



## STREETLIGHT BELIEFS PT 7: MEN AND WOMEN PT 2

So let's look again at 1 Timothy 2:8-15. I feel it's necessary to give the complementarian viewpoint on these verses. We might as well go ahead and allow one of the most prominent complementarian voices of the past decades, John MacArthur, articulate it. So I'm going to pull from his study bible notes here.

It's important to add that there are so many balanced complementarian voices out there that aren't as hard as MacArthur. But I figured that in this case I'd allow for the extremity, because MacArthur's analysis is thoroughly thought through and based around a paradigm that has influenced many to many differing degrees.

First let's just look at the passage again which Paul writes to his protege and ministry leader in Ephesus Timothy;

**8** *Therefore, I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument. 9 Also, the women are to dress themselves in modest clothing, with decency and good sense, not with elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls, or expensive apparel, 10 but with good works, as is proper for women who profess to worship God. 11 A woman is to learn quietly with full submission. 12 I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; instead, she is to remain quiet. 13 For Adam was formed first,*

*then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and transgressed. 15 But she will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with good sense. (1 Tim. 2:8-15)*

The passage says that women were to dress in modest clothing, be decent, not have salon wild hairstyles, bling, or high fashion threads on. But instead, they were to be busy with doing good as a result of their faith in Christ.

Again, John MacArthur, a long established pastor of the megachurch Grace Community Church in California, founder of Kings School, and well known hard (not soft or mid!) complementarian voice wrote extensively on this passage, which we'll get into here. We'll just allow MacArthur to speak on it.

MacArthur said that women in the church were living impure and self-centered lives (cf. [5:6](#), [11–15](#); [2 Tim. 3:6](#)), and that practice carried over into the worship service, where they became distractions. Because of the centrality of worship in the life of the church, Paul called on Timothy the pastor to confront the problem.<sup>1</sup>

MacArthur noted that The Gr. word for “dress” meant “to arrange,” “to put in order,” or “to make ready.” A woman was to arrange herself appropriately for the worship service, which included wearing decent clothing which reflected a properly adorned chaste heart.

The Gr. word for “decency” referred to modesty mixed with humility, which carried the underlying idea of shame. It could also refer to a rejection of anything dishonorable to God, or refer to grief over sin. “Moderation” basically referred to self-control over sexual passions. Godly women hated sin and controlled their passions so as not to lead another into sin.

Specific practices were also causing distraction and discord in the church. Women in the first century often wove “gold, pearls,” or other jewelry into their hair styles to call attention to themselves and their wealth or beauty. The same was true of those women who wore “expensive apparel.” By doing so they would draw attention to themselves and away from the Lord, likely causing the poorer women to be envious. Paul’s point was to forbid the preoccupation of certain women with flaunting their wealth and distracting people from worshiping the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

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Those women who had publicly committed themselves to pursuing godliness should support that claim not only in their demeanor, wardrobe, and appearance, but by being clothed with righteous behavior.<sup>3</sup>

According to MacArthur's application of this passage (and others), women were not to be the public teachers when the church assembled, but neither were they to be shut out of the learning process. The form of the Gr. verb translated "let . . . learn" was an imperative: Paul was commanding that women be taught in the church. That was a novel concept, since neither first-century Judaism nor Greek culture held women in high esteem. Some of the women in Ephesus probably overreacted to the cultural denigration they had typically suffered and took advantage of their opportunity in the church by seeking a dominant role in leadership. *in silence with all submission*. "Silence" ("quiet") and "submission" ("to line up under") characterized the role of a woman as a learner in the context of the church assembly. Paul explained his meaning in v. 12: women were to be silent by not teaching, and they were to demonstrate submission by not usurping the authority of the pastors or elders.<sup>4</sup>

According to MacArthur, the Gr. word for "permit" was used in the NT to refer to allowing someone to do what they desire. Paul may have been addressing a real situation in which several women in Ephesus desired to be public preachers. Paul used a verbal form of the Gr. word for "to teach" that indicated a condition or process and was better translated: "to be a teacher." This was an important, official function in the church. Thus Paul was forbidding women from filling the office and role of the pastor or teacher. He was not prohibiting them from teaching in other appropriate conditions and circumstances.

Paul forbade women from exercising any type of authority over men in the church assembly, since the elders were those who ruled. They were all to be men as was clear from the requirements in 3:2, 5.<sup>5</sup>

MacArthur noted that a woman's subordinate role did not result after the Fall as a cultural, chauvinistic corruption of God's perfect design; rather, God established her role as part of His original creation (v. 13). God made woman after man to be his suitable helper (see Gen. 2:18; cf. 1 Cor. 11:8, 9). The Fall actually corroborated God's divine plan of creation (see Gen. 3:1-7). By nature Eve was not suited to assume the position

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of ultimate responsibility. By leaving Adam's protection and usurping his headship, she was vulnerable and fell, thus confirming how important it was for her to stay under the protection and leadership of her husband (see [5:11](#), [12](#); [2 Tim. 3:6, 7](#)). Adam then violated his leadership role, followed Eve in her sin, and plunged the human race into sinfulness—all connected with violating God's planned roles for the sexes. Ultimately, the responsibility for the Fall still rested with Adam, since he chose to disobey God apart from being deceived ([Rom. 5:12–21](#); [1 Cor. 15:21, 22](#)).<sup>6</sup>

MacArthur also noted that Paul did not have Eve in mind here was clear because the verb translated “will be saved” is future, and he also used the plural pronoun “they.” He was talking about women after Eve. “*Will be saved*” is better translated in this context, “will be preserved.” The Gr. word can also mean “to rescue,” “to preserve safe and unharmed,” “to heal,” or “to deliver from.” It appeared several times in the NT without reference to spiritual salvation ([Matt. 8:25](#); [9:21, 22](#); [24:22](#); [27:40, 42, 49](#); [2 Tim. 4:18](#)). Paul was not advocating that women were eternally saved from sin through childbearing or that they maintained their salvation by having babies, both of which would be clear contradictions of the NT teaching of salvation by grace alone through faith alone ([Rom. 3:19, 20](#)) sustained forever ([Rom. 8:31–39](#)). Paul was teaching that even though a woman bore the stigma of being the initial instrument who led the race into sin, it was women through childbearing who may be preserved or freed from that stigma by raising a generation of godly children ([5:10](#)). *through childbearing*. Because mothers had a unique bond and intimacy with their children, and spent far more time with them than fathers did, they had far greater influence in their lives and thus a unique responsibility and opportunity for rearing godly children. While a woman may have led the human race into sin, women also have the privilege of leading many out of sin to godliness. Paul was speaking in general terms; God did not want all women to be married ([1 Cor. 7:25–40](#)), let alone bear children. “*If they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with good sense*. The godly appearance, demeanor, and behavior commanded of believing women in the church (vv. [9–12](#)) was motivated by the promise of deliverance from any inferior status and the joy of raising godly children.”<sup>7</sup>

MacArthur undoubtedly makes a number of strong, biblical points. Neither men nor women who profess Christ should flaunt their wealth. Through Christ, we should all pursue His modesty, humility, grief over our sin, and desire not to make people stumble into sin. Christ clothes all of His obedient followers with righteous behavior. MacArthur rightly notes that women won't necessarily be saved by giving birth to children, but will

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experience an intimacy with God almighty by raising children to follow God/be disciples of Jesus.

However, in my opinion, I think that MacArthur wrongly assessed the Artemisian religious context of Ephesus here, and made a blanket statement, saying that all women in Israelite and Roman culture were oppressed, and that was the reason for some women rebelling against created order. Again, it could be argued that in Ephesus, women were abusive towards men in a form of feminine empowerment that usurped men. I hold to the conviction that Paul was calling negatively feminist Artemis worshippers in 1 Timothy 2, and telling them to be quiet, learn, mature, repent, grow, get sanctified, and then potentially they could take on what it really meant to be a servant leader by the power of Christ.

I cannot overstate the fact that MacArthur represents the stricter end of the complementarian viewpoint. In 2019, he was quoted to say, “Women who pastor and women who preach in the church are a disgrace and openly reflect opposition to the clear command of the word of God.”<sup>8</sup> MacArthur has the right to have that conviction. I would argue that his conviction has led to abusive practices within his Church, as many objective facts, unfortunate scenarios, and the testimonies of many clearly prove<sup>9</sup>. Also, nobody talks about how filthy rich the guy is, and he certainly lives a lifestyle like a health and wealth prosperity preacher, though he would rather openly reject such views.

However, MacArthur aside, I have personally known, listened to, and continued to glean from the teachings and commentaries of many great complementarian leaders. One example is pastor Jonathan Schaeffer of Grace CMA Church in Middleburg Heights, Ohio.<sup>10</sup> In the sermon I included in the footnote below, Schaeffer gave a very balanced complementarian treatment of biblical texts, while not condemning egalitarian & inclusivist views. I think Schaeffer, unlike MacArthur and others like him, rightly treats this as a secondary issue.

Additionally, like I already stated, MacArthur’s analysis of the debatable text, while thorough, does not include anything about the cult of Artemis and its profound impact on the culture and church in Ephesus. So the big difference between the inclusivist/egalitarian view and complementarian view is essentially that inclusivists view the hard hitting passages on women in the church as contextual, and complementarians view them as prescriptive for the Church of all time. This is true of 1 Timothy 2:11-15, as

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<https://www.liberty.edu/champion/2023/02/student-opinion-god-clearly-says-that-women-should-not-be-pastors-and-thats-okay/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://julieroys.com/tag/john-macarthur/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/live/LVvXBtTb7JY?si=i3ogiOhi6V1-LsI9>

well as passages like 1 Corinthians 11:3-12, 14:34-35, and Titus 1, 2. To dig into all of these would take many more pages but I'd encourage you all to read both perspectives on each passage and come to your own conclusions via the Holy Spirit and prayer!

So you can see that I'm compelled by the egalitarian or inclusivist viewpoint and conviction. I spent years of my Christian life wrestling with it. I'd say, for the early years of following Jesus from 2002-2005, I simply waffled between conservative and progressive viewpoints on most theological issues. From 2005-2012, I'd say I was pretty strictly complementarian- probably somewhere between mid to soft complementarian. From 2012-2023 I gradually moved from mid to extremely soft complementarian, and from 2023 up until now, I'd consider myself egalitarian or inclusivist. However, I desire to lead a community where people are on both sides of this conviction, disciple one another, and work together in Christ's mission to bless a neighborhood that has myriad issues- poverty, violence, trauma, addiction, abuse, neglect, and more, whilst being tethered tightly to Nicene Creed, Orthodox Christian doctrines, akin to the ones I've articulated throughout this series. I think the Lord would smile down on the effort to bring people together in the name of discipleship and mission to a rough area, don't you? After all The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, we pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field of Kenmore. (Luke 10:2) On a pragmatic level, our Church Community, and the neighborhood of Kenmore, needs as many faithful, reasonable, balanced, discipleship focused, godly, faithful followers of Christ as possible! Too many people jump ship on our Church community and this neighborhood because of the challenges we face. We need less apathy, less arrogance, less indifference, less slander and gossip, less grumbling, less complaining, less fear, and more Holy Spirit fire, Christ-breathed humility, passion for the gospel and Kingdom, urgency for the lost and broken, honesty, love and humorous, fun interaction between believers, Holy Spirit fearlessness, Holy Spirit certainty, and Holy Spirit conviction!

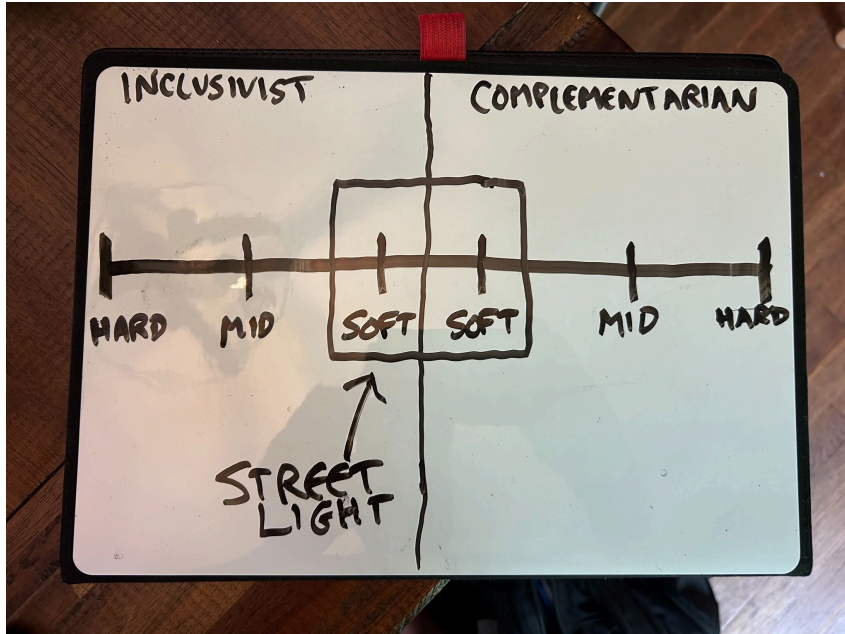
And having an inclusivist view on women in Church leadership does not mean that one entirely morphs the biblical canon into a progressive free-for all. Quite the contrary, I can say with confidence that I hold to a very high view of the Bible. That's why I started this series by clearly articulating our beliefs as a Church. I hold to this view of men and women in Church leadership right alongside a millenia old biblical view of sexuality and marriage. As we've articulated already, we believe in a literal, visceral, eternal hell, devil, salvation through Christ alone, atonement through Christ alone, virgin birth, resurrection, ascension, the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, and more. We can empower women in the Church right alongside that from a biblical perspective, without allowing the empowerment of women (or men!) to become an idol.

I could go on and on about how politics have poisoned Christians. Let me continue to articulate that we can hold to a biblical view of marriage and sexuality while also radically loving, embracing, and building relationships with those in LGBTQ spaces, and finding ways to all participate in discipleship and mission together. If I had to condemn people for sexual reasons then every man who masturbates to pornography in our community needs to be shunned. (Matt 5:27-30) But no- we believe in discipleship and mission. We believe in creating spaces where people can encounter the living God and be transformed and impacted by the Holy Spirit.

I believe in protecting the unborn, and also believe in advocating for women who are going to have, or have had abortions recently or in the past. I will never condemn someone for having had an abortion. Jesus wouldn't, and neither will I. Jesus wants to rescue babies in the womb and wants to rescue women who have terminated babies who once lived in their womb. If I had to condemn people for murder and death, then every person who struggles with anger, gossip, slander, hatred, bitterness and unforgiveness also needs to be shunned. (Matt. 5:21-26) But no- we believe in discipleship and mission. We believe in creating spaces where people can encounter the living God and be transformed and impacted by the Holy Spirit.

So, when it comes to the role of men and women in our Church, we will empower men and women in their gifts fully. Women and men will teach. Women and men will lead. Women and men will disciple people, not just men discipling men and women, and then women discipling only women, but we will have a discipling culture where men and women disciple men and women in many different aspects. There is a place for gender specific ministry, which is why we encourage DNA groups to be gender specific, but in our Church as a whole, we'll have plenty of spaces where men and women disciple each other- Sunday mornings, DNA Spiritual Formation Sessions, Missional Community spaces, and more. And we don't have a hard fast rule about DNA groups being gender specific. There are DNA groups that are "co-ed"- like the Emotionally Healthy Spirituality group.

But we're also going to leave space for people on both sides of the issue of men and women in the Church to belong here and disciple one another in love. We do this politically- we've got democrats and republicans. We do this theologically in the sense that we're somewhere in between being pentecostal and baptist without being either, and are a "Word and Spirit" sort of Church community where we love the Bible and passionately seek the Holy Spirit! So now, I'm clearly defining for us that we're doing this with the issue of men and women in leadership and ministry. This diagram should assist us:



What I'm saying is that we're going to have a community where people can be on both the inclusivist side and the complementarian side.

However, if you're the kind of hard inclusivist/egalitarian that hates all complementarians, or most complementarians, this probably isn't the place for you, because we have some wonderful complementarian brothers and sisters here who are doing amazing work of discipling Christ followers and doing mission in this rough neighborhood. And we're not going to drive them out because you think they're chauvinists and have refused to allow the Lord to soften your heart.

On the flip side, if you're the kind of hard complementarian that hates all egalitarians/inclusivists, or most egalitarians/inclusivists, this probably isn't the place for you, because we have some wonderful egalitarian/inclusivist brothers and sisters here who are doing amazing work of discipling Christ followers and doing mission in this rough neighborhood. And we're not going to drive them out because you think they're feminists and have refused to allow the Lord to soften your heart.

If you're in that mid range place of being an inclusivist, you firmly believe that women should be empowered in all their giftings and Church leadership callings, and have a bit of hatred for the patriarchy, then I'm simply asking that you begin to scoot over to the right a bit and soften. Don't soften your convictions, just soften your posture towards complementarians. Be in community with them. Love them. Share meals, coffees and backyard cookouts with them. Let your kids play together. Share your convictions with



them by speaking the truth in love, so we all can grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ. (Eph. 4:15)

If you're in that mid range place of being a complementarian, you firmly believe that men should be leaders in the home, Church and society, and have a bit of distaste towards aggressive feminism, then I'm simply asking that you begin to scoot over to the left a bit and soften (that's right- I said left- don't get alarmed if you're a republican ok?! ;). Don't soften your convictions, just soften your posture towards inclusivists. Be in community with them. Love them. Share meals, coffees and backyard cookouts with them. Let your kids play together. Share your convictions with them by speaking the truth in love, so we all can grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ. (Eph. 4:15)

If you're in that soft place of being an inclusivist then you're like me. You firmly believe that women should be empowered in all their giftings and Church leadership callings. You may have read extensively on both sides of this issue. You're aware that convictions can differ. What you really want to see is women and men leading and flourishing in their full capacity in Christ. You may desire that women carry the title of pastor or elder, but are willing to put that aside for the sake of the discipleship and mission of Christ to go forward in our community and this neighborhood.

If you're in that soft place of being a complementarian then you're like I was for years. You believe that women should be empowered in all their giftings, but want men to lead strongly in the Church also. You may have read extensively on both sides of this issue. You're aware that convictions can differ. What you really want to see is women and men leading and flourishing in their full capacity in Christ. You may desire that only men carry the title of pastor or elder, but are willing to put that aside for the sake of the discipleship and mission of Christ to go forward in our community and this neighborhood. So that's why we want to propose that we simply adopt an approach of "titleless leadership". And what I mean by that, is that at Streetlight we'll simply have leaders and coordinators over certain areas. I, Ben White, will retain the title of "pastor", because I simply think people in 2024 Akron, Ohio Christendom can't get past it. I could get into how that title is barely used in the New Testament, and roles like "elder", "deacon", "servant", and "co-laborer" were more common, because the New Testament was and is a very movemental, missional collection of texts reflecting the gospels and early church. But I digress... That's another conversation for another time!

However, as for our Direction Team leaders and coordinators of specific ministries, as well as all other staff (who are currently part-time, I'm the only full time Streetlight staff at this point), we are going to simply call people "leaders". We're not going to call them

“elders”, we’re not going to call them “deacons”, we’re not going to call them “pastors” (and I’d be fine with not being called “pastor”- as you can tell).

However, if you’re a soft complementarian, feel free to think of our Direction Team leaders and coordinators as a collection of elders and deacons. If it helps you, think of the men as elders and the women as deacons- that’s fine. Just understand that we’re viewing the elders and deacons as equals working together for the betterment of this church. We want men and women, Priscillas and Aquilas (see Acts 18, Romans 16:3, 1 Cor. 16:19, & 2 Tim. 4:19) to be seated at the table and prayerfully, collectively, humbly, lovingly, deferentially come up, in the power of the Holy Spirit, with all that is the very best for this Church and this neighborhood for the sake of Jesus Christ!

And if you’re a “soft inclusivist” (if there is such a thing), feel free to think of our Direction Team leaders and coordinators as a collection of equal leaders. And understand that they are just that- equal leaders working together for the betterment of this Church.

We care about our leaders living up to scriptural standards and leading the way in Christ’s character, prayer, integrity, holiness, and more! Understand also that the Direction Team leaders are held to a higher standard of leadership, akin to 1 Tim. 3:1-13<sup>11</sup>, and the coordinators are held to a basic standard of leadership and have demonstrated a call to a specific area of ministry that we have decided to honor and equip them in<sup>12</sup>!

But let me talk to some of you who might be confused, doubting or unsure of the work that Christ has done in me. If you don’t think I give women a voice at the table just ask the women around me who know me- first ask Sarah White, Charlotte White, Brooklyn White, and even little two year old Madison White. In fact, there is nobody in my life that calls me out and holds me accountable to following Jesus more than my wife Sarah White, and Charlotte and Brooklyn come in close second and third place! In fact, Charlotte is fearless in calling me out for my sin. However, I do the same for them. Sarah and my girls don’t boss me around, and I don’t boss them around. We are a loud family, we are an opinionated family, and we hold each other accountable. We also apologize to one another often. We are the opposite of passive aggressive to be sure. We are a family who disciplines one another and has very open, honest, passionate, loving dialogue constantly. Also, understand that I didn’t bribe them, manipulate them,

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<sup>11</sup> See our Direction Team Leader Covenant Here:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YltidEbg5ZMn0Ee-OD2N0\\_\\_q-IQdCQFI88tZYgQXmGo/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YltidEbg5ZMn0Ee-OD2N0__q-IQdCQFI88tZYgQXmGo/edit?usp=sharing)

<sup>12</sup> See our Coordinator Covenant Here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1f4H9-2-Ez8u-Mgyx5i8eULQCwwVH7tEVU5TWS6roGII/edit?usp=sharing>

or abuse them into giving their perspective on me to you. If you think crap like that I have no idea why you're still part of this Church community! 🙄

Then ask Michelle Gregory, Jessica Swiger, Catherine Knapp, Melinda Tokie, Robin Henry, Jolana Dawson, and Brenda Adams. Ask them if they feel like their voices are valued by me. They'll tell you that I'm intense, I'm opinionated, I'm passionate, and I'm a strong type of leader, but they'll also tell you that I value them and treat them as equals. They'll tell you that they've called me out plenty of times and I've received it in Christ, even if I was resistant to it at first. If you think I've brainwashed them or manipulated them into thinking that, again, I have no idea why you're still part of this Church community! Plus, my family is way too broke to bribe people! But I think anyone with half a brain could see that these women wouldn't put up with crap from anybody, including me!

Also understand that I have developed a set of standards as a ministry leader for those I allow closely into my life to have a voice. I do this for the men **and** women around me. I must do this. You have no idea how people, including many Christians, treat "pastors" in our culture. People scapegoat us, slander us, act condescending towards us, verbally beat us up, unload on us, sin against us, tell dirty secrets to us, and all the while think they can hold us to impossible standards that they themselves would and could never live up to.

As a result, I've worked with my Christian therapist to formulate a great list of relational standards that I can hold myself to, and hold others to before allowing them deeper into my relational orbit- this list was provided to me by my counselor Mark Loomis at Renew Counseling Ministries in Fairlawn, Ohio. And I'll tell you I've committed myself to practicing these things- I won't do so perfectly and will have to apologize I'm sure- but also, if anyone, man or woman, doesn't adhere to these things with me, I will naturally put relational boundaries up for the protection of my own sanity and peace in Christ. I don't desire to shun anyone, but when people are hurtful I attempt to put healthy distance between us.

*#1. I think, feel, and express myself appropriately to others, and I expect the same from those close to me.*

*#2. I do not get defensive with others, and I expect the same from those close to me. (Adults inform; Children explain.)*

*#3. I do not play games with others, and I expect the same from those close to me.*

*\*\*\*Games people play: Anger game; Comparison game; Record of wrong game; Mind-reading game; Blame game; I know better game; Submission game;*

*Cold-shoulder game; Shame/guilt game; etc. (When we play a game there is a winner & a loser.)*

*#4. I do not regress, from an adult to a child, and I expect the same from those close to me.*

*#5. I am honest with others, because secrets keep us sick, and I expect the same from those close to me.*

*#6. I acknowledge and validate others feelings, thoughts, and behavior, and I expect the same from those close to me.*

*#7. I only give advice, when asked, by the particular individual. (Get the GREEN light (permission) before giving advice), and I expect the same from those close to me.*

*#8. I am me, for everyone else is taken, and I expect those close to me to openly be who they are in Christ and as a human- strengths and weaknesses included.*

If you feel that I have distanced myself from you relationally in some way, it is likely because you have:

*#1. Expressed yourself inappropriately to me (with no apology or admittance of the same)*

*#2. Gotten defensive with me (with no apology or admittance of the same)*

*#3. Played a game with me where you perceived yourself as the winner and me as the loser (with no apology or admittance of the same)*

*#4. Regressed into acting like a child with me (with no apology or admittance of the same)*

*#5. Been dishonest and had obvious secrets in regard to your relationship with me (with no apology or admittance of the same)*

*#6. Have sought to discredit, judge, devalue, critique, give hyper spiritual answers to, or dismiss my genuine feelings, thoughts, and behavior (with no apology or admittance of the same)*

*#7. Have barraged me with advice when I didn't ask for it (with no apology or admittance of the same)*

*#8. Have made me feel like who I am- personality, flaws, strengths and quirks included, is somehow subpar or under your unspoken standard that you hold me to (with no apology or admittance of the same)*

And I have done all eight of these things to people. I have done them more so in my past when I didn't have the conviction or understanding of them being wrong. Now,

when I do these things, I have the deep desire and conviction to apologize to the person offended, repent, and ask God to change me.

Additionally- I am a servant of Christ. I am a forgiven and beloved child of the Most High God. I have a calling to lead, serve, preach, teach, evangelize, do creative mission, do creative discipleship, and full on lead God's people in a hard context. I am also a human being that has physical, emotional, mental, psychological, and spiritual limits. I am not Jesus Christ. I am not gifted in all the ways that you might be. So use your gifts to contribute to me and our community, not as a weapon against my weaknesses. Would you want people to do that to you? I doubt it.

And if you sin against me, just apologize, and repent and move away from the sinful pattern! And I'll tell you what- I'll do the same for you! Deal?

And remember the main things that drive my ministry in the Kenmore neighborhood of Akron, Ohio. I'm convinced these are impenetrable things from Jesus Christ Himself- discipleship and mission. I'm always willing to learn but I sure know why I didn't take a corporate gig or even a cushier church gig for myself! I have a calling from God over my life. I have a burden from Him I can't shake no matter how I try. I took a 20K a year pay cut to follow this burden. I put my kids into a volatile Church context and city setting for this calling. Demons have made their way into my home and into my family members as a result of this calling. This calling has resulted in me having death threats, me losing sleep, and plenty of first world problems- my family scraping by from paycheck to paycheck, the loss of ability to afford vacations, the loss of ability to stock our fridge with the level of healthy food we wish we could have, and spiritual attacks from the enemy on us regularly. We've seen people come and go from our church for various reasons- people have left for my current flaws that they can't forgive no matter how much I attempt to repent and change, our views on race and racism, our views on women, our heart for the poor, our heart for unbelievers, our heart for dangerous people, our difficult context, the fact that we don't own a building and meet during colder months in a rowdy urban youth center located in an alley, the fact that we're connected to 3DM as a discipleship resource and they don't like them, the fact that they simply don't believe in Christ anymore, the fact that they simply don't think it matters to be a Christ follower and part of an intentional Church body anymore, the fact that there's a much sexier church in a nicer part of the city or suburbs down the road, the fact that there's a neighborhood they feel called to serve more than Kenmore, the fact that they just want to be part of a different Church body, the fact we do hip hop in our Church service, the fact we meet outside in a less than safe neighborhood right in the middle of it all, and one time I simply had a key person in our community try to hit on my wife, and when she rejected him and immediately told me about it, things got weird no matter how much we desired them not to be, as you could imagine!

I've been chewed out, cussed out, slandered, and condemned on a number of occasions, but have learned what Paul meant when he wrote Romans 12:9-21 and what it means to practice and live it out, even when its hardest!

**9** *Let love be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. 10 Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another. 11 Do not lack diligence in zeal; be fervent in the Spirit; serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. 13 Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Give careful thought to do what is honorable in everyone's eyes. 18 If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for God's wrath, because it is written, Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay, says the Lord. 20 But*

*If your enemy is hungry, feed him.  
If he is thirsty, give him something to drink.  
For in so doing  
you will be heaping fiery coals on his head.*

**21** *Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.*

Jesus help me I ain't arrived yet, but I want more of you! My main prayer- conquer my evil with your good!

And the burden and calling on my life has brought a deeper intimacy with Jesus and the Holy Spirit than I ever could have imagined!

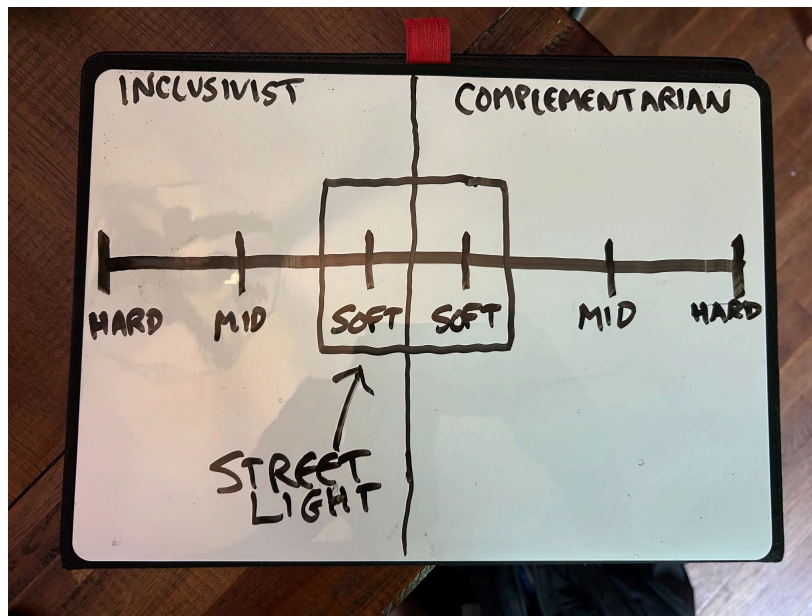
I am motivated to continue on by disciples of Jesus who want to fully live for Him in every way and continue learning and growing. We have people in our Church community who are in their seventies and retired who are rapidly and deeply growing in their faith, as well as sacrificially and selflessly serving this neighborhood more observably than others! You are an example of faithfulness to us all! Wisdom is known by her actions! We know a tree by its fruit! I am here for the receptive, not the deceptive or regressive.

I am driven by the mission we have in our neighborhood. I work with urban youth all throughout the week in the hip hop ministry that we've developed over the past five years, and the ministry and collaboration we have between Streetlight Community Church, First Glance, Akron Dream Center, and Glory in the Beat Christian Hip Hop Radio keeps growing. I got to make a gospel rap beat for someone who is writing their

second Christian hip hop song last week, and when I met them six years ago, wanted nothing to do with Jesus or Church, and is now a committed attender at Streetlight. Yesterday, I picked a student up and brought him to the studio to work on beats on his own, got to feed him lunch and let him make music for a few hours while I did other office stuff. I'm committed to mentoring youth rappers and producers, sharing my faith with them, and inviting them into Streetlight's Church spaces. I'm also driven by the impact we're making on the Kenmore neighborhood of Akron, Ohio, and am always seeking ways that we can provide good meals, create evangelistic opportunities, and discipleship pathways for the people of Kenmore that may not have even considered being a part of a church family before! God continues to raise up people who understand this! I'm seeing a community and village come around the lives of many people who are coming up hard in Akron, and via the gospel and Kingdom through the arts, lives are gradually transforming!

That all needed to be stated clearly and poignantly because you need to know the motives Christ has deeply put in my heart and the struggles I face as a result! Now, back to our main point of the role of men and women in the Church...

Ultimately we are going to hold a middle position of "titleless leadership" at Streetlight Community Church- as again you can see by this diagram:



So for the sake of our Church community and the Kenmore neighborhood, we'll ride the middle. We'll ask that people on both sides come towards the middle and learn to love one another, do community together, and participate in the mission we have. And let me tell you, the more you participate in the actual mission and choose to be less of a spectator or two hour a week short term missionary to Kenmore, the more your love for

people in this community on the ground for Jesus, and the struggling folks in this neighborhood, will grow.

Again, it's not my end game to force you into living crazy for Jesus, but step by step, we're inviting everyone into a lifelong relationship with Jesus, and in our ministry, we partner with urban missionaries, and invite everyone also to **participate** in urban mission. I said **participate** not **be consumed by!** That means you can give financially to us and to one or more of our missional allies, serve in a team on Sundays, be in a DNA group, attend Sundays, serve with one of our missional allies or another Kingdom ministry, go through our DNA Spiritual Formation Sessions in the Fall and Winter and be trained as a DNA Group leader, come to Coffee & Conversations and help people connect to our community, pray for us, build relationships with people who follow Christ and don't follow Christ who are connected to us, and more!

We'll give this a month from now. If you have any questions, reach out to me or any of the other Direction Team leaders. I'm happy to sit with you over coffee or food. I'm happy to have a phone or video call with you. Anything that will clarify things further.

And from there, we'll propose amendments to our Constitution on Sunday, June 30th to officially make the Direction Team our central leaders of the Church. We'll work on writing all that into a proposed new Constitution between now and then. I'll add as well, that instead of officially having "male elders", I will stay committed to a rhythm of deep discipleship with any of the men who are a part of the Direction Team, so that there is a layer of accountability and growth there as well.

Beyond Sunday June 30th when we propose these amendments, and in honoring our Constitutional process, we'll give everyone in our community three weeks to look things over and ask further questions. Then, on Sunday July 21st, the day after my 43rd birthday, we'll vote to officially apply these amendments to our constitution. Again, anyone who cares about this Church community is invited to vote. We invite people into organic discipleship and don't have an official "membership roster", though of course we're always inviting everyone into a lifelong relationship with Jesus, and to partner alongside us and other urban missionaries to participate in urban mission!

And who is it all about? **Jesus!** Don't forget it!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How have you seen the Church treat women positively?
2. How have you seen the Church treat women negatively?
3. How did Jesus treat women? How would Jesus treat women in 2024 Akron, Ohio?