seems quite natural and even somewhat warranted, while at the same time unfortunate. It is unfortunate because "all Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim 3:16), and therefore, should be given equal consideration. Every Scripture offers something important that is needed so that one can arrive at sound conclusions.

When interpreters allow their presuppositions and/or prejudices to guide them, or fail to theologically reflect on the whole of Scripture, inconsistent interpretations take place. Sumner provides an excellent example. She says:

No wonder conservative Christians are confused. We are given so many mixed messages. In one long breath, we are told that women are not inferior but that 'the permanent facts of creation' reveal that women should assume subordinate roles; yet women are equal to men just as surely as the Son is equal to the Father, even though we don't share the same status with men as the Son does with the Father; and men are not superior to women because both are created in the image of God, although men are uniquely designed (though not necessarily gifted) to be women's leaders; and women are uniquely designed to nurture and affirm men's leadership over them even if they themselves are more spiritually gifted than the men who oversee them. All this, we are told, is to be honored - unless certain male leaders commission certain women to be exceptions.<sup>15</sup>

It would be an unfair to say that all complementarians are aware of their inconsistent interpretations, yet do not care. Sometimes the problem is simply the result of poor exegetical habits. Specifically, we all have great difficulty in determining which Scriptures are culturally bound and which are transcultural. The result is that sometimes we make up the rules as we go.

Webb describes why he wrote his book on cultural analysis when he makes the following statement:

Most of the Western church no longer practices what Scripture says (at a nonabstracted, concrete level) about head coverings, holy kisses, foot washings, hairstyles, slavery, and so on. But we have not been particularly clear in explaining why we have discontinued certain practices yet continued others. The lack of explanation and consistency has often left thorny problems for the next generation of Christians. We pass on to them both the Scriptures themselves and our assessment of what to practice and what not to practice within those Scriptures, but without a clear guide as to how those decisions have been reached.<sup>16</sup>

For centuries, such vagueness led the church to endorse slavery as being the will of God. After all, the Scriptures say things such as "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters" (Eph 6:5a). What was once regarded as a timeless principle is now considered to be culturally bound. Webb states that it's because "Scripture does not present a 'finalized ethic' in every area of human relationship."<sup>17</sup>

This is a perfect example of how doing exegesis alone will not get the job done. One must consider the whole of Scripture to grasp the proper meaning. Since redemption is at the core of the biblical message, it only makes sense that slavery was a system that would eventually tumble.

One more example will suffice. 1 Corinthians 11:14 says, "Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?" Paul's words are straightforward and seem easy to understand. In fact, he grounds his argument in nature. Yet, today few people would accuse long-haired males of sinning. The pressing question is this: What makes this verse any different than 1 Timothy 2:12,

which prohibits women from teaching? If we can't answer that question by remaining consistent in our interpretations, then we should not be dogmatic about our beliefs.

Because there can be no doubt that Paul knew of Samson's heroics, as well as his long hair, I find it interesting that he gave the statement concerning the long hair of men. Yet, he did. Likewise, when he wrote 1 Corinthians 11:5 (women pray and prophecy) and 1 Corinthians 14:34 (women are to be silent), he was intentional with his words despite the fact that they sound conflicting to us today.

There is only one answer that makes sense: Paul knew what he meant and the messages are not contradictory. It is our job to reconcile the statements, not ignore the ones we do not prefer. If we want to be respected interpreters of the Bible we must make sound cultural analysis an absolute, as it often provides the clue we need to make sense of perplexing statements (see Appendix 3).

While we are all probably guilty of ignoring Scriptures that do not help us advance our arguments, such practices do not glorify God. Our goal must be to arrive at the correct understanding of the biblical message. When we do, we'll find ourselves being more consistent in our theology.

### **Thesis 32: The Liberties Taken in Many Modern Translations**

Our society is saturated with modern translations of the Bible. Most Christians are overwhelmed by the selection and know little about the differences.<sup>18</sup> The primary criteria for choosing a Bible are recommendation and readability. Church leaders are also using a third criterion - convenience. It's as if they step up to the smorgasbord, sample each product, and then choose the translation which most closely resembles what they want to say.

The fact of the matter is that all translations are not created equal; some are better than others. It is an illegitimate practice to pick translations because they say what one is looking to say. I always tell my students, "Who cares if you can quote it, if it's wrong." In other words, it is not a wise decision to trade accuracy for readability (or convenience).

Many modern translations clearly take unwarranted liberties. As a rule, word-for-word translations, such as the NASB, RSV, KJV, etc., are far less likely to corrupt the text. That's because they focus on translating words. On the other hand, thought-for-thought translations such as the NLT, CEV, GNT, etc., are much looser in their translating. They focus on translating meaning, not words. And, of course, paraphrases, (LB, MSG) in which an author rewrites the text in his own words, are the most liberal with this.

The problem is that thought-for-thought translators are more prone to become interpreters, not just translators. And by becoming interpreters, sometimes they corrupt God's Holy Word. I should point out that all translations, even the word-for-word translations, require interpretation. My point is that some are more prone to error than others.

At this point some readers may be wondering how their Bible could be "wrong" on some points. Please know that even the most "liberal" of the paraphrases mentioned have been interpreted by people who truly desire to help people understand God's

Word. And in all, the overall truth of the gospel is not compromised. Still, when one is using a Bible which is closer to a paraphrase, it may be wise to treat it like devotional or commentary reading.

To help one understand why type of translation one is purchasing, Zondervan rates how conservative (word-for-word translations are at this end of the spectrum) and liberal various translations are.<sup>19</sup> Of the Bibles they rate, they rank the NASB as the most conservative and place the NIV in the middle of the scale, claiming that it is the “best balance between accuracy and readability.”<sup>20</sup> To the NIV’s right on the scale, with the right being the more liberal end, they place the following translations in this order: TNIV, NCV/ICB, NLT, NivV, GNT, CEV, LB and MSG (with The Message as being the most liberal).<sup>21</sup>

In examining the liberties that modern translations often make, I looked at key texts that impact the gender issue. I consulted the NASB (most conservative on Zondervan’s scale), NIV (middle ground) and various looser translations: NCV, NLT, NivV, GNT, CEV and MSG. With each subsequent table, I will compare the translation in question with the NASB and NIV.

Before we begin, I want to point out that I am in no way claiming the NASB is superior and without problem or that it is the best translation on the market. While I must admit that I prefer the NASB for personal use, I regularly read many translations and have come to love the NIV as well. I am simply using Zondervan’s analysis (NASB is most conservative, NIV is in the middle and others that are more liberal) for demonstration purposes. I will **bold** words where translators have taken liberties<sup>22</sup> that adversely affect women.<sup>23</sup>

**Table 5.1**

	<u>NASB</u>	<u>NIV</u>	<u>NivV</u>	<u>MSG</u>
1 Tim 2:11	Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness	A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.	When a woman is learning, she should be quiet. She should <b>follow the leaders in every way.</b>	<b>I don’t let women take over and tell the men what to do.</b>

**Table 5.2**

	<u>NASB</u>	<u>NIV</u>	<u>CEV</u>	<u>MSG</u>
1 Tim 2:12	But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.	I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.	They should be silent and not be allowed to teach or to tell <b>men what to do.</b>	They <b>should study to be quiet and obedient</b> along with everyone else.

**Table 5.3**

	<u>NASB</u>	<u>NIV</u>	<u>NLT</u>
--	-------------	------------	------------

1 Pet 3:1	In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any <i>of them</i> are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,	Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives,	In the same way, you wives must <b>accept the authority</b> of your husbands, even those who refuse to accept the Good News. Your godly lives will speak to them better than any words. They will be won over
-----------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Table 5.4**

	<u>NASB</u>	<u>NIV</u>	<u>GNT</u>	<u>MSG</u>
Eph 5:23	For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself <i>being</i> the Savior of the body.	For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.	For a husband <b>has authority over</b> his wife just as Christ has authority over the church; and Christ is himself the Saviour of the church, his body.	The husband <b>provides leadership</b> to his wife the way Christ does to his church, not by domineering but by cherishing.

**Table 5.5**

	<u>NASB</u>	<u>NIV</u>	<u>NLT</u>	<u>GNT</u>	<u>MSG</u>
1 Cor 11:3	But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.	Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.	But there is one thing I want you to know: A man is responsible to Christ, a woman is <b>responsible to her husband</b> , and Christ is responsible to God.	But I want you to understand that Christ is supreme over every man, the <b>husband is supreme over his wife</b> , and God is supreme over Christ.	In a marriage relationship, there is <b>authority</b> from Christ to husband, and <b>from husband to wife</b> . The authority of Christ is the authority of God.

**Table 5.6**

	<u>NASB</u>	<u>NIV</u>	<u>GNT</u>
1 Cor 11:10	Therefore the woman ought to have <i>a symbol of</i> authority on her head, because of the angels.	For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.	On account of the angels, then, a woman should have a covering over her head to show that she is <b>under her husband's authority</b> .

**Table 5.7**

	<u>NASB</u>	<u>NIV</u>	<u>NCV</u>
--	-------------	------------	------------

Rom 16:1	I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea;	I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea.	I recommend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a <b>helper</b> in the church in Cenchrea.
----------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Table 5.8**

	<u>NASB</u>	<u>NIV</u>	<u>GNT</u>
1 Tim 3:1	It is a trustworthy statement: if <b>any man</b> aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.	Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.	This is a true saying: if a <b>man</b> is eager to be a church leader, he desires an excellent work.

**Table 5.9**

	<u>NASB</u>	<u>NIV</u>	<u>NLT</u>	<u>NirV</u>	<u>GNT</u>
1 Tim 3:11	Women <i>must</i> likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.	In the same way, <b>their wives</b> are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.	In the same way, <b>their wives</b> must be respected and must not speak evil of others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do.	In the same way, <b>their wives</b> must be worthy of respect. They must not say things that harm others. In anything they do, they must not go too far. They must be worthy of trust in everything.	<b>Their wives</b> also must be of good character and must not gossip; they must be sober and honest in everything.

**Table 5.10**

	<u>NASB</u>	<u>NIV</u>	<u>MSG</u>
2 John 1	The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth,	The elder, To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth—and not I only, but also all who know the truth	My dear <b>congregation</b> , I, your pastor, love you in very truth. And I'm not alone—everyone who knows the Truth

What we have discovered is that Zondervan's ratings of how conservative and liberal each translation seems somewhat accurate, for as we move to the more liberal side of the scale the number of liberties per translation increases (the exception is the CEV<sup>24</sup>). The breakdown is shown in Table 5.11.

**Table 5.11**

	<u>NASB</u>	<u>NIV</u>	<u>NCV</u>	<u>NLT</u>	<u>NirV</u>	<u>GNT</u>	<u>CEV</u>	<u>MSG</u>
--	-------------	------------	------------	------------	-------------	------------	------------	------------

# of liberties taken	1	1	1	3	2	5	1	5
----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Table 5.11 demonstrates that both the GNT and the MSG took unwarranted liberties in 5 of the 10 passages examined that promote the complementarian position. Another popular translation, the NLT, took 3.

Between these three translations, well over 75 million copies have been sold.<sup>25</sup> In other words, by reading these three translations alone, 75 million people (at least in theory) have been reading translations of the Bible that inaccurately depict how the biblical writers spoke about women. Such poor scholarship is one of the chief reasons why, even in 2007, the gender debate continues. People pick up a Bible, think they can trust what it says, and then unknowingly advance, not the sacred text, but rather teachings that are interpretations of the sacred text.

If local churches are to reach agreement on any of the gender issues, sound translations must be consulted. The smorgasbord approach to studying the Bible is disastrous to this most crucial issue and only causes more confusion and divisiveness.

Such an approach reminds me of a Sunday School teacher who, instead of actually teaching what a text means, asks his/her class, "What does the text mean to you?" It really makes no difference what the text means to any given person; they could be wrong. The questions that do matter are these: "What does the text say?" "What does the text mean?" and "How is the meaning properly applied today?" When we use poor translations and/or paraphrases we can't even get the first question right, let alone the others.

<sup>1</sup> One reason some people think preaching is off limits to women is because they view preaching as being more authoritative than speaking or teaching. This line of thinking leads to some strange conclusions. For example, if preaching is more authoritative than teaching, then when I teach Sunday School my words are less authoritative than they are an hour later when I preach during the church service. Of course, the reasonable question is whether or not my words are authoritative to begin with. My conclusion is that they are not. The Word is authoritative; the teacher merely expounds on the Scriptures - sometimes correctly and sometimes incorrectly. Thus, a teacher or preacher should pray that the Holy Spirit will use him/her as a vessel to correctly communicate the authority of God's Word. Some, having viewed the preacher as authoritative, have bought in to countless erroneous teachings simply because they feel they are in no position to question his/her authority. Nothing could be further from the truth. With the passing of the apostles, the Word of God stands alone as the authority base one must follow.

<sup>2</sup> Staton, 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Loren Cunningham and David Joel Hamilton with Janice Rogers, *Why Not Women? A Fresh Look at Scripture on Women in Missions, Ministry, and Leadership* (Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 2000), 66.

<sup>4</sup> Ralph D. Winter, "Women in Missions," *Mission Frontiers* (August 1999): n. pag. (qtd. in Cunningham and Hamilton, 26.)

<sup>5</sup> Tucker, *Women in the Maze*, 183.

<sup>6</sup> Although Schreiner is a complementarian, I admire his honest assessment of the flaws of some complementarians. He graciously says, "Some women unquestionably have the spiritual gift of teaching. Men should be open to receiving biblical and doctrinal instruction from women. Otherwise, they are not following the humble example of Apollos." Yet, he curiously turns around and says women should not function as the "regular teacher of a gathering of men and women." I believe it is because he would view such regularity as a "pastoral function" to which he is opposed. Thomas R. Schreiner, "The Complementarian View," in *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 191.

<sup>7</sup> I will deal with 1 Tim 2:14 later.

---

<sup>8</sup> It has occurred to me that some would argue that ordination is the key difference. While I certainly agree that ordination is important, I would simply argue that women may be ordained into ministry.

<sup>9</sup> "Blare-a-tone" was a word one of my elders used at times to describe his voice. Unfortunately, I'm a member of his choir!

<sup>10</sup> The list of women who have gained prominence in Christian music seems endless. A few that come to mind are: Rebecca St. James, Stacie Orrico, Jennifer Knapp, CeCe Winans, Sandi Patty and Kathy Troccoli. There are also many groups which are either exclusively female or feature a female lead singer such as Point of Grace, BarlowGirl, FFH, Zoegirl, Flyleaf, Out of Eden and The Benjamin Gate.

<sup>11</sup> Groothuis, 74.

<sup>12</sup> Sumner, 202.

<sup>13</sup> Alvera Mickelsen, "An Egalitarian View," in *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, eds. Bonnidell and Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 62.

<sup>14</sup> As an example, Grady mentions how Christians during the Crusades used the Scriptures to inspire their slaughter of Muslims and Jews in the name of Christ. J. Lee Grady, *10 Lies the Church Tells Women: How the Bible Has Been Misused to Keep Women in Spiritual Bondage* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2000), 1-9.

<sup>15</sup> Sumner, 291.

<sup>16</sup> Webb, 246.

<sup>17</sup> Webb, 247.

<sup>18</sup> It's like when I go get an oil change. Since to me oil is oil, I always wonder why they ask me what brand I prefer. Since I've been told you should use the same oil in your vehicle, I usually say "Pennzoil." I think I settled on Pennzoil years ago because I liked the yellow Indy cars they sponsored! That tells you how much I know about oil.

<sup>19</sup> Zondervan, "Bible Translations," < <http://www.zondervanbibles.com/translations.htm>>

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Note that I have not said the NASB or NIV never take liberties. For example, the NIV is more literal than the NASB in 1 Tim 2:11 when it says "learn" (vs. the NASB "receive instruction").

<sup>23</sup> I want to acknowledge that at times these translations actually soften the text. For example, the NCV says, "Let a woman learn by listening quietly and being ready to cooperate in everything" (1 Tim 2:11). I think we would all agree that cooperation is much easier than submission. The NCV has made an unwarranted change that is not fair to the complementarian argument. Still, the majority of the liberties taken are slanted to the complementarian view.

<sup>24</sup> This does not mean that the CEV doesn't necessarily take liberties. It simply means they did not take liberties that adversely affect women.

<sup>25</sup> These numbers have been derived from various web sites.

The MSG has sold over 5 million copies in 5 years: "The Message Product Catalog,"

<<http://www.navpress.com/Assets/PDF/Message/msgcat.pdf>>.

The GNT has sold over 30 million copies and is the most popular version among British parishioners. "Good News Translation,"

< [http://www.fact-index.com/g/go/good\\_news\\_translation.html](http://www.fact-index.com/g/go/good_news_translation.html)>

The NLT has sold over 40 million copies - "New Living Translation,"

< <http://rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Letter/v6n1-6.htm>>