

Do women have the Biblical right to be ordained?

By Rev. Gwen Ehrenborg



For centuries godly women have been taught that they must not preach publicly nor take any leadership role in the Church. William Booth, Founder of the Salvation Army, also believed this teaching until his brilliant wife, Catherine, did a study of Holy Scripture and found to her surprise that there was, “no Scriptural reason to deny women a public ministry.” She went on to write in a 32-page treatise published as *Female Ministry: or Women’s Right to Preach the Gospel:*

“What the Bible urges the Holy Spirit has ordained and blessed, and so it must be justified. The Holy Spirit has been given to both sexes. Women prophesied in the early church, and Paul’s command to “keep silent,” referred not to preaching but to gossip, interruption and uncalled-for questions and discussion. A mistaken application of the passage, ‘let your women keep silent in the churches,’ has resulted in loss to the Church, evil to the world and dishonor to God.”

1 Timothy 2:11,12 can be properly understood with Biblical scholarship which reveals the cultural context of this text. Christendom must interpret this passage alongside all of Paul’s teaching on the role of women in order to discern if he was issuing a universal command, that must be applied to all women at all times, or an instruction that applied to a particular temporary predicament in the early church. In the light of the entire teaching of the Bible and its context and culture we see that the latter view is confirmed.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter proclaimed that, “it shall come to pass in the last days, says the Lord, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy... and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.” (Acts 2:17-18) Jesus Christ’s redemptive work upon the Cross broke down the wall of partition between God and mankind thereby making us all equal as, “the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:26) Every Christian is a part of the priesthood of all believers and is an essential part of the Body of Christ.

Each person must be free and encouraged to use and develop their abilities and talents and flow freely in the fruits and gifts of the Spirit as God reveals himself to them. We each have gifts and abilities that those around us do not possess. When we do not use them in the Church we all are diminished by it. May we as individuals and as the Church provide the opportunity for all people to reach their potential and fulfill the call of God upon their lives.



Affirming the Ordination of Women for Christian Ministry

Supporting Women in Ministry International is an Incorporated, Non-profit, Religious organization that is designed to uphold women who are called of God to ministry in the Body of Christ. Since not all women in ministry are called to pastor a local church within a denomination, the need exists for gifted women, who are called to lead in Christian ministry, to have a local body of believers recognize and affirm their calling through a Ministerial Credentialing process. In response to a move of the Holy Spirit in Christendom today, calling women to ministry inside and outside the walls of the established church, *S.W.I.M. International* has included in its By-laws, full rights to legally license and ordain.

S.W.I.M. offers unique opportunities often unavailable to women. Among these services is a network of support groups, whereby women can gather together regularly for sharing, fellowship, edification, worship and prayer. *S.W.I.M.* holds prayer as a core component of its reason for being. Therefore, a group of committed prayer intercessors, whimsically called, “Lifesavers,” see themselves as a circle of prayer support around *S.W.I.M.* participants. Mentoring and teaching opportunities are also offered to assist women who are in the process of discerning their call to ministry or preparing for leadership. Consequently, a vigorous process for Ministerial Credentials, through *S.W.I.M.*, has been created and is described in more detail in the following pages. This process is designed for women with special gifts and unique talents to,

**“take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord,
that you may fulfill it.” Colossians 4:17**

Ministerial Credentialing

Licensing and Ordination Qualifications

To qualify for licensing or ordination through *S.W.I.M. International* the applicant should:

1. Maintain a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
2. Have received a personal “call” to leadership in Christian ministry from the Holy Spirit.
3. Demonstrate the Fruit of the Spirit in one’s life and a devotion to growing in the wisdom and knowledge of Jesus Christ.
4. Provide three character references which affirm and endorse a life of integrity and proven ministry. One of these should be from a pastor or spiritual director.
5. Be in agreement with the *S.W.I.M. International* Statement of Faith.
6. Have appropriate educational training and a proven ministry.
7. Maintain an ongoing relationship with *S.W.I.M. International* by attending regional groups and annual Gatherings when possible.
8. Meet with the Credentialing Review Team as requested and be recommended to the Board of Directors of *S.W.I.M. International* for licensing or ordination.



Ministerial Credentials granted by *S.W.I.M. International* is conditional upon the above qualifications being met and may be revoked by the Board of Directors upon failure to maintain these qualifications.

Licensing and Ordination Requirements

Licensing and Ordination applicants are required to:

1. Read and sign the Agreement to the *S.W.I.M.* Statement of Faith.
2. Read and agree to *S.W.I.M.*'s Mission Statement and Purpose Statement.
3. Complete and submit the initial application for licensing or ordination and the background check form.
4. Obtain three references which will be mailed directly to the chairperson of the *S.W.I.M.* Credentialing Review Team.
5. Submit all educational transcripts that are applicable.
6. Read all books and complete any course work requested by the Credentialing Review Team.
7. Submit a Biblical and Theological Profile Questionnaire in writing.

Applications for either licensing or ordination are available.

The application packets describe the different requirements between licensing and ordination. Applicants are contacted within two weeks of receipt of the completed application, references, transcripts, questionnaire and background check. An interviewing panel consisting of men and women will meet with the candidate. The applicant will be assigned a *S.W.I.M.* “Esther-Sister” mentor for support, assistance and encouragement. After a time of prayer and on-going discernment, the team will either recommend affirmation of the person’s call to ministerial credentials or determine what further preparation may be appropriate.

S.W.I.M. does not require membership dues nor annual credential fees of any kind. *S.W.I.M.* intends to remain a support system for the credentialed leader in the future as they fulfill their God-given ministry.

For detailed information or applications contact:

Rev. Laurie Graber, Secretary, *S.W.I.M.* Board of Directors

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