



THE 49 THESES  
Opposing the Doctrine of Excluding Women  
from Public Life

## THE 49 THESES

*Against the Subjugation of Women and Girls in Church, State, and Society*

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## Preamble

These theses are an invitation to theological engagement, not a manifesto.

They engage Scripture as a whole, but hold that the final interpretation of all texts must be tested against the words and actions of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. Where a reading of Scripture contradicts Jesus' treatment of women, that reading must be re-examined — for example, in the treatments of Genesis 3:16, 1 Timothy 2:12, and Jesus' own reinterpretation of Torah: *"You have heard it said... but I say..."*

Each thesis functions as a test statement. Readers are invited to select one thesis (or a small group), state whether they agree or disagree, and — where they disagree — offer an alternative biblical interpretation that can be sustained in light of Jesus' life and ministry.

Appeals to tradition, authority, or cultural order are not substitutes for engagement with the Gospels themselves.

The purpose is not consensus but clarity: to distinguish what can be sustained from the witness of Jesus from what has been added later and defended as doctrine.

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These theses do not tell Christians what to believe.

They identify what can no longer be defended if Jesus is taken seriously — and where the church has departed from Christ.

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## I. CONCERNING THE BEING OF WOMEN (ONTOLOGY)

1. Women are created fully and directly in the image of God, not as secondary or derivative beings defined through men; therefore, any teaching that assigns women lesser spiritual worth denies the biblical doctrine of creation itself.

**Genesis 1:27 (NRSV) | Genesis 5:1–2 (NRSV)**

*The imago Dei (image of God) is explicitly conferred on both male and female, without hierarchy or derivation.*

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2. To treat women as morally dependent, guided, or answerable through men contradicts Scripture, which holds women equally responsible before God for their conscience, decisions, and actions.

**Ezekiel 18:20 (NRSV) | Romans 14:12 (NRSV) | 2 Corinthians 5:10 (NRSV)**

*Scripture never assigns moral accountability by gender; conscience and judgment are personal.*

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3. Claims that women are 'ontologically subordinate' confuse human power structures formed after the Fall with God's original design, mistaking domination and hierarchy for divine intention.

**Genesis 1:26–28 (NRSV) | Genesis 3:16 (NRSV) | Matthew 19:8 (NRSV)**

*Hierarchy enters after sin; as a consequence of sin, not a command of God; Christ explicitly warns against treating fallen conditions as divine will.*

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4. The image of God is not male by nature; therefore, any theology that treats masculinity as closer to God than femininity replaces God with gender and commits a form of idolatry.

**Numbers 23:19 (NRSV) | Isaiah 66:13 (NRSV) | John 4:24 (NRSV)**

*Scripture explicitly resists collapsing God into male embodiment or masculinity.*

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5. Any view of humanity that defines women primarily by their capacity to bear children reduces persons to biological function and denies women's full dignity, vocation, and personhood.

**Luke 10:38–42 (NRSV) | 1 Corinthians 7:7–8 (NRSV) | Galatians 3:28 (NRSV)**

*Scripture consistently affirms vocation, discipleship, and dignity beyond biological function.*

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## II. CONCERNING CONSENT AND BODILY AUTHORITY

6. Consent is a basic moral requirement rooted in love of neighbour; therefore, any attempt to control women's bodies through force, threat, or law directly contradicts Christian ethics.

**Matthew 7:12 (NRSV) | Matthew 22:37–40 (NRSV) | 1 Corinthians 13:5 (NRSV)**

*Christian ethics are grounded in love that refuses coercion; force over bodies violates neighbour-love at its core.*

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7. God entered the world through Mary only after her consent, showing that God's purposes do not override human choice or treat people as instruments without agency.

**Luke 1:38 (NRSV) | Luke 1:34 (NRSV)**

*The Incarnation itself proceeds through human consent, not divine coercion — an unparalleled theological affirmation of agency.*

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8. Sex without consent is violence, no matter the relationship, status, or circumstances, and no religious teaching can transform coercion into something holy.

**2 Samuel 13:11–14 (NRSV) | Deuteronomy 22:25–27 (NRSV) | 1 Thessalonians 4:3–6 (NRSV)**

*Scripture consistently treats sex without consent as violence and exploitation, never sanctified by status or relationship.*

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9. When women are denied authority over their own bodies while male desire or entitlement is excused, moral responsibility is reversed and injustice is sanctified.

**Matthew 5:27–30 (NRSV) | James 1:14–15 (NRSV) | Romans 2:11 (NRSV)**

*Scripture places moral accountability on the acting subject, not on those blamed for another's desire.*

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10. When the state claims control over women's bodies, it practices domination rather than moral guidance, replacing conscience and care with force and punishment.

**Matthew 20:25–26 (NRSV) | Romans 14:4 (NRSV) | 2 Corinthians 3:17 (NRSV)**

*Christian moral formation relies on conscience, persuasion, and care — not state-enforced bodily control.*

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### III. CONCERNING PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH

11. Pregnancy can be a calling only when it is freely chosen; when pregnancy is forced by law or coercion, what should be a vocation becomes a form of punishment.

**1 Corinthians 7:17 (NRSV) | 2 Corinthians 9:7 (NRSV) | Philemon 1:14 (NRSV)**

*Scripture consistently treats vocation and moral good as meaningful only when freely embraced, not coerced.*

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12. Treating pregnancy as a penalty for sexual behaviour revives a system of moral punishment that Christ explicitly rejected in favour of mercy, restoration, and personal responsibility.

**John 8:3–11 (NRSV) | John 9:1–3 (NRSV) | Luke 13:1–5 (NRSV)**

*Christ explicitly dismantles the logic that bodily suffering or consequence is divine punishment for moral failure.*

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13. Forcing women to give birth while denying them healthcare shows concern for control over bodies rather than genuine respect for life and human well-being.

**Luke 10:33–35 (NRSV) | Matthew 25:35–40 (NRSV) | James 2:15–16 (NRSV)**

*Scripture defines respect for life through concrete care, not abstract declarations.*

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14. Celebrating childbirth in religious language while refusing material support for mothers and children devalues life by praising birth while neglecting what life requires to survive.

**1 John 3:17–18 (NRSV) | Acts 4:34–35 (NRSV) | Isaiah 58:6–7 (NRSV)**

*Biblical faith consistently joins reverence for life with responsibility to sustain it.*

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15. Any teaching that claims to protect unborn life while ignoring the woman's health, safety, or dignity practises selective morality rather than consistent care for life.

**Proverbs 31:8–9 (NRSV) | Hosea 6:6 (NRSV) | Matthew 23:23 (NRSV)**

*Scripture repeatedly condemns moral systems that elevate one value while neglecting justice, mercy, and human dignity.*

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#### IV. CONCERNING ABORTION AND MORAL AGENCY

16. Christian moral teaching has always recognised that some situations are tragic and morally complex; treating every pregnancy decision as simple and absolute ignores this tradition and erases women's moral judgment.

**Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (NRSV) | Romans 14:1–4 (NRSV) | Romans 14:22–23 (NRSV)**

*Scripture acknowledges morally tragic situations and resists flattening all discernment into rigid absolutes.*

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17. When women are denied the ability to make moral decisions about pregnancy, they are denied moral agency altogether and treated as objects rather than responsible human beings.

**Genesis 2:16–17 (NRSV) | Deuteronomy 30:19 (NRSV) | Romans 2:15 (NRSV)**

*Biblical morality assumes persons are capable of discernment and accountable for their choices.*

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18. Forcing pregnancy through state power, without exception, confuses moral witness with coercion and replaces persuasion and care with punishment and control.

**Matthew 20:25–28 (NRSV) | 2 Corinthians 3:17 (NRSV) | Philemon 1:8–14 (NRSV)**

*Christian moral witness persuades through love and truth; coercion belongs to domination, not discipleship.*

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19. Reducing women to mere containers for life while claiming to value life contradicts the Gospel, which insists that every person is more than a biological function.

**Luke 10:38–42 (NRSV) | Mark 5:25–34 (NRSV) | Galatians 3:28 (NRSV)**

*The Gospel consistently treats women as whole persons with dignity, agency, and vocation.*

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20. Any theology that silences women's conscience in reproductive matters elevates rigid law over love, ignoring Christ's insistence that moral life must be guided by compassion and discernment.

**Matthew 12:7 (NRSV) | Mark 2:27 (NRSV) | 1 Corinthians 8:7–13 (NRSV)**

*Jesus consistently subordinates rigid law to love, compassion, and attentive moral discernment.*

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#### V. CONCERNING SEXUAL SHAME AND PURITY CULTURE

21. When sexual shame is imposed mainly on women, it functions as a tool of control rather than a path to holiness, using fear and humiliation instead of moral growth.

**1 John 4:18 (NRSV) | Romans 8:1 (NRSV) | 2 Timothy 1:7 (NRSV)**

*Scripture identifies fear and humiliation as contrary to holiness; moral growth flows from love and freedom, not shame.*

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**22.** Purity systems that excuse or overlook male sexual wrongdoing while punishing women practise unfairness, directly contradicting Scripture's clear rejection of partiality and double standards.

**James 2:1 (NRSV) | Leviticus 19:15 (NRSV) | Romans 2:11 (NRSV)**

*Scripture consistently condemns double standards; moral law applies equally, without gendered exemption.*

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**23.** Teaching women that they are responsible for managing men's desire shifts moral responsibility away from those who act wrongly and places blame on those who are harmed.

**James 1:14–15 (NRSV) | Ezekiel 18:20 (NRSV) | Romans 14:12 (NRSV)**

*Biblical ethics place responsibility on the one who desires or acts, not on those blamed for another's impulses.*

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**24.** When modesty is used to monitor, restrict, or police women's behaviour, fear is recast as virtue and surveillance is mistaken for faithful discipleship.

**Colossians 2:20–23 (NRSV) | Matthew 23:4 (NRSV) | Galatians 5:1 (NRSV)**

*Scripture rejects rule-based surveillance that burdens consciences without producing genuine righteousness.*

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**25.** Christ taught that moral failure begins in the heart of the one who desires wrongly, not in the bodies of women who are seen or blamed.

**Matthew 5:27–30 (NRSV) | Mark 7:20–23 (NRSV) | Proverbs 4:23 (NRSV)**

*Jesus decisively relocates moral responsibility from women's bodies to the inner life of the one who desires.*

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## **VI. CONCERNING VIOLENCE, ABUSE, AND SILENCE**

**26.** When women who report abuse are silenced, dismissed, or punished, the Church sides with violence instead of truth and protects harm rather than confronting it.

**Proverbs 31:8–9 (NRSV) | Ephesians 5:11 (NRSV) | Isaiah 1:16–17 (NRSV)**

*Scripture commands truth-telling and protection of the harmed; silence in the face of abuse is itself a moral failure.*

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**27.** Demanding forgiveness from women while refusing to demand accountability from abusive men turns forgiveness into a weapon and becomes a form of spiritual abuse.

**Luke 17:3–4 (NRSV) | Matthew 3:8 (NRSV) | James 5:16 (NRSV)**

*Biblical forgiveness never bypasses truth, repentance, or responsibility.*

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**28.** Any theology that prioritises protecting male reputation over ensuring women's safety abandons Christ's clear concern for the vulnerable and powerless.

**Matthew 18:5–6 (NRSV) | Psalm 82:3–4 (NRSV) | Zechariah 7:9–10 (NRSV)**

*Scripture consistently prioritises the safety of the vulnerable over institutional image or power.*

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**29.** Using religious language about 'submission' to keep women trapped in dangerous or abusive situations twists Scripture into a tool of harm rather than liberation.

**Ephesians 5:21 (NRSV) | Colossians 3:19 (NRSV) | 2 Corinthians 3:17 (NRSV)**

*Submission in Scripture is bounded by love and mutuality; abuse nullifies any claim to godly authority. Mutual submission is the Christian ethic.*

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**30.** Institutions that accept women's suffering as the cost of preserving male authority or social stability sacrifice truth, justice, and compassion in the name of order.

**Micah 6:8 (NRSV) | Isaiah 10:1–2 (NRSV) | Matthew 23:23 (NRSV)**

*God rejects stability purchased at the cost of justice and compassion.*

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**31.** Christ taught that sexual sin originates in the heart of the one who desires, commanding men to discipline themselves rather than shame or control women for their urges.

**Matthew 5:27–30 (NRSV) | Mark 7:20–23 (NRSV) | James 1:14–15 (NRSV)**

*Jesus decisively shifts responsibility away from women's bodies and onto male self-discipline and accountability.*

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## **VII. CONCERNING PUBLIC LIFE AND LEADERSHIP**

**32.** God's Spirit gives gifts and callings to people without regard to sex; excluding women from leadership therefore rejects the Spirit's work and substitutes human control for divine guidance.

**Acts 2:17–18 (NRSV) | 1 Corinthians 12:4–7, 11 (NRSV) | Romans 12:6–8 (NRSV)**

*Scripture grounds leadership and ministry in the Spirit's gifting, not in gender.*

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**33.** Using certain Bible verses selectively to silence women reveals fear of women's authority rather than genuine faithfulness to Scripture as a whole.

**Acts 20:27 (NRSV) | 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NRSV) | Matthew 23:23 (NRSV)**

*Isolating texts to exclude women contradicts Scripture's own demand for holistic, faithful reading.*

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**34.** Jesus openly welcomed women as disciples, witnesses, and teachers; any theology that erases or minimises this reality directly contradicts the Gospel accounts.

**Luke 8:1–3 (NRSV) | Luke 10:38–42 (NRSV) | John 20:16–18 (NRSV)**

*The Gospels portray women as learners, proclaimers, and bearers of foundational testimony. Mary Magdalene was commissioned as the first witness to the resurrection.*

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**35.** When women are barred from public leadership for religious reasons, the Church silences half its members and damages its public witness and credibility.

**1 Corinthians 12:12–27 (NRSV) | Matthew 5:14–16 (NRSV) | Philippians 2:14–16 (NRSV)**

*Exclusion damages the Church's unity and weakens its public testimony.*

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**36.** Restricting women to domestic roles on theological grounds confuses calling with confinement, turning what should be free vocation into enforced limitation.

**Galatians 3:28 (NRSV) | 1 Corinthians 7:17 (NRSV) | Romans 16:1–7 (NRSV)**

*Scripture recognises diverse vocations for women beyond domestic confinement, including public leadership and ministry.*

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## **VIII. CONCERNING LAW, POWER, AND CONTROL**

**37.** When the state enforces religious rules about gender, belief is no longer chosen freely but imposed by force, replacing faith with compulsion.

**John 18:36 (NRSV) | Galatians 5:1 (NRSV) | 2 Corinthians 3:17 (NRSV)**

*Christian faith is grounded in freedom and allegiance to Christ's kingdom, not enforced conformity by the state.*

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**38.** Laws that focus on controlling women's bodies reveal a theology driven by fear and anxiety, not by trust in God or respect for human dignity.

**2 Timothy 1:7 (NRSV) | Isaiah 33:15–16 (NRSV) | Psalm 112:7 (NRSV)**

*Scripture contrasts fear-driven control with trust in God and respect for human dignity.*

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**39.** Male authority enforced through law rather than practised through love contradicts Christ's teaching that true power serves rather than dominates.

**Matthew 20:25–28 (NRSV) | Mark 10:42–45 (NRSV) | Ephesians 5:25 (NRSV)**

*Christ explicitly rejects coercive authority and redefines leadership as sacrificial love. Authority defined as service, not domination.*

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**40.** Christian nationalism's approach to gender relies on punishment, threat, and exclusion to maintain order, rather than persuasion, care, or moral example.

**Romans 2:4 (NRSV) | 1 Peter 5:2–3 (NRSV) | Colossians 2:20–23 (NRSV)**

*Christian transformation is grounded in persuasion and example, not punishment or intimidation. Leaders are forbidden to 'lord it over' others.*

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**41.** Where obedience is demanded without consent, discipleship collapses into tyranny, and following Christ is replaced by submission to power.

**Philemon 1:8–14 (NRSV) | Matthew 11:28–30 (NRSV) | Romans 14:4 (NRSV)**

*Following Christ is an invitation rooted in conscience and love, not submission enforced by power. Moral good must be voluntary, not compelled.*

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## IX. CONCERNING THE GOSPEL ITSELF

42. Any version of Christianity that requires women to be subordinate in order to keep society stable is not the Gospel of Christ, which brings freedom rather than enforced hierarchy.

**Galatians 5:1 (NRSV) | Luke 4:18–19 (NRSV) | Galatians 3:28 (NRSV)**

*The Gospel is defined by liberation in Christ, not by stabilising society through domination. '...there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.'*

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43. A Church that fears women's freedom and leadership has forgotten the power of the resurrection, which breaks fear, overturns domination, and creates new life.

**Romans 8:11 (NRSV) | 2 Timothy 1:7 (NRSV) | Matthew 28:5–10 (NRSV)**

*Resurrection faith overcomes fear and authorises women as bearers of the Church's central message.*

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44. The exclusion of women is not an accidental flaw but a central tool of authoritarian religion, used deliberately to maintain control and suppress challenge.

**Matthew 20:25–26 (NRSV) | Matthew 23:4 (NRSV) | Colossians 2:20–23 (NRSV)**

*Scripture recognises exclusion and burdening as deliberate tools of domination, not accidental flaws.*

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45. Christian nationalism's fixation on controlling women shows that it has moved away from grace and toward power, using religion to enforce order rather than to offer liberation.

**Romans 2:4 (NRSV) | 2 Corinthians 3:17 (NRSV) | Matthew 11:28–30 (NRSV)**

*Grace draws people freely; power that enforces order betrays the Gospel's character.*

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46. Therefore the subjugation of women must be named honestly and without euphemism: it is not biblical faithfulness, but heresy against the life and teaching of Christ.

**Matthew 23:13 (NRSV) | John 10:10 (NRSV) | Acts 15:10–11 (NRSV)**

*Blocking women's full participation contradicts Christ's life-giving Gospel.*

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47. The defence, minimisation, or concealment of sexual abuse of children — especially by men in positions of authority — is a grave sin. Christ Himself declared that those who harm children face judgment so severe that death would be preferable.

**Matthew 18:5–6 (NRSV) | Mark 9:42 (NRSV) | Luke 17:1–2 (NRSV)**

*'...it would be better for him to have a millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the sea.' Jesus treats harm to children as uniquely grievous, warranting the strongest condemnation.*

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48. The deliberate denial of truthful education to girls about their own bodies — paired with false teaching about obedience and purity — strips them of knowledge needed to recognise danger, preparing children for harm and standing condemned by Christ's severest warning.

**Hosea 4:6 (NRSV) | Proverbs 1:22–23 (NRSV) | John 8:32 (NRSV)**

*'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.' — 'The truth will make you free.'*

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**49. Christians obey governing authorities — except where obedience conflicts with God.**

**Romans 13:1–4 (NRSV) | Acts 5:29 (NRSV) | Daniel 3:16–18 (NRSV)**

*'...be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.' Biblical obedience to the state is conditional and never overrides obedience to God's justice and truth.*

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