

Women in Ministry
Questions for Study / Discussion - *A Few Answers*

This is a topic that has divided many churches / denominations and is currently a hot topic in some evangelical church associations. With the rise and dominance of feminism in our society, it is a topic that does come up. GBC has lost families over our position because the woman wanted to do things beyond what we believe Scripture allows.

According to Genesis 1 & 2:

What is the origin of man? - *God, made from the dust of the ground*

What is the origin of Woman? - *Man, fashioned from Adam's Rib*

What is the specific purpose(s) for which God fashioned Eve from Adam's rib?

To be a helpmeet to Adam in fulfilling God's mandate to him in Genesis 1:28

Is there any difference between men and women their standing before God? (Gal. 3:26-29)

None

Are there any restrictions on spiritual gifts which God might grant to a woman? (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12)

None

What are some of the spiritual ministries women practice that are recorded in the Scriptures?

Prophetess (Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Noadiah, Anna); Judge - Deborah (note - this is a specific period when each "did what was right in their own eyes"; Worship leader of women - Miriam. Hospitality - Martha, Teacher of women - Titus 2:5-6; Prayer - Acts 16:13. There are no Biblical examples of a woman being the leader / overseer / elder / pastor of a church

According to Ephesians 5:22-33, what is the role of the man and what is the role of the woman in marriage? *Husband - sacrificially love wife by leading her into holiness, provide / care as he does for his own body. Wife - voluntarily submit to and respect. Both are to work together in harmony to be a picture of Christ and the church.*

Define the terms "complimentarian" and "egalitarian" in the context of the ministry roles women can have within the church.

Complimentarian - the roles of the man and woman are different from each other but compliment each other in fulfilling God's plan for mankind. In the church, distinction is made on what roles & positions each may hold.

Egalitarian - the roles of man and women are equal to each other without differences other than she can give birth to and suckle her young and he cannot. Other physical differences are considered relative. In the church, the emphasis is on equality of opportunity for women for all roles and positions in all aspects of church life.

According to 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, what are the relative positions God has given to men and women? What should be the attitude of the woman? How would that be demonstrated?

Men are responsible to God to be in the position of headship and therefore to lead.

Women are responsible to be submissive in following the man's leadership. That should be reflected in her attitude toward God, her man and the role God has given her.

Women are to outwardly demonstrate that attitude in dress, action and demeanor

Neither are independent of each other.

According to 1 Timothy 2:9-15, what restrictions does Paul place upon women? What is the reason / origin of those restrictions?

There is a restriction on women teaching or exercising authority over men within the church and home.

1) The reason is the order of creation (vs. 13) which is a reference to the purpose of the fashioning of the women from Adam's rib.

2) Is the greater propensity of women to be deceived - with a reference to the deception of Eve.

According to 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, what restrictions does Paul place upon women? What is the reason for the restrictions? (Be careful of the context)

Women are to be silent in church - and are instead to subject themselves to the church leaders. The specific context is the church and teaching within the church body. This is not a restriction on women singing, praying, working with other women or children. It is not even a restriction of a woman asking questions in a class designed to include that purpose. It would be a restriction on women teaching or seeking to usurp the male preacher / teacher. The example of Priscilla & Aquila is that correction and proper instruction of the teacher is done privately (Acts 18:26).

Can a woman meet the qualifications for an overseer / elder in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:4-9? Explain.

No. She cannot be "the husband of one wife" (a one woman man). A married woman is part of the home managed by her husband - she is not to be the manager of the home over him. She would also end up violating the other scriptural restrictions on teaching and exercising authority over men.

What guidelines would you give to women in regards to ministry in each of the following areas:

Teaching - Teach other women and children

Leadership - Lead other women and children. Lead in ministries that do not require teaching the Scriptures to or exercising Biblical authority over men. With a correct attitude and under the authority of the Elders, this would allow leading in such things as women's ministries, nursery, children's ministries, VBS, aspects of music, administrative tasks, hospitality, etc.

Mixed Public speaking - Do not teach scripture in a mixed audience. - Give testimonies, praise, reports, etc. Prayer groups designed for a mix - not in the general church service for usurps the responsibility of the men to lead. Ask questions in groups specifically designed for that purpose.

What range of ministry responsibility would you grant to a Deaconess ministry? Be specific about the ministries in which they would only help and those in which they would have practical oversight under the authority of the Elders.

Assist / help in any ministry as long as it does not violate restrictions on teaching scriptures / exercising authority over men .

Practical oversight under the authority of the elders can include: Shepherd women, teaching other women, teaching children, hospitality, nursery, meeting practical needs within the congregation (meals, cleaning, physical assistance, transportation, etc.), administrative organization (cleaning, kitchen, office work, library & resources, etc.), visitation / care of sick, financial bookkeeping, music: ensembles and choir - but not directing congregational singing. Basically any ministry / task that does not require teaching scriptures to men or usurp the authority that God has charged to the men in both church & home

Scenario Questions

Someone inquires whether your church has any pastors that are women, and if not, why not?

We believe the scriptures clearly restrict the role and authority of pastors to men. We allow women to pursue ministry in any area that does not violate the restrictions detailed in Scripture - and specifically 1 Timothy 2:12-14 of teaching Scriptures to or exercising Biblical authority over a man in the church. Hand them our Policy on Women in Ministry.

A family that moved to a new area due to a job change is having a hard time finding a church. They have found one they like more than the others, but they discovered it has women on the church Elder Board. What advice would you give them?

Keep looking for a better church. Perhaps this will require re-evaluation of what they are looking for in a church. A smaller church striving to faithfully follow the scriptures including church polity is better than a larger church with more and better programs, better music and perhaps a better orator (good at speaking, but if content is contrary to fundamental / basic Biblical principles, it is not preaching).

A missionary who is a single woman is coming to your church to report on her work? What specific ministry opportunities would you grant to her?

- 1) Give a brief report in the main worship service*
- 2) Have a dinner or other special meeting in which she can give a more detailed report*
- 3) Encourage / arrange for meeting with different groups in the congregation to meet her and hear what God has been doing in her ministry.*
- 4) If her ministry included teaching women or children, an opportunity to do so with similar groups within the church*

A single woman in your church is pursuing full time missions work. What advice regarding her role would you give her for work in helping to plant a church? How can she use her superior Bible knowledge and yet not usurp the role of the men?

- 1) Don't go it alone. Go as a part of a team for church planting which includes a man that can teach*
- 2) Concentrate on ministries to women and general evangelism.*
- 3) If you end up in a situation in which you have superior Bible knowledge than the men, follow the example of Priscilla in Acts 18 of equipping Apollos with a better understanding of Scripture*

How can a wife who has greater Bible knowledge and Christian maturity use her abilities and spiritual gifts without usurping the responsibilities of her husband?

Have a humble attitude and follow the example of Priscilla in Acts 18. Instruct him, but also encourage him to take the lead. Men can be lazy, so if the wife is not careful, he will simply let her do it. You may have to give him the materials, but have him do it.

How can a woman who is a talented musician and has theological discernment minister to the congregation in public worship services? How would you advise her? What restrictions would you place upon her? *Use the talent to present music that is theologically sound in any forum open to her. That could include writing songs. Encourage others to think carefully about the theological content of the music they present. Encourage the music director. Restriction: Leading the congregation. Making teaching comments about / between songs to a mixed audience.*

A woman with a Bible degree in theology starts attending your church. She insists that Paul was a chauvinist and that you are one too if you restrict women from using their spiritual gifts. She likes to point out Galatians 3:28 that there is neither male nor female in the church because all Christians are one in Christ Jesus. She also likes to point out that Deborah was a judge (Judges 4), that Miriam, Huldah and Anna were all prophetesses. How will you respond to her?

Let her know that she was not trained well in getting her Bible degree. Send her back to those same Scriptures and challenge her to interpret them in both in the historical and grammatical context and if those examples apply to the church. She will have to be able to defend her position from using that hermeneutic before I will give her my time. If she makes the attempt, I will work with her teaching her proper hermeneutics along the way. If she is unwilling, I will tell her she is welcome to continue to attend the church, but her theology is contrary to the church's position and will not be accepted here. She either attends knowing that or needs to find another church. If she seeks to persuade others to her position we will follow Romans 14 and mark her as a divisive woman in the process of church discipline.

A man who has started attending your church begins to talk about the Bible teachers he likes to listen to and who have helped him understand Jesus and Christianity. He lists some that are very solid, and then also mentions several women whom you know consider themselves to be public preachers and some even have the title of "Pastor." How will you deal with him?

A lot will depend on the man's attitude. It is not necessary to directly attack the women "pastors" immediately, for God has even used heretics to bring people to a greater understanding of himself. Using some stories of such use of such Biblical unqualified teachers will help smooth the transition to gently instructing him on what the Scriptural qualifications are for Pastors - and that women cannot meet them, therefore women claiming to be such are to be held suspect in their teaching even if they get some of the basics of the gospel correct. Encourage him to listen to good male preachers.