NEW BIBLE STUDY *COMING THE FIRST WEEK OF SEPTEMBER!*

CHRISTIANITY BEYOND THE EASY ANSWERS

AND OTHER THINGS THAT CHRISTIANS ARGUE ABOUT.

A BIBLE STUDY SERIES *FOR REAL QUESTIONS AND REAL FAITH.*

- SUNDAY MORNINGS WITH PASTOR IN THE GYM
- INVITE A FRIEND
- 9 AM TO 9:45 AM

1. **Can You be a Christian without the Church?** (A challenging question for an increasingly unchurched culture that still likes Jesus just fine—as long as nobody asks them to join.)
2. **Is God speaking to me or is it just my own thoughts?** (For those nights when you're lying awake wondering whether the Lord is revealing His will for your life—or whether you just had coffee too late.)
3. **Are men and women called to different roles in the church, and what does the Bible say about women leading?** (A calm, reasonable, totally non-combative discussion that will surely produce no strong opinions whatsoever. Yeah... 😉)
4. **What is God's plan for Israel?** (Benjamin Netanyahu and Donald Trump aside, this topic has managed to generate strong opinions for only a few thousand years.)
5. **Are you troubled by fears or confusion about predestination?** (Martin Luther's pastoral advice.)
6. **How can we practice the liturgy without just going through motions?** (A deep dive into why we do what we do in worship—it's more than just synchronized standing.)
7. **Why is the Lutheran view of Baptism so difficult for Baptists and Evangelicals?** (Hint: God's grace isn't stingy, but apparently that makes some people nervous.)
8. **Why does a good God allow suffering?** (A serious look at evil, free will, and comfort in pain—because "everything happens for a reason" is usually not as helpful as people think.)
9. **Can we really trust ancient Bible manuscripts?** (Covers biblical reliability, history, and canonization—because apparently "it's old" is both a criticism and a selling point.)
10. **What happens exactly when a person dies?** (We'll explore death, heaven, hell, judgment, and the afterlife—lightheartedly, in the way only Christians can discuss such ultimate things.)
11. **Can a true Christian ever lose their salvation?** (A dive into grace, assurance, and the kind of theological question that has made very confident people suddenly much less confident.)
12. **How do I forgive someone who isn't sorry?** (Explores the hard boundaries of biblical forgiveness—because "just let it go" is easier said by other people.)

Question 3

Do Men and Women Have Different Roles in the Church?

BIG IDEA:
Men and women share equal dignity as God's creatures and the same salvation in Christ. At the same time, Scripture speaks of distinctions of responsibility within marriage and within the Church. These distinctions concern God-given callings—not differences in personal worth, intelligence, ability, or spiritual standing.

This study moves from creation to the fall, to Christ-centered headship, to the pastoral office, and finally, women's indispensable service in the Church.

① When you hear "different roles for men and women in marriage and the church," what concerns come to mind?

People often respond with understandable questions: "Is that fair?" "Does this mean women matter less?" "Isn't this just an ancient cultural expectation?" Others may associate the word *order* with something restrictive rather than something good.

These concerns deserve thoughtful answers, especially because misunderstandings have historically caused women to experience mistreatment and the misuse of Scripture to defend such treatment—even within the Church. We should not dismiss those experiences or use biblical language to defend them.

† The LCMS POV is that a proper understanding of Scripture on this issue begins with two truths that must be held together:

- **Men and women have equal dignity and standing before God.**
- **Equal dignity does not mean every God-given calling is interchangeable.**

Both are created in God's image. Both are entrusted with caring for His creation. Both receive forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ. Both belong to the priesthood of all believers and are called to serve Christ and their neighbors. (The false idea that every calling of God is interchangeable leads the world today to believe that men can be mothers and women can be husbands, etc.)

At the same time, the LCMS understands Scripture to reserve the pastoral office for qualified men who are rightly called. This is not because men are more capable in pastoral ministry, faithful, intelligent, or valuable, but because of God's ordering and manner of calling of people into that particular office. God's Word teaches that men should fill the highest teaching offices in the Church.

† **The central distinction here is between the responsibilities of an _____office and the worth of a _____person. The pastoral office exists to serve Christ's people through His Word and Sacraments—not to confer superior status.**

- *This teaching does not mean every man has authority over every woman, nor does it mean women have no leadership responsibilities in the Church. Faithfulness includes both honoring Scripture's boundaries and actively valuing women's gifts, theological insight, and service.*

② According to Genesis 1:26–28 and Galatians 3:26–29, what do men and women share equally, and why must that remain the foundation for this discussion?

Genesis 1:27 teaches that God created both male and female in His image. Neither is more fully human or more "in God's image" than the other. Both possess God-given dignity and worth.

God also gives His blessing and commission to both. Together, man and woman are called to be fruitful, fill the earth, and exercise responsible dominion over creation. From the beginning, both receive a significant and similar calling under God.

Galatians 3 teaches that men and women share the same standing as God's children through faith in Christ: Jesus died for both; both receive the Holy Spirit; both are baptized into Christ; both receive forgiveness; both are heirs of eternal life.

These passages do not make every calling or function identical, but they certainly exclude any claim that women are spiritually second-class. When Scripture distinguishes responsibilities, it is not saying women are less intelligent, less capable, less spiritual, or less important. Nor does holding the pastoral office make a man a better Christian or give him greater access to God.

Different responsibilities must never be confused with different levels of human value or salvation.

③ What does Genesis 2:15–25 reveal about the "order of creation," Adam's responsibility, and his need for a corresponding partner?

Genesis 2 gives a closer look at the creation of man and woman. Adam is formed first and receives God's command concerning the tree before Eve is created. God then declares that it is "not good" for the man to be alone and makes a helper fit for him. The assumption is that if Eve was to have learned about the prohibition against eating of the tree, then Adam would have need to teach her what God commanded.

The LCMS uses the phrase **"order of creation"** to describe relationships and responsibilities God established before sin entered the world. Genesis 2 helps us understand both shared dignity and distinct callings of *teacher* and *helper*.

The point is not that being created earlier automatically makes Adam superior. Rather, as we will see later, the New Testament writers explicitly appeal to Adam's creation before Eve when

explaining responsibilities in the Church. We therefore read Genesis in light of Scripture's own interpretation.

† **Receiving God's Word brings responsibility**
Adam receives God's command and warning before Eve is created. This shows us that to receive God's Word comes a responsibility to not only trust and be obedient to that word, but also the _____vocational responsibility to faithful share the Word of God with those who do not know it. This is a universal calling to both men and women, yet the New Testament writers also understand that the actual "order" by which this calling was given and lived-out in the first family, sets a model for the family of God in the Church—Adam was given the Word and was made responsible for teaching that Word to his wife.

- Genesis does not explicitly describe Adam teaching Eve. Nevertheless, concern for her spiritual well-being is consistent with the loving responsibility Scripture assigns to husbands. This is a calling to _____service, not a personal entitlement to control. And this cannot be stressed enough. IT IS A SERVICE!!!! In the same manner as Christ, who came to serve and not be served (John 13).

In similar manner it is the responsibility of parents—mothers and fathers-- to bear responsibility for teaching God's Word to their children (Deuteronomy 6:6–7; Ephesians 6:4).

This vocational responsibility to take responsibility for teaching God's Word does not mean that only men can teach, nor does it mean that women cannot share God's Word with men. The need and opportunity to teach and proclaim God's word exist in myriad ways in a sinful world which desperately needs God's Word. But Genesis teaches us that the responsibility to teach begins with husbands and fathers and thus accountability begins with them as well. See Genesis 3 to see how God approaches Adam first about their disobedience.

Genesis 2 also teaches that Adam's need and weakness is real even before the fall
Adam's aloneness is described as "not good" before sin enters the world. Human companionship is not merely a remedy for sinful weakness; it belongs to God's good creation.

None of the animals is a suitable partner. But this does not make Eve just another creature for Adam to possess or to exercise dominion over. Chapter 1 has already established that she shares his humanity and stands beside him (literally from his side) as his wife. Together they receive God's blessing and commission to be fruitful, fill the earth, and care for creation. Adam cannot fulfill that commission alone.

This establishes marriage as God's good gift, yet it does not mean everyone must marry to live a complete and faithful Christian life. Scripture also honors singleness (1 Corinthians 7). Married or unmarried, we need community and opportunities to give and receive care.

④ How do the descriptions "a helper fit for him" and "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" show that Adam and Eve are equal without being interchangeable?
Read: Genesis 2:18–24; Psalm 121:1–2.

The word *helper* can sound to modern ears like an assistant of lesser importance. But the Hebrew word *ezer* frequently describes God as the helper of His people. So clearly, the word itself does not imply inferiority.

"A helper fit for him" describes someone corresponding to Adam—a partner who shares his humanity while yet being distinct from him as a woman.

Adam's response, "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh," expresses joyful recognition of that shared humanity. Eve is neither an animal nor a lesser kind of person. Both bear God's image and possess equal dignity.

The Hebrew word translated "rib" literally means "side." Eve's creation emphasizes their close kinship. Describing her as standing "at his side" is a helpful illustration, though that illustration does not by itself establish particular marital responsibilities.

Equal dignity and distinct callings belong together
Their differences as male and female are real, embodied gifts of creation—not differences in human value. Within marriage and family, these include the distinct callings of husband and wife, father and mother. These are not interchangeable.

Genesis 2:24 brings the account to its culmination: a man and woman are joined as husband and wife in a lifelong, one-flesh union.

In everyday marriage, husband and wife work together in:

- Caring for their household.
- Managing finances.
- Raising children.
- Making decisions.
- Supporting one another's spiritual and physical well-being.

Their particular gifts and circumstances shape how they share these responsibilities not some Scriptural mandate. As we will see later in Ephesians 5:21, both husband and wife should submit to each other out of reverence for Christ. Thus, Scripture does not assign every household task according to sex. And in general, a biblical way of looking at the world would then also understand that for the most part, there is great overlap in what men and women can do with their lives in the world. Only occasionally, we might debate certain roles like the military and how it impacts God-given vocations like fatherhood and motherhood.

But from an LCMS perspective, this partnership does not erase the husband's calling to headship or the wife's calling to willing submission. Both must be understood through Christ: A self-giving love rather than coercion or domination. And a wife's submission never requires participation in sin or acceptance of abuse.

⑤ How does Genesis 3 show sin distorting God's good creation, and why is that important when discussing authority and responsibility today?
Read: Genesis 3:1–19; Romans 5:12–19.

Genesis 3 shows that neither man nor woman faithfully lives out God's good design.

Eve listens to the serpent and eats the forbidden fruit. Adam also eats. The text identifies him as being "with her" when she gives him the fruit, While it does not specify how much of the preceding conversation he heard, this is not a good report of Adam. And given the somewhat distorted responses that Eve gives as reply to Satan's lies, it would seem Adam either did not teach as he was supposed to, and does not intervene when he hears God's Word being distorted and lied about. Both failures cause mankind to fall into sin. And most certainly and clearly of all, Adam, himself, does not uphold God's command; he joins in disobedience.

Of great significance in a "order of creation" POV: when God confronts them after The Fall, He calls to Adam first. Read alongside Romans 5, this underscores Adam's accountability. Paul traces humanity's fall through Adam, leaving no room for men to shift all responsibility onto Eve.

Sin brings:

- Blame instead of accountability.
- Conflict instead of harmony.
- Selfishness instead of service.
- Domination instead of loving responsibility.
- Mistrust instead of mutual care.

The consequences described in Genesis 3 are not instructions to dominate. They describe the tragic distortion of relationships by sin.
This distinction matters. Not everything we observe in male-female relationships reflects God's design. Much of it reflects the fall.

The LCMS teaches that God's creation order still matters, even though sin has corrupted how we live within it. A calling to responsibility does not guarantee faithful service. Adam's failure makes that painfully clear.

These passages therefore confront both men and women with their need for repentance and forgiveness. Romans 5 directs us from Adam's disobedience to Christ's obedience. Jesus does more than model better relationships: He saves sinners and renews them for lives of love and service.

⑥ In Ephesians 5, how does the Apostle Paul define headship and submission—and how does that rule out abuse, control, and domination?
Read: Ephesians 5:20–33; Mark 10:42–45.

In Ephesians 5, headship is **Christ-centered, not dictatorial**. Paul compares the husband's relationship to his wife with Christ's relationship to His Church. Christ does not exploit His bride. He gives Himself up for her.

A husband's headship is therefore a serious responsibility to love and serve—not a license to demand comfort, obedience to sinful demands, or personal superiority.
Christian headship should be marked by:

- Sacrifice.
- Protection.
- Responsibility.
- Tenderness.
- Care.
- Faithfulness.
- Holiness.
- Gentleness.
- Service and love.

Submission is not the same relationship as a child's obedience
Paul uses a different verb for a wife's submission than he uses for children's obedience in **Ephesians 6:1–3**. A wife is not her husband's child.

Verse 21 places the household instructions within a life of humble service "out of reverence for Christ." The following verses describe distinct responsibilities for husbands and wives within that shared Christian life.

A wife's willing submission does not mean she lacks judgment, may not disagree, or must surrender her gifts and voice. A husband's sacrificial love does not permit him to manipulate her with religious language.

Abuse contradicts the passage
Selfishness, harshness, humiliation, coercion, and violence are contrary to Christ's love. Using "headship" to demean women, erase their gifts, or treat them as spiritually unimportant betrays the passage.

Scripture must never be used to pressure someone to remain in immediate danger or to conceal abuse. Seeking safety, pastoral care, professional assistance, and appropriate civil protection is not a rejection of God's Word.

Jesus also rejects worldly models of power in Mark 10. He came "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
Christ's saving service—not the desire to control—defines the Christian use of authority.

⑦ Why does Paul appeal to creation in 1 Timothy 2:11–14, and how does the LCMS understand his instructions about teaching, authority, and quietness?

Paul grounds his instruction in Adam and Eve, not simply in local customs or the educational opportunities of his day.

Because Paul appeals to creation, the LCMS does not understand his teaching as merely a temporary accommodation to first-century culture. Read alongside the rest of Scripture, it supports reserving the pastoral office for qualified men who are rightly called.

The reasoning is not, "Women are incapable of doing this." It is, "God has given this office particular responsibilities and qualifications."

The pastoral office is Christ's institution for serving His people through the public preaching of His Word and administration of His Sacraments. It is not a reward for superior talents or greater spiritual worth.

Paul's reference to Eve does not establish female inferiority
Eve's deception does not prove that women are inherently more gullible, less intelligent, or less faithful than men.

Scripture also holds Adam responsible. Romans 5 specifically traces humanity's fall through him.

† **"Learn in quietness" does not mean having no voice or value**
Paul explicitly instructs that a woman should **learn**. Women's reception and understanding of God's Word matter.

The word translated "quietness" conveys settled, peaceable attentiveness, not necessarily absolute silence. A related word appears in verse 2 in the description of a "peaceful and quiet life."

This does not remove Paul's restriction concerning teaching and authority, but it helps us avoid reading the passage as a ban on every instance of a woman speaking about Scripture.

Priscilla helps explain the faith to Apollos (in Scripture, Priscilla's name is frequently listed before her husband Aquila's name (Acts 18:18, 18:26; Romans 16:3), which many scholars view as an indicator that she was the more prominent teacher, leader, or active partner in this ministry), and Paul instructs that older women are to teach younger women. The issue is not whether women have theological insight or may share God's Word, but the responsibilities attached to the Church's authoritative teaching office.

Humble receptivity to God's Word is also necessary for men. Holding an office never places someone above the Word he is called to teach.

⑧ How should we understand Paul's instruction that women "keep silent" in 1 Corinthians 14 when Scripture also describes women praying, prophesying, and participating in worship?
Read: 1 Corinthians 14:26–40; 1 Corinthians 11:5; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19.

First Corinthians 14 addresses the orderly use of speech and spiritual gifts for the congregation's good.

Women are not the only people told to remain silent under particular circumstances:
- A person speaking in a tongue must remain silent if no interpreter is present (verse 28).
- A prophet is to become silent when another receives a revelation (verse 30).

These instructions concern particular activities and responsibilities. They do not declare that some Christians have less worth.

The LCMS reads verses 33–35 alongside 1 Timothy 2 and Scripture's broader teaching about creation and the pastoral office. It does not understand them to prohibit women from singing, joining congregational prayers, confessing the faith, or speaking altogether.

Scripture itself prevents a blanket prohibition

In 1 Corinthians 11:5, Paul discusses women praying and prophesying and gives instructions concerning how they do so rather than simply forbidding it. The precise setting and relationship of this passage to chapter 14 are discussed by interpreters, but it cannot simply be ignored.

Colossians 3:16 and Ephesiansians 5:19 call the congregation to mutual encouragement through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Women participate fully in that audible worship and confession.

The precise speech addressed in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 is debated. Nevertheless, the LCMS understands the passage as supporting the distinction between the service all Christians offer and the authoritative public teaching entrusted to the pastoral office.

The issue is not merely whether a woman's voice is heard, but whether a particular activity assumes responsibilities assigned to that office.

⑨ What biblical examples show women proclaiming, teaching, praying, and serving—and how should those examples shape our congregation's life?

Read: Matthew 28:7–10; Luke 24:9–11; Acts 18:26; Acts 21:8–9; Titus 2:3–5; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14–15.

Scripture does not picture women as passive spectators. It honors their faith, understanding, witness, and service.

Women announce the resurrection

In Matthew 28 and Luke 24, women—including Mary Magdalene—are among the first witnesses to the resurrection and the first to announce it to the disciples.

This is a tremendous honor. The distinction concerning the pastoral office does not prohibit women from proclaiming the good news of the risen Christ.

Women exercise prophetic gifts

Acts 21:8–9 identifies Philip's four unmarried daughters as women who prophesied.

Prophecy, teaching, and preaching are related activities, but the terms are not simply interchangeable. The existence of female prophets should be acknowledged without automatically equating their gift with holding the pastoral office.

Women teach the faith

- **Priscilla and Aquila:** Together they take Apollos aside and explain "the way of God more accurately" to him (Acts 18:26).
- **Older women:** They are instructed to teach what is good and train younger women in faithful living (Titus 2:3–5).

- **Lois and Eunice:** Paul honors the faith of Timothy's grandmother and mother. His references to their faith and Timothy's childhood knowledge of Scripture highlight the importance of their spiritual influence (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14–15).

Women participate in worship and mutual encouragement
Women pray, sing, confess the faith, and encourage others through God's Word. Their theological learning is not merely permitted; it should be encouraged and taken seriously.
Congregations should therefore cultivate women's gifts in areas such as:

- Teaching children and other women.
- Mentoring and encouragement.
- Music and choir leadership.
- Evangelism and public witness to Christ.
- Hospitality.
- Prayer and Scripture study.
- Mercy ministry.
- Counseling and care, with appropriate training.
- Leadership in service.
- Sharing wisdom and theological understanding.

These gifts are not exclusively women's gifts, nor does every woman have the same gifts. The point is that the Church must not ignore the gifts God actually gives its women.
The question is not whether women should serve, but how the congregation can faithfully support their service within God's ordering of the Church.

⑩ What, then, is the actual distinction in LCMS practice, and how can we uphold it while making sure women's gifts are neither ignored nor minimized?
Read: Galatians 3:26–29; Mark 10:42–45.
The central distinction concerns the **pastoral office and its responsibilities**, not a general prohibition against women serving, speaking, teaching, or leading.
The LCMS reserves the pastoral office for qualified men who are rightly called. Its responsibilities include:

- Public preaching as the congregation's called pastor.
- Administration of the Sacraments entrusted to that office.
- Authoritative pastoral teaching and doctrinal oversight.
- The spiritual care of the congregation through Word and Sacrament.

Related positions must also be evaluated by their actual responsibilities. A role that assumes the distinctive functions of the pastoral office, or exercises spiritual authority in a way contrary to the scriptural ordering of that office, cannot be treated as permissible merely because it has a different title.

At the same time, **not every administrative decision, leadership position, or form of congregational oversight is an exercise of the pastoral office**. The LCMS permits women to vote and to hold various lay offices consistent with its doctrinal position. Particular roles should be assessed carefully rather than ruled out simply because they involve leadership.

Women serve faithfully as teachers, musicians, choir directors, mentors, volunteers, ministry workers, witnesses to the Gospel, and leaders in many forms of service. LCMS women also serve in recognized church vocations such as deaconesses and Lutheran school teachers, within the responsibilities of those callings.

Addressing fairness honestly

Different responsibilities do not mean different value:

- Men and women have the same Savior.
- Both receive the Holy Spirit.
- Both are baptized into Christ.
- Both belong to His people.
- Both inherit eternal life.

Abuse of authority is sinful and must be confronted. Although misuse does not cancel God's good gifts, appealing to God's design must never become an excuse to ignore misuse.

A faithful congregation therefore does two things together:

1. **Honors the scriptural boundaries of the pastoral office.**
2. **Actively encourages women's theological learning, meaningful participation, and faithful leadership in appropriate callings.**

That includes taking women's wisdom seriously, making room for their contributions, recognizing their work, and refusing to treat their service as secondary.

Bringing the discussion back to Christ

God's order is not permission for pride, domination, or the dismissal of anyone's gifts. All of us need forgiveness for seeking control, avoiding responsibility, or undervaluing another person's service.

Christ meets us with more than instructions. He gives Himself for us, forgives our sins, and renews us to love our neighbors in our particular callings.

The Church flourishes not by ranking people's worth, but by receiving Christ's gifts and serving one another in love. Women's gifts are indispensable to that life together.

Question 3

Do Men and Women Have Different Roles in the Church?

BIG IDEA:
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† The central distinction here is between the responsibilities of an _____ and the worth of a _____. The pastoral office exists to serve Christ's people through His Word and Sacraments—not to confer superior status**.**

➢ *This teaching does not mean every man has authority over every woman, nor does it mean women have no leadership responsibilities in the Church*.

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