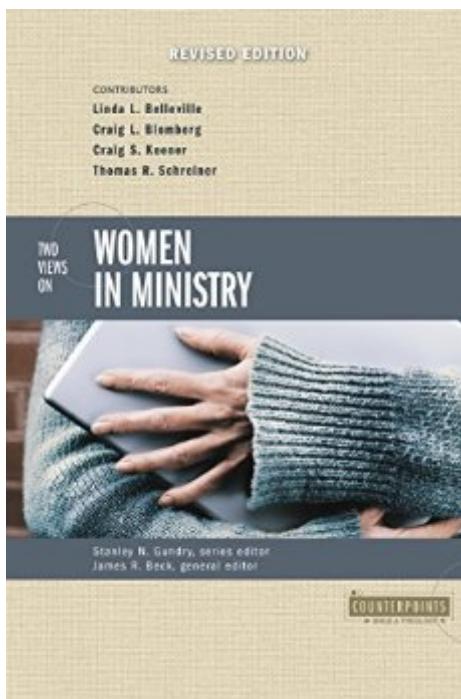


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# Two Views On Women In Ministry (Counterpoints: Bible And Theology)



## **Synopsis**

What does the Bible say about women's roles in the church? With pros and cons on either side of a heated, ongoing debate, no definitive conclusions have emerged. This book furnishes you with a clear and thorough presentation of the two primary views on women in ministry so you can better understand each one's strengths, weaknesses, and complexities. Each view—egalitarian (equal ministry opportunity for both genders) and complementarian (ministry roles differentiated by gender)—is represented by two contributors. This revised edition of the book brings the exchange of ideas and perspectives into the traditional Counterpoints format. Each author states his or her case and is then critiqued by the other contributors. The fair-minded, interactive Counterpoints forum allows you to compare and contrast the two different positions, and to form your own opinion concerning the practical and often deeply personal issue of women in ministry. The Counterpoints series provides a forum for comparison and critique of different views on issues important to Christians. Counterpoints books address two categories: Church Life and Bible and Theology. Complete your library with other books in the Counterpoints series.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

The best introduction to the debate over women in ministry is by far and away Craig L. Blomberg's and James R. Beck's *Two Views On Women In Ministry*. Edited by two men, each conservative seminary professors (Denver Seminary) represent the opposing viewpoints, and call upon one man and one woman to each put forth an essay arguing for and against women in ministry. Craig Keener and Linda Belleville defend the Egalitarian position (allowing) while Tom Schreiner and Ann Bowman defend the Complementarian position (barring). The most exegetically dense essay comes from Belleville in that she answers Wayne Grudem's "6 questions" in his *Open Letter to Egalitarians* satisfactorily. She also makes many key distinctions between being "pro-mutuality" and "pro-gay" that undermine the charge that accepting women as pastors will eventually lead to accepting practicing accepting homosexual persons as pastors (hence validating their lifestyles). Schreiner returns the favor with an equally strong essay--probably the most well written--building his prohibiting views off of a broader base of gender roles he believes are spelled out more clearly in the Genesis record and the teachings on marriage. He then finishes it off with cogent interpretations of the classic prohibiting texts such as 1 Timothy 2:11-15, 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, and 14:34-35. Keener, draws upon his voluminous wealth of extra-biblical historical literature showing how each instance of the prohibiting texts is plausibly culture bound, and the main point of his essay is establishing criteria that is able to determine what is culture-bound and what not.

As with previous "Counterpoints" books, this book is very technical, and the authors make much use of the original Greek and Hebrew biblical texts. The good parts of this book are very good -- meriting 5 stars easily for their coverage of the subject. Specifically, the essays by Keener and Belleville (promoting equality of roles in the church) and Schreiner (promoting male authority) are very well-researched and well-written. Anyone wanting a current understanding of the debate on gender roles in the church would do well to read the book for these essays alone. I only give this book 3 stars, though, for 3 main reasons: (1) The 4th essay, by Ann Bowman, really doesn't fit with the format of the book. She writes very compellingly on how women are equal to men before God, how women are equally called to serve in ministry, and how women are equally gifted with the same spiritual gifts. What she does NOT cover, though, is the specific roles that the Bible deems appropriate for women (which is what I thought the book was supposed to be about). In short, she spends all but about 7 pages writing on what everybody else would agree on anyway. She does a

good job of establishing the equal value of women in the church, but contributes almost nothing to the discussion of what leadership roles they should occupy.(2) The format of the book is different from earlier Counterpoints volumes, in that the authors do not respond to each other's articles. The editors simply ask each of the writers a series of questions after each essay, and then comment on each position. Gone are what I thought were some of the most insightful portions of previous Counterpoints books -- seeing writers POINT OUT THE WEAKNESSES of the other writers' positions.

Two Views on Women in Ministry is a collection of essays from prominent thinkers regarding the egalitarian/complementarian debate. Craig Keener and Linda Belleville each provide essays supporting egalitarianism, while Tom Schreiner and Ann Bowman present the complementarian point of view. Denver Seminary professors (and editors of the book) James Beck and Craig Blomberg provide commentary on each of the views, and Dr. Blomberg concludes the book with an essay attempting to posit a tertium quid, appropriately entitled "Neither Hierarchicalist [Complementarian] nor Egalitarian."As someone who has struggled with coming to a concrete decision on this thorny theological topic, the book was of great help to me. Keener, Belleville and Schreiner all wrote exceptional essays, interacting with all of the relevant texts and providing (mostly) good and detailed arguments. I did not find Bowman's essay particularly useful, as she came at the topic from more of an experiential and general philosophy-of-ministry point of view. I was really looking for structured exegesis of key texts. Beck's and Blomberg's commentaries on each pair of essays were beneficial, though, in that they did an excellent job summing up each side's key points, strengths and weaknesses. Blomberg's final commentary provided yet another example of excellent interaction with Scripture, but in the end, I felt his idea of "women can do anything except be the senior pastor" was still essentially complementarian in nature. I'm not convinced he quite made it to that "third way."In the end, the book allowed me to examine impartially the key arguments and biblical texts involved in the debate about the role of women in ministry, and this is exactly what I was hoping it would do.

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