



THEOLOGICAL CHEAT SHEET:

Understanding the 7 Viewpoints *about Women in Church Leadership*

When it comes to understanding what the Bible teaches about women leading in the church, it can be, well... *complicated*. We all come from such rich and diverse backgrounds, and because this is not spelled out clearly in black and white in Scripture, there is a lot of disagreement, controversy, and strong emotions connected around this topic. Even in my own experience as a church leader for over twenty years, it seems like there were different rules in every church setting, even though they often had the same theology! What I've begun to understand, however, is that although many discuss this topic as if there are two opposing theological views, I believe there are actually 7 different ways this plays out in day to day ministry life. I go into a lot more detail about this in my book, *Developing Female Leaders* (Harper-Collins, 2019), but this Theological Cheat Sheet will help guide and resource you to better understanding the environment in which you serve, as well as your own personal theology.

This outline is not intended to be prescriptive in any way, but simply descriptive so we can better understand and open up a healthier dialogue with one another. I have had wonderful, loving, and supportive experiences in many of these theological settings, and even in some that don't fit squarely in just one category. Since there is no way to fully represent all cultural practices in one chart, my hope is that I have represented everyone equally and with the love and respect I feel for my fellow brothers and sisters across the theological spectrum. Enjoy! – Kadi

	BIBLICAL VIEWPOINT	BASIC BELIEFS ABOUT GENDER ROLES	AT HOME	AT CHURCH	AT WORK OR LOCAL COMMUNITY
EXTREME FEMINISM/ MATRIARCHAL	Scriptures are often distorted, ignored, or used out of context.	Women are superior to men, smarter, and more caring, and therefore should hold higher levels of leadership in home, church, work, and communities/politics.	Women are strong (even aggressive) in their leadership at home. Husbands tend to be passive.	Although there aren't many available examples of this, it is assumed this would run similar to a home.	Women are more capable than men to lead at work or in communities. There is a strong sense of fighting for women to hold more and higher levels of leadership than men.
STRONG EGALITARIAN (ALSO CALLED EVANGELICAL FEMINISM)	Egalitarian with a sense of advocating for women's rights or places of leadership because of past male-domination	Men and women are fully equal in value and leadership opportunities based on individual gifting and calling.	Men and women are equals with an emphasis on mutual submission and partnership. Roles are collaboratively decided based on giftedness and preference. It would be common for either a man or woman to stay home with small children or for both to work.	Men and women are equal and able to fulfill all roles of leadership based on the community's validation of one's giftedness and calling. Women are embraced in leadership, including being a senior leader of a congregation.	Men and women are completely equal in the workplace.
MILD EGALITARIAN	Egalitarian	Men and women are equal partners in home, church, and work.	Roles are based on personal giftedness and preference. There is a high sense of teamwork and supporting one another equally in both home life, parenting and career opportunities. There is shared decision-making with an emphasis on compromise. It would be common for a man to make dinner every night because he enjoys cooking, and a woman to pay the bills because she is good with finances.	All roles and leadership positions are open for men and women equally. However, in practice, many churches have more men in leadership roles than women. Women lead on their own merits and are not required to be married to a pastor to have high levels of influence and authority including teaching/preaching.	Men and women are completely equal in the workplace.
COMPLEMENTARIAN/ EGALITARIAN CROSSOVER	Combination of Egalitarian & Complementarian viewpoints and practices	Men and women are equal and have individual giftings that tend to be connected to gender, but there is space for differences. A preference for final male leadership or authority is common.	Roles are similar and are usually based on giftedness and preference. There is a high sense of teamwork but most women choose to prioritize children over career and most men choose to be the breadwinner. Decisions are made together although the husband would break a tie (which is rare). There is a sense of husbands and wives completing one another and mutual submission.	Most roles can be filled by either a man or a woman based on giftedness and effectiveness although the highest level leadership (Senior Pastor and/or Elders) are reserved or preferred to be men. Women may preach but usually with a male "covering." Women may lead in some high-level organizational leadership roles or because they are married to a man in higher pastoral leadership. Although the majority of leaders will be men, some women may hold the title "pastor" or there may be gender-neutral titles for everyone (ie. Ministry Director).	Men and women are equal in the workplace and are encouraged to pursue career success. However, women are encouraged and celebrated when they stay home with young children and value family over career.
MILD COMPLEMENTARIAN	Hierarchical for home and church where there is "spiritual authority"	Men and women are equal in value but have different primary roles; although there is more freedom in secondary roles. Home and Church operate differently than work.	Some roles are clearly different while some may be based on ability or preference. Women are homemakers and the primary caregivers to children, men are the primary breadwinners and leaders of the family. The husband is considered the leader and has the final decision-making rights but will often involve his wife in the decision-making process.	Formal and high level leadership roles are reserved for men, but women may have a several formal or informal leadership roles that do not involve having "spiritual authority" over a man. Women freely lead other women or children under 18 years old. On occasion, women may be included in team teaching or as a guest speaker with "covering" or approval by the male senior pastor/elders. Pastor's wives tend to be more involved in leadership alongside or as extensions of their husband's authority.	There is a clear distinction between roles at home and church and opportunities at work. Women are free and often pursue lifelong careers including leadership roles, although most choose to stay home with small children.
STRONG COMPLEMENTARIAN	Hierarchical	Men and women are equal in value but different their roles. The man is considered the "head" and the woman the "helpmate."	A man's primary role is to provide servant leadership and be the breadwinner for his wife and children. A woman's primary role is to be submissive to her husband's leadership and manage the home and children until they are adults. Decisions are solely made by the husband.	Men hold all roles of leadership and authority including elders, pastors, preachers, deacons and team leaders; the only exception would be women's ministries but those would be under the direction of a male pastoral leader. Women may fill service roles in the church but would not involve any form of leadership over men. Women are not allowed to teach in ministry settings or seminaries.	A woman's primary focus is being a homemaker and raising children, although some women work outside the home as long as their family responsibilities are not compromised. However, roles of authority (such as a police officer or holding political office) are not appropriate.
PATRIARCHAL	Scriptures are often distorted, ignored, or used out of context.	Men are superior to women and should lead in all areas of life. There are biological, psychological, and intellectual differences between genders that make each suitable for their role.	Clear roles are based on gender with men in leadership roles in all aspects of home life and women in submissive roles. Women often wear skirts, no makeup, and let their hair grow. There is often high control of how they spend their time.	Men hold all positions of leadership and authority. Ministries and activities are often separated between adult men and women and children. If a woman needs help in her home (for example, her husband is abusing her), she is to come to the church leadership for resolution rather than the authorities such as police or a women's shelter.	A woman should not work if she is married and especially if she has children. Some may question her need for an education.