

**An Open Response to the
Healthy Complementarianism
Discussion Paper from the Committee of Elders and Deacons
Written by the Macquarie Chapel Presbyterian Church Session.
December 2022**

Aim:

This is an open response to the Healthy Complementarianism discussion paper from the Committee for Elders and Deacons (the CED), dated July 2022. The aim is twofold.

1. We would like to encourage and contribute to a healthy discussion within our denomination and facilitate understanding of one another. It is a sign of health and maturity when we can listen to and accept others with differing values and beliefs to our own.
2. We would like to demonstrate, as a part of the above discussion, that the Complementarian position, as presented, is not the only position that can be held from a Biblical perspective and we would like to correct the misrepresentation of 'Egalitarian' views in the paper.

Context:

Currently the PCNSW allows each Session and congregation to choose male and female elders. This allows each Session and Congregation to put into practice their own understanding of eldership. Limiting this will not make our denomination healthier. A sign of health as well as a contributor to it is when people have the maturity to respect different views and the complexities that this sometimes involves.

Some PCA ministers have trained at Christ College/PTC without looking at any of the key passages dealt within the paper or told to formulate a view around male/female eldership or given help in doing this. Some churches have joined our denomination and paid assessments on the understanding that women were a part of the eldership in the PCNSW.

It has been proposed that the NSW General Assembly vote on this matter. It does not seem prudent for the vote to occur at the level of the male dominated Assembly. This is a decision that should be made by our whole church. It is a decision that will impact our whole denomination. There is biblical precedence for a whole church decision on weighty matters (Acts 15:22).

The CED stated on page 3 that *"the discussion paper is designed to provide a starting point for discussion in the church about healthy biblical relationships between men and women, and specifically about the sex of elders. The Assembly has encouraged the paper to be read and discussed widely in the church. The paper can be read and discussed by individuals or by groups, whether formal or informal."* This Paper from the CED is the start of the conversation. We are grateful for the opportunity for this discussion, and we would like to raise some points in our response and we request fair consideration by the Committee, as well as whoever might engage with it from across our denomination.

Response Summary

1. Definitions: The CED on pages 9-10 does not define Complementarianism or Egalitarianism to the level required for this discussion, especially regarding Hierarchical Complementarity. The debate is not sufficiently described as Complementarian v Egalitarian. It is Hierarchical Complementarity (HC) v Non-hierarchical Complementarity (NHC).¹ It is important to tease out where there is or is not biblical evidence for HC. For example, on page 17 the CED state that Jesus confirms “*God-given difference and complementarity*” in Matthew 19 when he “*confirms the “one flesh” nature of marriage between “a man” and “his wife”*”. We agree, but we do not see it as evidence for a gender-based hierarchy. Jesus makes no comment in the passage about the authority of a husband over a wife.

2. Other Key Terms/Phrases: The CED refers to several key terms/phrases including ‘fit for him’ (Genesis 2), ‘Head’ (kephale), domineering (authentein), ‘husband of one wife’ (1 Timothy 3) and ‘submit’ (hypotusso). There is need for greater and more accurate discussion around these terms/phrases. For example, the CED state, “*Although it has been argued that κεφαλή means “source,” or “preeminence,” rather than “authority,” these interpretations are not supported by the lexical evidence*”. Yet there is Lexical evidence to support these interpretations.²

3. Greek grammar: The CED suggest that we should read the male references in the original grammar as being exclusive of women, when Greek and Hebrew convention is that male only references can be used to include women and children. For example, John 3:16 and 1 Timothy 3:1 both use the phrase “anyone”. This is strictly a male ‘anyone’, and yet we would all agree that John 3:16 includes women as well as men.³

4. Headship: The CED distort the marriage metaphor used by Paul when on page 5 they state, “*that the relationship of headship and submission applies most directly to husbands and wives in the family, and to elders and members in the church.*” In Scripture, Elders are never referred to as ‘heads’ of the church or of the congregation. Jesus is the only one ever presented as a ‘head’ of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23, Colossians 1:18). Indeed, the WCF refers to Jesus as “the Head and Saviour of His Church.”⁴ The WCF also says, “There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ”⁵ and the communion of Saints is a reality for, “All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head.”⁶ The idea that elders are ‘heads’ is foreign to scripture, our confession of faith, and our church polity.

¹ C.f. https://margmowczko.com/kassian-complementarianism/?fbclid=IwAR12La1ou1IEfdgFDEvVhANKbjsBeM_FOFqsalMZ2B7J0z29UB0HylMH9a4

Mowczko says, “I call myself a Christian Egalitarian. I too can see that God has created men and women with differences that complement each other. My beliefs differ from those of complementarians, however, in that I believe these differences do not mean that men have authority and women don’t, simply on the basis of their sex. I am a non-hierarchical complementarian, whereas the position of Mary Kassian, John Piper, and others is that of a hierarchical complementarity.”

² C.f. especially: Liddell, Henry George. Scott, Robert. A Greek-English Lexicon vol. 1. Clarendon Press Oxford. 1925 pp944-945

³ C.f. <https://margmowczko.com/masculine-pronouns-english-bible/> Mowczko says, “In the Bible, masculine pronouns are also used when referring generically to a person. This is true for both the original languages, as well as for English translations, even when the person being written about, or addressed, could be either a man or a woman. (The “default” grammatical gender when speaking about people in general in Hebrew and Greek is masculine.) The inclusiveness of women is usually (but not always) understood by people who are familiar with the grammar of Hebrew and Greek, and who understand the nuances in the texts. But the possible or actual presence, or inclusiveness, of women is obscured in many English translations of certain verses when masculine pronouns are used and understood literally by the reader.”

⁴ WCF Chapter VIII Of Christ the Mediator

⁵ WCF Chapter XXV Of the Church

⁶ C.f. WCF Chapter XXVI Of the Communion of Saints

5. The Key Verses: The CED present ‘Egalitarian’ arguments concerning the key passages, Genesis 1-3, Judges 4-5, 1 Corinthians 11 & 14, Ephesians 5, 1 Timothy 2 & 3 that are inaccurate and incomplete. There is more to be said for a non-hierarchical perspective with several valid alternate readings for passages such as 1 Timothy 2:11-15.⁷

6. Healthy Authority: The CED on page 19 claim that the created order is the man initiates marriage and sex within marriage. Scripture speaks of mutuality regarding the initiation of sex within marriage in 1 Corinthians 7:2-6. Scripture does not support a created order that reflects the husband as the preferred initiator of sex. The only mention of authority by Paul regarding sexual relations in marriage reflects mutuality between husband and wife (1 Corinthians 7:4).

This leads into a deeper discussion about authority and the model of the Kingdom that Jesus and the NT present of mutual submission above and before assuming authority over others. The idea that there is a God ordained hierarchy of gender in marriage or in the church can be fertile soil for abuse.⁸

7. A way forward: We would ask the Assembly to move slowly rather than quickly in considering the matter of male only elders. The paper by the CED provides only the beginning of a long overdue discussion on the biblical foundations of leadership and authority in the church. Doing this well will involve a measured, time-rich process with adequate discussion that allows all sides to represent their views fully, rather than the CED doing so on the behalf of others.

⁷ C.f. <https://derekdemars.com/2019/07/11/first-timothy-2-11-15-and-women-in-ministry/> As well as presenting a thoughtful alternative understanding of 1 Timothy 2, Demars states, “Maybe you’ve heard some influential evangelical leaders champion this view (guys like John Piper, Wayne Grudem, or John MacArthur). And maybe you’ve been told that any alternative interpretation isn’t really motivated by a sincere desire to submit to the truth of Scripture, but is driven by the liberal, hyper-feminist spirit of our postmodern age. I want to make as clear as I can that such statements as that last one are patently false and unnecessarily alarmist.

It may be true in some cases, but the reality is that there is a substantial number of godly Bible scholars, pastors, and theologians, with the utmost regard for the truth of Scripture, who are convinced that this is the wrong way to read 1 Tim 2:11-15 — people like Gordon Fee, Scot McKnight, Craig Keener, and N. T. Wright, among others.”

⁸ C.f. Maddock Pidgeon, Kylie...COMPLEMENTARIANISM AND DOMESTIC ABUSE:

A SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE ON WHETHER “EQUAL BUT DIFFERENT” IS REALLY EQUAL AT ALL “Men therefore occupy the positions of greater power and public influence in a church and hold the offices charged with major decision-making and oversight of the abuse within their churches. However, the doctrine and culture of male authority and female submission, even when enacted with loving kindness, presents obvious risks to the safety, voice, and participation of women, as it grants permanent and unilateral authority to men. Complementarian church governments are male-dominated by design, where men are automatically afforded greater decision making authority than women, irrespective of commensurate gifting. A gender-skewed bias is therefore created in many arenas of church life, including leadership, spiritual formation, and pastoral care.”

Response in Full

1. Definitions

Complementarianism

The definition given of Complementarianism by the CED does not contain any reference. Complementarianism is described as the view that men and women are both created as complementary expressions of the image of God, thus equal in dignity, worth and significance while reflecting God in different ways. Further to this they claim on page 10 that complementarianism is a view that “includes the conviction that God has assigned distinct and complementary roles or functions to men and women in marriage and in church life.” The Complementarian catchphrase, “Equal but Different” sums this view up.⁹ ‘Decision making, initiating, leading, authority and power’ are not mentioned in the definition of Complementarianism, though Complementarianism frequently refers to them.¹⁰ A full definition of HC, which is the position of the CED, should include dynamics such as power and authority. This reflects the reality that this is not simply Complementarianism that is being presented by the CED, but Hierarchical Complementarianism.

Egalitarianism

We also note that though there is no separate heading for a definition for egalitarianism, one is provided and referenced under the definition of complementarianism. The definition for egalitarianism chosen from cbeinternational.org is a mission statement for CBE International, not a definition. As such it does not define egalitarianism appropriately. The implied understanding of Egalitarianism that the CED develops through the paper is that Egalitarianism does not recognise a created, complementary difference between men and women. The CED makes statements that misrepresent the Egalitarian position. For example, on page 31, *“Paul’s statement in Galatians 3:28, therefore, cannot reasonably be interpreted to mean that the differences between men and women are completely obliterated by our unity and equality in Christ.”* This implies that Egalitarians think that Galatians 3:28 ‘completely obliterates’ any difference between men and women. We do not know of any biblical egalitarian who believes this.¹¹ In Christ, men and women have clear biological differences.¹²

Murray Smith the convener of the CED stated in an interview with PCNSW women that he hoped the paper would be “a resource for considering the biblical arguments on both sides of the question of whether elders must be male.”¹³ We note that the CED claims to have given full voice to the Egalitarian argument, and yet we note that they have failed to define either side of the discussion appropriately, and that there is a lack of Egalitarian references provided within the paper. Both sides should be fairly represented and rightly understood so that an informed decision can be made.

Male only Eldership

There is a surprising definition under “Male only eldership” which the Committee has described as “the view that the biblical office of elder-overseer is restricted to men,” and then adds, “It is possible to hold the complementarian view of relationships between men and women in marriage and church life but not support male only eldership.” This would describe many NHCs.

⁹ C.f. this example <https://albertmohler.com/2018/05/23/wrath-god-poured-humiliation-southern-baptist-convention>

¹⁰ C.f. <https://cbmw.org/2019/08/01/whats-in-a-name/> to learn of the origin of the term ‘complementarian’

¹¹ <https://rachelheldevans.com/blog/4-common-misconceptions-egalitarianism>

¹² C.f. Leviticus 15:19

¹³ <https://www.pcnswwomen.org.au/blog/interview-with-murray-smith?fbclid=IwAR08mRgndSQsxiHkl7bAo0dsFTSfhrrDKNUxMf9DjK-iUAFRaJT-ZR2bRtM>

Many examples given by the CED in support of Complementarity are believed by Egalitarians. We believe that sexual relations are for within marriage and should be between a husband and wife, and not same sex oriented. Egalitarianism is not a belief in blanket sameness between men and women. The heart of the issue is whether men have authority over women in the home and the church simply due to their gender/sex.

The CED in Part One p12-18 provide a theological background that we largely agree on, but we note that no evidence has been given for hierarchy between genders up to the end of p18. From p19 the CED wish to highlight a God given order in creation. We also note that there is an order. Adam was created first and Eve second. We also note that animals were created before Adam!¹⁴ We also note that it is largely the post fall reality that the CED point to, in highlighting how they wish to understand the created order, with Adam initiating sex with Eve, if indeed he did.¹⁵ The CED point to Numbers 30 and the law which deals with the vows of young women differently to men. There are many ways to understand this other than pointing towards a created hierarchical order.¹⁶ Defining both sides of this discussion appropriately will enable more healthy discussion.

2. Other Key Terms/Phrases

‘Fit for him’ (Genesis 2:18)

On page 15 CED claims, *“the phrase ‘fit for him’ (ESV) or ‘suitable for him’ (NIV) indicates her complementary difference from him. The phrase could be translated ‘like opposite him’ (יָרִיבֵּהוּ)”* They also state, *“The man and the woman share fully the same humanity, but are also different from each other—even ‘opposite’ to each other—in a good and necessary way. The woman is the man’s equal match, his complement.”* The CED suggest that the word translated as “fit for him” could be translated as “like opposite him”. Sometimes the Hebrew word in question is translated “opposite”¹⁷. At a glance “opposite” does suggest complementary. But this is to distort the meaning of the word. Indeed, it has many more translations that reflect the idea of “before” or “in front of”.¹⁸ The translation, “opposite” does not refer to something that is the reverse (and therefore complementary) to something, but rather something that is located opposite to, thus before or in front of, such as in Genesis 21:16, “sat her down *opposite*.” The term ‘opposite’ is positional, not ontological.

We do not deny a sense of complementarity in the idea of a helper suitable for Adam being created but none of this suggests a creation ordered hierarchy.

‘Head’ (Kephale)

The CED says on page 20, *“The Greek noun κεφαλή (“head”) ordinarily refers to “the part of the body that contains the brain,” and also refers—by extension, and metaphorically—to a person of*

¹⁴ <https://margmowczko.com/adam-created-first/>

¹⁵ “Know” is a euphemism or idiomatic expression for sex and usually is expressed as the male ‘knew’ the female. It is not a clear indication of who initiated sex but rather that sex occurred. C.f. Genesis 24:16 that describes a virgin not as a “woman who had not known a man”, but rather a “woman who a man had not known”. Also Genesis 38:26 refers to Judah not “knowing” Tamar again when clearly Tamar was the one who conspired to have sex with Judah.

¹⁶ C.f. <https://www.thetorah.com/article/why-can-womens-vows-be-vetoed>

¹⁷ Reference Strong’s Number 5048 <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/5048.htm>

¹⁸ Reference Strong’s Number 5048 <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/5048.htm>

“superior rank”.¹⁹ Although it has been argued that *κεφαλή* means “source,”²⁰ or “pre-eminences,”²¹ rather than “authority,” these interpretations are not supported by the lexical evidence.²² More importantly, it does not make sense of Paul’s teaching in Ephesians 5 or 1 Corinthians 11.” We have included the references from the CED quote in here as footnotes 22-25. Bauer, as referenced by the CED gives ‘superior rank’ but does NOT give ‘authority’ which seems to be the meaning the CED works with, though various lexicons do not use the term ‘authority’ for *kephale* at all. The CED claim ‘source’ or ‘pre-eminence’ are not supported by lexical evidence and use Grudem as the reference to back this up, rather than a lexicon. The CED’s suggestion that the word *kephale* means “leader” or “authority” is not convincing. The lexicon, Liddel & Scott does not record the idea of authority for the term *kephale* but instead ‘source’²³ and ‘preeminent’ and are quoted by Cervin as doing so.

Authentein

Regarding ‘authentein’ the CED says, “it is a mistake to make much of his use of the verb *αὐθεντέω* (“exercise authority”). While this verb certainly does carry negative connotations, there is no indication in the context that Paul would affirm a woman holding authority over a man, if only she exercised that authority in the right way.” We think it prudent to take note of a word that is only used once in the NT, when there are other words that Paul could use and does use regularly to mean authority.²⁴ Hübner says regarding the rarity of the word, “when one takes into consideration the whole picture—potential alternative terms, the author, the occasion, syntax, contemporary usage, and so on, there are more than enough reasons to believe that *αὐθεντέω* exhibits some nuance or connotation that assists in Paul’s communicative goal. To assert anything less would be to cast the words of the Pastorals (and perhaps the entire Pauline corpus) in an intolerably arbitrary light.”²⁵

There is evidence to link this word to “‘perpetrator’, ‘murderer’ and ‘dictatorship’”²⁶ as well as, “domineer.”²⁷ and, “domineer over someone.”²⁸ This is a negative word.

¹⁹ W. Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 541 §§1–2.

²⁰ S. Bedale, “The Meaning of *κεφαλή* in the Pauline Epistles,” *JTS* 5 (1954): 211–15; A. Mickelsen and B. Mickelsen, “What Does *κεφαλή* Mean in the New Testament?,” in *Women, Authority, and the Bible*, ed. A. Mickelsen (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 97–117; C. C. Kroeger, “Appendix III: The Classical Concept of Head as ‘Source,’” in *Equal to Serve: Women and Men in the Church and Home*, ed. G. G. Hull (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell, 1987), 267–83.

²¹ See esp. R. R. Cervin, “Does *κεφαλή* Mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal,” *TJ* 10 (1989): 85–112; “On the Significance of *κεφαλή* (‘head’): A Study of the Abuse of One Greek Word,” *Priscilla Papers* 30.2 (2016): 8–20.

²² See esp. W. Grudem, “Does *κεφαλή* (‘Head’) Mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples,” *TrinJ* ns 6.1 (1985): 38–59; “The Meaning of *κεφαλή* (‘Head’): A Response to Recent Studies,” *TrinJ* 11 (1990): 3–72; “The Meaning of *κεφαλή* (‘Head’): An Evaluation Of New Evidence, Real And Alleged,” *JETS* 44.1 (2001): 25–65; J. A. Fitzmyer, “Another look at *κεφαλή* in 1 Corinthians 11:3,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 503–11; “*Kephalē* in 1 Corinthians 11:3,” *Int* 47 (1993): 32–59.

²³ Liddell, Henry George. Scott, Robert. *A Greek-English Lexicon* vol. 1. Clarendon Press Oxford. 1925 pp944–945

²⁴ Revisiting *αὐθεντέω* in 1 Timothy 2:12: What Do the Extant Data Really Show? Jamin Hübner John Witherspoon College jaminhubner@gmail.co Hubner states, “if Paul, in 1 Tim 2:12, was attempting to communicate (for example) a general sense of exercising authority, there is little question about what words could (or should) have been used.”

²⁵ P15 Revisiting *αὐθεντέω* in 1 Timothy 2:12: What Do the Extant Data Really Show? Jamin Hübner John Witherspoon College jaminhubner@gmail.com

²⁶ Beekes, Robert. *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* vol. 1 Brill, London 2016 p169

²⁷ Mounce, William D. *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* Zondervan Michigan 1993 p106

²⁸ Bauer’s, Walter, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature* Ed. Arndt & Gingrich. University of Chicago Press. Chicago & London. 1979. P121

The CED statement that there is “no indication in the context that Paul would affirm a woman holding authority over a man, if only she exercised that authority in the right way” is an argument from silence and does not respond to the egalitarian argument that they have outlined on pages 29-30.

Husband of one wife

On page 36 the CED state, “Most significantly, Paul twice stipulates that the elder-overseer must be “a husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:2: *μῆς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα*; Tit 1:6: *μῆς γυναικὸς ἀνὴρ*). This stands in direct contrast with his requirement that widows who receive church support must have been “the wife of one husband” (*ἐνὸς ἀνδρὸς γυνή*) (1 Tim 5:9). Thus, in the very same letter, Paul speaks of men and women in distinct ways in regard to their marital faithfulness: elder-overseers are to be “a husband of one wife”; widows supported by the church are to have been the “wife of one husband.” In both cases the requirement is gendered in a non-interchangeable way. From this it is clear that the apostolic requirement is for elder-overseers to be men.”

The reason Paul uses a term gendered in a non-interchangeable way in 1 Timothy 5:9 is because he is clearly speaking about women who have been faithful. Men are not in view as Paul is talking about widows. In 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6, however, there are a couple of other factors at play.

First, it is not as clear from the context as to whether Paul is speaking to only men. Secondly, there is the possibility that “husband of one wife” is an idiom that was used to describe marital faithfulness as a general term, and thus able to be used in referring to men or men and women. Marg Mowski says the following:

“One phrase that does not seem to apply to women is where it says that a church leader should be, literally, “a husband of one wife” or “a one-woman man” (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6; cf. 1 Tim. 3:12). This phrase is, however, an idiom and there are dangers in applying it too literally. Because it is an idiomatic expression, many people have had difficulty explaining and adapting its meaning in the context of contemporary Western church culture, a culture that is vastly different from that of the first-century church and early church.

It is possible that the real intent of this phrase in 1 Timothy and in Titus is marital faithfulness in a church leader who is already married. Accordingly, Andreas Köstenberger states that “‘husband of one wife’ represents an idiom of marital faithfulness ...” Philip Payne writes, “The closest English equivalent to one-woman man is ‘monogamous,’ and it applies to both men and women.”²⁹

Philip Payne states that Moo and Schreiner (complementarians) do not believe that you can exclude female elders because of 1 Timothy 3 and the phrase “one woman man”. Douglas Moo acknowledges that this phrase need not exclude “unmarried men or females from the office— it would be going too far to argue that the phrase clearly excludes women...” And “Thomas Schreiner acknowledges, “The requirements for elders in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9, including the statement that they are to be one-woman men, does not necessarily in and of itself preclude women from serving as elders.”³⁰

‘Submit’ (Hypotasso)

Regarding the term hypotasso, the CED write on page 21, “the command to submit—in every case—comes with a corresponding command to the one in authority to use their authority for the sake of those ordered under them. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church, giving themselves up for their wives (Eph 5:25). Fathers are not to provoke their children to anger, but to serve them by bringing them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4). Masters are not

²⁹ Marg Mowski <https://margmowczko.com/pauls-qualifications-for-church-leaders/> with the following footnotes, [6] Philip B. Payne, Does “One-Woman Man” In 1 Timothy 3:2 Require That All Overseers Be Male? (Source: pbbpayne.com)

³⁰ <https://www.pbbpayne.com/does-one-woman-man-in-1-timothy-32-require-that-all-overseers-be-male/>

to threaten their slaves, but to remember that they, like their slaves, answer to their Master in heaven, and so are to treat them “justly and fairly” (Eph 6:9; Col 4:1).”

Contrary to the claim by the CED that ‘in every case’ the command to submit comes with a corresponding command to the one in authority, in Ephesians 5:21 the command to submit is not followed with a command for the person in authority to use their authority for the sake of those ordered under them. The dictionary definition of ‘submit’ may include the idea of authority but can also exclude authority as one can submit to the will of another, regardless of the presence or absence of authority structures.³¹

James 4:7 tells us to submit to God. This highlights that ‘submit’ will look different in different contexts. Husbands are not God, and Paul would not expect wives to submit to them in the same way as they would to God. We are to submit to governing authorities (Titus 3:1) which would look different again. 1 Peter 5:5 urges the younger to submit to the older. Submission in some contexts seems to be linked to humility (1 Peter 5:5-6). 1 Peter 3:1-4 suggests that wifely submission can reflect purity, reverence and inner beauty. It clearly involves more than simply taking direction from another. It is what we are all called to do.

3. Greek Grammar

Understanding the use of the masculine and feminine in the New Testament Greek is not as simple as a masculine reference ruling out any possible context of women. The CED says on page 31, *“Certainly, the Scriptures consistently assume that elders are male. In the Old Testament, the masculine form of the Hebrew adjective זָקֵן (“elder”) is consistently used to refer to Israel’s elders. The feminine form does occur—as in Zechariah 8:4 in the pair “old men and old women” (זָקֵן וְזָקֵנָה)—but it is never used to refer to recognised leaders in Israel.”* Then on page 32, *“Across the New Testament, the biblical authors consistently use the masculine form of the Greek adjective πρεσβύτερος (“elder”) to refer to those holding office, whether among the Jews or in the church. The feminine form is well-attested in Greek literature, and Paul uses it once when referring to older women (1 Tim 5:2: πρεσβυτέρα; cf. the cognate noun at Tit 2:3: πρεσβυτιδας), but the New Testament never uses the feminine form for those who hold office in the church. Put negatively, there is no indication anywhere in the Bible of women functioning as elders. Put positively, the Bible everywhere assumes that elders are men.”*

It should be noted that in the Greek the male form is often used in instances involving men and women. One prominent example we gave in our summary earlier is John 3:16. Although Jesus states that anyone (male) who believes in the one God sent will have eternal life, this promise is for women too! This is called the “generic he”³² When in 1 Timothy 3:1 Paul states, “If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task” it is not excluding women. Indeed, if Paul wanted to, he could have explicitly ruled out women at this point, but instead uses language that the natural Greek speaker would have assumed included women. Whenever a NT writer is referring to a group of elders, whether all male or mixed, they used the same wording. If Paul wanted us to know that he was only referring to male elders or female, then there are several ways he could do this, such as in 1 Timothy 5:2 for women or 1 Timothy 5:1 for men.³³

³¹ C.f. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/submit> “to yield oneself to the authority **or will of another... to permit oneself to be subjected to something... to defer to or consent to abide by the opinion or authority of another”.**

³² <https://frame-poythress.org/gender-in-bible-translation-exploring-a-connection-with-male-representatives/>

³³ For further thoughts on assumptions around the New Testament only giving evidence of male elders c.f. <https://margmowczko.com/women-elders-new-testament/> It is not that the Bible assumes elders are men but rather that the CED does.

4. Headship

In regard to 'headship' we wish to say four things:

1 - There is only one passage in scripture that describes the husband as the head of the wife.

In Ephesians 5:22-33 there is nothing that husbands are told to do as the head, other than to love their wives as their own body. Paul mentions it as an encouragement for wives to submit, something that Paul has asked all believers to do to one another. It is to read into the text to assume that Paul is setting up a power dynamic within marriage. The context of the passage would suggest that Paul is trying to encourage mutual love and submission in all relationships, including marriage and even between slaves and masters.

2 - Elders are never described as 'heads' in scripture.

Scripture does not apply the head/body analogy to church elders and congregations. In the summary of part one on page 5 the CED state, *"the relationship of headship and submission applies most directly to husbands and wives in the family, and to elders and members in the church."* Scripture, the WCF and our church polity do not suggest that elders are heads of the congregation. Colossians 1:18 states that Jesus is the only head of the church and Ephesians 1:22 states that Jesus is the "head over all things to the church" and in Ephesians 4:15, Paul reminds us that Jesus is 'the head'.

3 - Scripture never equates 'head' with 'authority'.

The use of the term 'head' in Colossians 1:18 suggests the idea of pre-eminence and source and again in Colossians 2:10 Jesus is described as "the head over every power and authority". Rather than the idea that Jesus is the authority over every authority, Jesus is the source or origin of all authority. 1 Corinthians 11:3 we see these meanings in "the head of Christ is God". The Godhead is the 'source' of Christ not the authority over Christ. In 1 Peter 2:7 Jesus is described as the capstone or literally in the Greek, the 'head' of the corner. This does not speak of his authority over the other stones but his pre-eminent relationship to them.

4 - Paul puts 'headship' into perspective for us.

With the context of 'headship' Paul says 1 Corinthians 11:11-12, *"in the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God."* Paul makes it clear that there is a mutuality and unity at play between male and female as God is the 'source' of us all.

5. Key Verses

Genesis 1-3

The CED deal with the Genesis creation account on pages 15-16 under the heading, "Complementary difference in creation." We note two things from this section. Firstly, we agree with the CEDs conclusions regarding the presence of complementarity in the creation account. Secondly, we note that the CED points to nothing in the creation account that demonstrates hierarchy or authority between the man and the woman. It does highlight different responsibilities. We believe that Genesis 1-2 highlights that the man and woman shared purpose, dominion and image of God.

The CED states on page 18, *"we are right to affirm that there is a basic biblical shape to masculinity and femininity, rooted in the biological differences given at creation, and in the distinct and complementary roles that God has given to men and women in "filling" and "subduing" the earth (Gen 1:26-28; 2:18; 3:16-19). Faithful expressions of masculinity and femininity are not merely arbitrary."* We note that once again the only evidence shown of complementarity by the CED is evidence for NHC. The 'filling' and 'subduing' is given to both men and women, though the role that the woman and man play in the "filling" is clearly biologically different as noted by the CED above. The reference given by the CED to Genesis 2:18 refers to the need for a suitable helper for

Adam, but from the text we can only assume that this ‘helping’ is in reference to the only thing that is not good – Adam’s aloneness. We agree that the differences between men and women are not arbitrary, and of course Egalitarians/NHCs do not claim this is the case. We merely assert that there is no God given hierarchy or authority based in God’s good, created order. The CED/HCs do claim this and yet the CED has been unable to point to anything in the creation account to demonstrate this.

Genesis 3 tells the story of the fall of mankind and the curses given by God in response. In reference to these curses on page 16 the CED says, *“the man will be able to use this desire to manipulate the woman to his own advantage (“he will rule over you”). This, of course, describes the perversion rather than the ideal of male leadership. In God’s original design, Adam’s headship was to be expressed, like God’s own rule, in love and sympathy towards his wife. The reference here at Genesis 3:16, then, to the man “ruling” over his wife, is not to male leadership per se, but to its parody in the “harsh exploitative subjugation” which has all too often characterized the treatment of women by men.”* Although we have suggested that ‘headship’ does not mean authority or leadership, we would also highlight that Adam is never referenced as Eve’s head or indeed anyone’s head. We also wish to highlight that Genesis 1-2 do not suggest any leadership role of Adam over Eve. The rule/dominion mentioned is their shared rule/dominion. What happens through the fall and the curses is that we move from men and women sharing rule/dominion together to the man having rule/dominion over women; a reality lived out in society to this day.

Judges 4-5

In dealing with Judges 4-5 we want to respond to the CED’s reading into the text of scripture. The CED make assumptions about Deborah and Barak that are not found in the text. We deal with these below.

The CED state that, *“the LORD raised up Deborah and Jael to shame the men of Israel, who were failing in their God-given leadership and teaching roles.”* The only reference to back up this claim is a verse from Isaiah 3:12 which is not a part of the text in question and we suggest provides no support for the claim.³⁴

The CED state that, *“Barak, however—despite his impressive name (“Lightning”)—offers only a weak response, prompting Deborah to declare that he will not receive “glory,” but in fact be shamed.”* The suggestion that this is a ‘weak’ response from Barak is not supported by the text. The text shows that Deborah told Barak that she would deploy him against Sisera. Barak then says he will play his part if Deborah is with him. She says she will be with him and that he should know that *“there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking”* as Sisera will fall at the hand of a woman. Barak, knowing that the glory is going to go to another, still plays his part. Note that the text shows no link between Barak’s response and the glory going to a woman. When Deborah says there will be no glory *“in the journey you are taking,”* it appears that this is the journey of confronting Sisera. There is nothing in the text to assume that it is the journey of insisting Deborah come with him. The CED say that Barak would, *“in fact be shamed”* an idea not in the text. As a result, the conclusion of the CED that, *“This word affirms the good God-given order—that the men of Israel ought to take the lead—and announces a form of judgment on Israel’s men, especially Barak, for their failure to do so”* is unsupported.

The CED then claim, *“This is confirmed in the “Song of Deborah and Barak” in Judges 5, which further celebrates the ideal, and laments the failures, of Israel’s men.”* Yet, a close inspection of Judges 5 fails to find a lament of the failure of Israel’s men. The CED also states that, *“the princes of Israel ought to have taken the lead, and the fighting men ought to have offered themselves willingly*

³⁴ C.f. especially <https://margmowczko.com/old-testament-women-numbers-30-vows/> “Accordingly, the New English Translation has: “Oppressors treat my people cruelly; creditors rule over them ...” Isaiah 3:12 NET. The Common English Bible, the Good News Translation, and the New English Bible, likewise, do not have the word “women” in Isaiah 3:12.”

(Judg 5:2) but since they didn't in this case (Judg 5:7, 16–17), the LORD raised up a woman instead (Judg 5:7)". The CED then state in a footnote in reference to Judges 5:2, "*The text here does not specify "men," but refers to the "people" (עַם / λαός). In context, however, it is surely the fighting men of Israel who are intended.*" It supports the CED's position to state this is only referring to the fighting men of Israel, but this is not what the text says. The word is often translated as 'people' and is used this way consistently through scripture (e.g., Genesis 11:6).

Regarding Judges 5:7 the CED appear to be working from a rendering of the verse like the NIV that says, "*Villagers in Israel would not fight; they held back until I, Deborah, arose...*" A more literal translation would be, "*village life ceased until I arose.*" Indeed, the ESV which is a more literal translation renders this as, "*The villagers ceased in Israel; they ceased to be until I arose; I, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel.*" The idea that Deborah is shaming the men is read into the text.

The CED claim that God, "*disgraced his enemies by defeating them through the hand of a woman (Judg 5:24–30).*" Judges 5:24–30 certainly describes a victory given by God through a woman, but it does not highlight that this was a reason for disgrace, and it certainly does not say it was to shame the Israelite or the enemy men.

The CED conclude with the following statements on pages 34–35, "*At the same time, the story of Deborah and Barak makes it clear that the LORD saved his people in this unusual way because the men of Israel, who should have taken the lead, failed in their task, and suffered shame as a result... The story thus provides a good illustration of biblical complementarianism: women and men are of equal dignity and honour in God's sight, equally called to serve the LORD, and equally capable of being used by the LORD; yet, the LORD has established a good order in which men are to take the lead.*" These chapters in Judges do show God can save his people in unusual ways. A tent peg through the cranium is unusual! The passages simply do not state that this is because of a failing in male leadership. They do not provide evidence of shame where this has not happened.

1 Corinthians 11

The CED again highlights evidence for NHC on page 17 as they deal with 1 Corinthians 11 saying, "*Paul also affirms here that male and female are not independent of one another, but interdependent; the differences are important, and they are important because life works best when men and women work together according to their God-given differences.*" We agree but wish to highlight that the only difference the CED have been able to point to in the text is, "*the obvious, men cannot fall pregnant, carry a child, give birth, or breastfeed.*"

Clearly 1 Corinthians 11 is a difficult passage, especially if we lack some of the cultural realities of the time when Paul wrote. There are several ways of reading this passage without importing hierarchy or authority.³⁵

1 Corinthians 14

1 Corinthians 14 contains a very difficult passage that provides several what appear to be contradictory statements by Paul. The CED present an 'Egalitarian' position on page 29 that perhaps these contradictions can be explained by being, "*a later interpolation in the text, not written by Paul, and not part of Scripture. Alternatively, if these verses are from Paul, the injunction is best understood as Paul quoting a Corinthian slogan in order to refute it. Paul does this elsewhere in the letter (1 Cor 6:12–13; 7:1), so it is possible he does the same here.*" In the response to this Egalitarian view by the CED we note that they deal with the idea of an interpolation on page 39 when they state, "*the view that 1 Corinthians 14:33b–35 is a later interpolation, not original to Paul, is unconvincing.*"

³⁵ C.f. <https://www.fixinghereyes.org/single-post/2017/06/20/an-exegetical-look-at-1-corinthians-11-16>
<https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/how-should-we-interpret-1-corinthians-11-2-16/>

The vast majority of the manuscripts include these verses, including the earliest and best manuscripts (P46, 123; & A B). While a minority of later manuscripts do not include the verses at this point (D, F, G), even these manuscripts include Paul's statement following 1 Corinthians 14:40. There is, therefore, no good reason to doubt that these instructions come from the hand of Paul; they are rightly regarded as part of the canon of Scripture." Indeed, this might be true but it is worth noting that not all Egalitarians hold this view, but many put weight on the alternative idea that these verses are a part of the original text but are a quote by Paul of the Corinthians. We note that the CED has not dealt with this alternate reading. Further to this we would wish to highlight there are several other alternate readings beyond the two mentioned by the CED.³⁶

Ephesians 5

In reference to Ephesians 5 the CED make several claims, including, *"It is not that human marriage is primary, and God's relationship with his people can be compared to it. It is the other way around. God created us male and female, and instituted marriage, in order to give us a picture of his love for his people."* The CED makes this assertion more than once and we do not understand the basis for it. We do not doubt that God uses marriage as an illustration, but we are sure that his sole or even main purpose in creating marriage was not so that we could have an illustration of his love for his people. According to Genesis 2:18-24 marriage was created primarily so that we would not be alone.

The context of Ephesians 5:22-24 is one of mutual submission (Ephesians 5:21). This point is highlighted by the CED on page 21.³⁷ If Paul's point is to highlight some special type of submission specific to marriage, Paul fails to mention it. We note that the CED say that this submission is wives following the lead/authority/decisions of their husband, but Paul never outlines any marriage specific submission in Ephesians 5.

The context of Ephesians 5:22-24 is also one of loving like Christ (Ephesians 5:1-2). If Paul wants to highlight a Christ like love that is marriage specific, Paul fails to mention it. We note that the CED say that this love is husbands using authority/decision making to love like Christ, but Paul never outlines any specific Christ like love for marriage in Ephesians 5.

Paul says nothing in Ephesians 5:22-24 that results in anything different in a believer's marriage to what he has asked of all believers in general.

What Paul is doing in Ephesians 5 is twofold. First, he is making sure all believers know that they are called to submit to one another – including wives to husbands. Second, Paul is making sure all believers know they are called to love each other like Christ – including husbands to wives.

We would suggest that there are alternate readings of the Ephesians 5 passage to the one the CED has presented.³⁸

1 Timothy 2-3

On pages 36-39 the CED deals with 1 Timothy 2 claiming that verses 11-12 are a universal and enduring command, and that this is grounded in God's good design and that the idea that Paul is addressing a specific situation in Ephesus cannot do the text justice. We disagree. We believe that one

³⁶ See especially <https://margmowczko.com/interpretations-applications-1-cor-14-34-35/>

³⁷ The CED state, *"Paul's teaching about headship and submission in marriage comes in the context of his command to 'be filled with the Spirit' (Eph 5:18), which manifests itself in all Christian people 'submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ' (Eph 5:21). The command to submit applies not only to wives in relation to their husbands, but is common to all believers. Indeed, a person's willingness to submit to others is a mark of being filled with the Spirit, who enables them to submit to the Lord himself. Submission is basic to Christian discipleship."*

³⁸ <https://juniaproject.com/paul-turns-headship-head-ephesians-5/>

of the only ways of making sense of this passage and the grammar of the original language is to understand it as a specific situation in Ephesus. This is not to say that the passage is not helpful in rebuking and training in righteousness for us today, as indeed it is.

The flow of 1 Timothy 1-3 is as follows:

- 1 – Paul has given Timothy an instruction to ***command certain people to not teach*** (1 Timothy 1:3) and highlights the issue of false teachers in a way that suggests the false teachers ('certain people') could be male and/or female (1 Timothy 1:3-7).
- 2 – Paul reminds Timothy that he himself once had it all wrong (Paul was once a false teacher) but acted in ignorance (1 Timothy 1:13) and was corrected, shown grace and used by God (1 Timothy 1:12-17).
- 3 – Paul mentions the ***command to stop false teachers*** again and references two male false teachers who refuse to submit to the truth and he hands them over to Satan (1 Timothy 1:19-20).
- 4 – Paul gives some general instructions around praying for all people ("this pleases God... who wants all people... to come to a knowledge of the truth – 1 Timothy 2:1-4).
- 5 – Paul underlines that he is now a true and faithful teacher (1 Timothy 2:7).
- 6 – Paul again says he wants prayer everywhere, as well as women dressing appropriately. We assume there was an issue with this in Ephesus (1 Timothy 2:9-10).
- 7 – Paul now moves from speaking generally to speaking about a specific woman as he changes in verse 11 to speaking about a singular woman.³⁹
- 8 – This singular woman should learn peacefully, submitting to the task of learning, just as any false teacher should (1 Timothy 2:11).
- 9 – Paul reminds Timothy of the ***command he has spoken about previously*** and in particular how it must apply in this situation – "I do not permit a woman (singular, i.e. a specific woman that Timothy is aware of) to teach and domineer a man (a singular specific man). She needs to be silent or at least peaceful (or non-domineering) and learn truth (1 Timothy 2:12).
- 10 – This is because Adam was formed first, then Eve, or as the CED helpfully highlights,⁴⁰ that Adam experienced some things that Eve did not and was therefore in a place of knowing the truth, while Eve received the command through Adam. Adam sinned knowingly (like Hymenaeus and Alexander in 1 Timothy 1:20) while Eve was deceived and needed to learn (like Paul in 1 Timothy 1:13 and the singular woman in 1 Timothy 2:11-12). Adam not only received the command directly from God, but also experienced God's love and provision in a way that Eve did not. He was alone and God provided.
- 11 – Paul finishes this section regarding a singular Ephesian woman by saying that she (singular) will be saved (in the future) through childbearing if they (plural) continue in faith etc. The reference to the singular 'she' who will be saved cannot be Eve as nothing she will do in the future will save her. Rather, as according to Greek convention, the 'she' must be the last singular woman that Paul referred to, which brings us back up to a specific singular woman mentioned in 1 Timothy 2:11-12.
- 12 – Paul then makes it clear that anyone can aspire to being an elder (1 Timothy 3:1) but there are some expected qualities listed.
- 13 – Paul lists some requirements for elders and deacons over the following verses without any restrictions or requirements regarding gender.

Understandings of I Timothy 1-3 like we have outlined above are not uncommon.⁴¹

³⁹ Not many English translations translate the specific Greek grammar accurately in verses 11-15, especially concerning the references to a singular woman. The ESV is one of the more accurate translations.

⁴⁰ From page 19 of the paper, "At creation, Adam is formed first from the ground (Gen 2:7). Eve is formed second, and from his rib (Gen 2:21-22). God reveals his will to Adam directly, in the command not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16-17). The command comes to Eve indirectly, through the man (Gen 3:2). When the couple sin, the order is reversed: the serpent tempts the woman, who eats the fruit, then gives some to her husband, and he also eats (Gen 3:1-6)."

⁴¹ <https://juniaproject.com/1-timothy-pauls-language-original-context/>
<https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/short-answers-challenging-texts-1-timothy-211-15/>
<https://margmowczko.com/anonymou-man-woman-1-timothy-2/>
<https://derekdemars.com/2019/07/11/first-timothy-2-11-15-and-women-in-ministry/>

6. Healthy Authority

On page 19 the CED says, *“in the first marriage, which is presented as the paradigm for all marriages, the man takes the initiative towards the woman: “for this reason the man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife” (Gen 2:24). Similarly, in the first act of procreation, Adam takes the initiative towards Eve: we read that “Adam made love to his wife Eve,” rather than the other way around (Gen 4:1).”*

The CED suggest Adam takes initiative with Eve in two ways. Marriage and sex within marriage.

Regarding initiative in marriage, Genesis 2:24 is not a description of what happened with Adam and Eve, but rather a statement of what happens in marriages, as was the reality at the time Moses wrote Genesis (*‘for this reason’*). Adam does not even have a mother and father to leave at this point and it was God who brought the woman to him. According to the text Adam does not appear to initiate anything. Adam simply responds.

Regarding initiative with sex within marriage the passage does not claim that Adam initiated sex. The passage states that ‘Adam knew his wife Eve’. ‘Knew’ is a euphemism or idiomatic expression for sex and usually (not always) is expressed as the male ‘knew’ the female. It is not a clear indication of who initiated sex but rather that sex occurred. For example, Genesis 24:16 describes a virgin not as a “woman who had not known a man”, but rather a “woman who a man had not known”. There is also at least one biblical example of the woman being the clear initiator of sex that is expressed in terms of ‘he knew her’.⁴²

The CED add the following footnote (16) to their claim that Adam is the initiator of marriage and sex within marriage, *“It would be over-reading to insist that men must, in every case, take the initiative in first proposing marriage, and then in conjugal relations within marriage. The point, rather, is that the relationship is rightly characterised by the male partner taking the initiative towards his wife for her good, and to enable their mutual participation in God’s purposes for the world.”* Surely this is either a paradigm for ALL marriages, or not. It is either how “the relationship is rightly characterized”, or not.

The CEDs idea of healthy complementarianism appears to include male initiated marriage and husband-initiated sex. To be clear, ‘initiated’ means ‘to lead; or ‘to have authority’. We would like to highlight that 1 Corinthians 7:2-6 shows there is no preferred initiator of marriage or sex within marriage. No one has that power. Marriage and sex require mutuality and complementarity. Husband initiated sex as the norm promotes gender-based stereotypes and is fertile ground for abuse.

The Healthy Complementarianism presented by the CED gives power to husbands and Elders that removes agency, stifles healthy independence and stunts maturity.⁴³ For example, on page 22 the CED says, *“The Christlike husband, therefore, will lead his wife, taking the initiative towards her, and any children, seeking their good in every way, and especially seeking their salvation and maturity in Christ. The godly wife will respect her husband, and willingly support his initiatives for her good.* The CED suggest a husband should ‘lead’, ‘take initiative towards’, ‘seek the good’, and ‘seek salvation and maturity’ of their wife. This is more parenting than marriage.⁴⁴

⁴² C.f. Genesis 38:26 that refers to Judah not “knowing” Tamar again when clearly Tamar was the one who conspired to have sex with Judah.

⁴³ This appears to contradict the leadership definition of the CED on p46 when they say, *“Ministers and elders, working together in the session, have the responsibility of leading the congregation. Such leadership can be well defined as creating the conditions in which all of God’s people—men, women, and children—under their care can flourish.”*

⁴⁴ For an example of complementarian headship that parents c.f. <https://www.challies.com/christian-living/leadership-in-the-home-a-godly-man-leads/> *“The reality of male headship means that a husband is responsible for his wife’s well-being in a way she is not responsible for his. It falls upon you, for example, to take initiative in ensuring that your wife has sufficient opportunity to spend time in Scripture and prayer. It falls upon you to ensure that you live peaceably with your wife so that your prayers (not her prayers) may not be hindered by any discord between you (see 1 Peter 3:7). As leader, you bear the greater responsibility and the*

We learn to grow as adults by making our own decisions. We learn to make good decisions by being able to make decisions for ourselves. We are adults when we take responsibility for our own salvation and maturity in Christ. Having a ‘head’ that does these things for us is an unhealthy reality which will only serve to undermine our growth and maturity.

When we look at the teachings of the New Testament, we note that we are encouraged to take responsibility for ourselves⁴⁵ – with one notable exception. We should take responsibility for our children, while they are still children (Proverbs 13:24, Ephesians 6:4). Wives and adult members of our congregation are not children. ‘Healthy Authority’ will always result in people becoming more functioning, independent and responsible for themselves. The CED has presented a model that removes agency and autonomy from women and members of our congregations and places it in the hands of others.

Jesus (and the NT), encourage us all to be responsible and mature, and provides us with a model of healthy leadership (Matthew 20:24-28, John 13:1-17, Philippians 2:1-11). Paul only talks about his authority as an apostle as the authority to build others up (2 Corinthians 10:8 & 13:10). The only reason given to submit to elders is not due to authority or headship but that their role might not be a burden to them (Hebrews 13:17).

We are a Session, and we take our role as elders seriously. We are to look out for the sheep God has put in our care. We watch over their souls (Hebrews 13:17). These are weighty matters. We make decisions that impact the congregation, and we do this thoughtfully, prayerfully, and humbly such is the responsibility that comes with our role. But we do not need an ‘authority’, of ‘headship’ to do this.

So when the CED says on page 34, “*Paul describes several women as his co-workers (Rom 16:3, 9, 12; Phil 4:3)—just as he also describes several men in this way (Rom 16:9, 21; 1 Cor 3:5–9; 16:15–16; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25; Col 4:11; 1 Thess 3:2; Philem 1, 24)—but there is no indication in any of these texts that Paul considered his co-workers to hold the same authority he held as the apostle to the Gentiles*” we wonder what authority is assumed that Paul believes he has over his co-workers. The term ‘co-worker’ suggests mutuality, not authority. There is no NT reference to the authority of elders outside of the authority to build others up.

As the CED rightly states on page 37, “*The issue at stake is the right ordering of relationships and the right exercise of authority in the church.*” But what is the right exercise of authority? Why are we preoccupied with who has the right to initiate for another person? As stated at the beginning of our summary, this is not about complementarianism. This is about Hierarchical Complementarianism.

7. A Way Forward

We suggest a continuation of this discussion through a series of open forums discussing what Healthy Complementarianism looks like. It is important that all parties are fairly represented and heard.

We suggest that the current practice of each local Session and Congregation choosing elders without restriction of sex continue.

We suggest that if the Assembly, Presbyteries and/or Sessions vote on this matter there is a clear conflict of interest for every elder/minister. As such we believe that any vote that occurs on this matter should happen at the level of congregational members excluding elders and ministers.

greater burden... As a husband concerned both for your wife and for the church, you will see that she is serving according to her gifts and that she is giving of her time to each of her areas of ministry, whether in the home or outside of it. You will see that she does not overextend herself or minister at the expense of her family. And you will encourage her as she discovers and exercises her spiritual gifts... As husband you will ensure that she knows the roles God has called her to primarily. You will help guard her against sinful relationships and help her balance and prioritize her many responsibilities. You will encourage her to develop relationships with women who she can befriend, mentor or be mentored by.”

⁴⁵ Matthew 6:33 Luke 10:38-42 Galatians 6:1-6 Ephesians 4:25-5:20 Philippians 2:12-13 Colossians 3:1-17 Hebrews 12:7-13