

# The LCA ordination debate – what is this all about?

It is about the **1<sup>st</sup> Commandment**.

It is about who we fear, love and trust above everything else. It is about who *is* our God. Not who we say is our God, but who *functionally is* our God. Who do we really listen to, who do we want to please, who sets for us criteria for right and wrong, just and good.

Biblical view on who we are as human beings, as created in God's Image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27, Psalm 8), is without parallels. Since the early days of Christianity, a crucial part of the Gospel proclamation was this counter-cultural teaching that *all people* are created equal in God's eyes. Equally precious and valued. All people and also – *both sexes, men and women*. Whenever the Gospel was proclaimed, and is proclaimed today, cultures and societies are changed as the equality of both men and women is brought forward as one of the hallmarks of Christian way.

At the same time, the Word teaches what is known without doubt anyway, that both sexes are different on so many levels; men are hardwired for mission, task, things and systems, women for relationships, for people, for care (Gen 2).<sup>1</sup> Thus, Christians have always encouraged everyone, men and women, to use all their God given gifts as fully as possible in service to as many as possible. Let's continue to do this and let's encourage others!

There are, however, two settings, with a **very special importance for our God**. These are **marriage/family and the Church**. In these settings the Triune God has modelled our relationships according to His own relationships with His people. As Jesus Christ related to the Church, His beloved Bride – loving her and even giving Himself up for her (Eph 5:25) – so should husbands relate to their wives, and so should pastors – called and sent by Christ, standing in the place of Christ the Bridegroom – relate to their congregations, the beloved Bride of Christ. So that through this beautiful ordering for self-sacrificial service we can learn about and receive God's loving care.

This ordering for our marriages and the Church thus is grounded in God's good created design for us and in God's own modelling for our relationships. It's not about power, it is about self-sacrificial service, and it is very good. This is how the Church has understood and taught these matters for two millennia and the majority of the Church still holds this true and sacred.

## **But then, what has changed? Why do we now fight against this tooth and nail?**

Let's briefly look at three influences. [1] The loss of Biblical authority. [2] Anti-Christian ideologies. [3] Political coercion.

**[1] The loss of Biblical authority.** During the last centuries the authority of God's Word has been deliberately eroded, even in the Church. The Bible hasn't been portrayed as the Word of God anymore, rather as ancient ideas about God, not fit to guide our lives today in 21<sup>st</sup> century, or to provide for us criteria for what is good and right and just. No church has been spared of this corruption, and our LCA is no exception.

**[2] Anti-Christian ideologies.** As the authority of God's Word was under attack, the place didn't remain empty. New ideologies arose that sought to replace Biblical authority; they were anti-Christian, anti-marriage, anti-family in their essence (such as different strands of Marxism, cultural Marxism, deconstructionism, feminism, etc.). They all deliberately aimed to erase Christian underpinnings of Western Civilization, focusing their attacks on Christian faith, teaching

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<sup>1</sup> Watch <https://wiseberg.com.au/course/wisdom-4-relationships-certificate> or read these books that summarize the findings of contemporary research and also provides wealth of useful bibliography – Steven E Rhoades "Taking Sex Differences Seriously" and Lucas Carry "The Politically Incorrect Guide to Women, Sex and Feminism".

on marriage and family, sexual ethics, etc. They cunningly masked their attacks under virtuous sounding slogans of fighting for *justice, equality, freedom, standing against discrimination*, etc. Sounds familiar? They criticized God's design for our relationships in marriage/family and for Christ's Church as unjust, abusive, outdated, discriminatory, etc. These ideologies provided noble sounding language tools to attack God's good order both in families and in the Church.

**[3] Political coercion.** Many churches in Europe were state churches, meaning, pastors were formally employed by governments. While Europe was Christian it recognized God's good design for our lives and churches. When Christianity was driven out of the public realm by the above-mentioned aggressive anti-Christian ideologies, those very ideologies supplied new criteria for what is right and just and good. Thus came the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As societies and governments embraced those new standards, they tried to force them also on state-churches (e.g., in Norway, Sweden, Finland, etc.), demanding them to ordain women (in government-controlled state churches) for the sake of social justice and equality. All those churches resisted as long as they could, some holding to God's good instructions for decades, but eventually they lost this battle. See where these churches are now – pioneers of inclusion, welcoming every cultural trend, except... those faithful brothers and sisters who want to fear, love and trust the Triune God who speaks to us in Scriptures. They are not welcome.

As Biblical authority had been eroded, as anti-Christian cultural revolution continued to reshape the West, supplanting Biblical values with those of anti-Biblical ideologies, as more and more precedents of women ordination were set, the idea that women need to be ordained in the name of equality and fairness, spread further and further. Also, in Australia and also in the LCA.

There is **no single church** [!] that has decided to ordain both men and women based on what God teaches us in the Scripture. This is why the LCA has voted “**no**” **4** [!] **times**, when we were considering what the Word instructs us to do<sup>2</sup>, and that is why the LCA leadership now wants to try to introduce this practice without any further study of the Word, simply by administrative means. Just as other churches have done. This is where we are. In crossroads.

I hope this brief summary helps to see what is at stake. **The 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment.** We can't serve two masters (Mat 6:24), we can either listen to the Lord as He speaks to us in His Word, and whatever order He has designed for us – in our marriages/families and in His Church – it is good, very good, lovely and praiseworthy.

Or, we can listen to the world, to those ideologies that are openly anti-Christian, anti-family, but which with their virtuous sounding language have managed to deceive so many well-meaning, but poorly equipped brothers and sisters in Christ. We need to choose either the way of life, listening to our Triune God, or the way of death – listening to the world and the one who rules it.

**It is about the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment.**

I pray that our Father in Heaven grants us all His Spirit of wisdom and discernment, and also courage and joy to fear, love and trust Him above everything else.

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Glandore-Underdale, Adelaide, February 2023.

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<sup>2</sup> Before the 2018 synod, the LCA spent 3 years crafting “Draft Doctrinal Statement: A Theological Basis for the Ordination of Women and Men” (DDS). It incorporated public feedback and critique from more than 30 churchwide open consultations with LCA members (costing ~\$100K AUD). Yet, it couldn't find in the Bible what isn't there.