

Session Three:

Equal Yet Different in the Church

I. Equality in the Church

A. Salvation is available to all, without distinction

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28)

1. **Background of Galatians:** Judaizers (Jewish believers) infiltrated newly planted churches in a region called Galatia (modern day Turkey). They taught that the Gentiles needed to obey the Law of Moses to be saved. In Gal. 3:1-29, Paul is refuting this false gospel.
2. **In context, this verse is about the blessings of salvation to all.**
 - a. Gal. 3:6-9: Like Abraham, justification comes by faith. All who believe, Jews and Gentiles, are “sons of Abraham” and receive the blessing of Abraham.
 - b. Gal. 3:10-14: Righteousness comes by faith in Christ’s atoning work, not by in trusting the law. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. Those who put their trust in the law are still under a curse.
 - c. Gal. 3:15-18: Because the inheritance is based on a promise, the Mosaic Law cannot nullify God’s covenant promises to Abraham. The promise predated the law by 430 years and came through Abraham’s “offspring”, which is Christ.

- d. Gal. 3:19-22: The law was temporary until the promised “offspring” Jesus Christ had come. The law could not impart righteousness, it only imprisoned everyone under sin.
- e. Gal. 3:23-25: Paul’s final argument points to the role of the law now that Christ has come. The law acted like a guardian. Its purpose was to lead us to Christ. Now that Christ has come, the law (the guardian) is no longer necessary.
- f. Gal. 3:26-28: Paul says that ALL believers who trust in Christ Jesus by faith are justified and adopted as sons of God. Gender (male/female), ethnicity (Jew/Greek), social status (slave/free) makes no difference in receiving the blessings of salvation and sonship. (Gal. 3:28). In addition, this is the first time the concept of “in Christ” appears.

B. Ministry is done by both men and women

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...” (Eph. 4:11-12)

1. **Scope of Ministry:** “Ministry” is not confined to care group leaders, ministry team leaders or pastors. All Christians, men and women – young and old – are called to do ministry for the good of the church.
 - a. Ministry includes hospitality, serving, encouraging, praying helping, sharing God’s word, giving to those in need, singing, counseling, correcting, loving, rescuing, ... and so on.
 - b. All Christians, male and female, have spiritual gifts that should be used to minister to one another.

C. Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to both men and women

*"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."
(1 Cor. 12:7)*

"Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them..." (Rom. 12:6)

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace..." (1 Pet. 4:10)

1. **Principles from these verses:** In these and other verses, Peter and Paul make the point that no one gift is better than anyone else's gift. They are all gifts of God's Spirit. They also make the point that no one gender is favored in the distribution of gifts. All believers, male and female, have received one or more spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit and are to faithfully "steward" them (or use them) for the "common good" of God's people.

II. Different Roles in the Church

A. 1 Timothy 2:8-15

1. **Background of 1 Timothy:** Timothy was residing in Ephesus and had pastoral leadership responsibilities for this church. To help Timothy faithfully lead this church, Paul has written Timothy instructions and advice about dealing with false teachers and about issues of church order and church life.
2. **What does "learn quietly with all submissiveness" mean?**
 - a. Observation #1: In the context, "quiet/quietly" means peaceful, tranquil, unruffled, content.
 - b. Observation #2: "Submissiveness is a willingness to place oneself under the oversight and authority of another. This is the same word used to describe the wife's role and posture toward her husband.

- c. Observation #3: The quietness that Paul is calling for is over and against the exercise of authority.
- d. Conclusion: The role Paul is advocating for women in the church is similar to her role in marriage: she is to support, to encourage, and to defer to the men who are called to lead and teach in the church.
- e. John Piper defines “quiet” as not “speaking in a way that compromises the exercise of authority or the exercise of teaching.”

**3. What does Paul mean by “I do not permit a woman to teach”?
(Does Scripture categorically forbid women from teaching?)**

- a. Titus 2:3-4 *“older women... are to teach what is good, and so train the young women...”* Older women are to teach younger women how to love, serve and care for their husbands and children.
- b. 2 Tim. 3:14 *“...continue in what you have learned...knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings.”* 2 Tim. 1:5 implies that he was taught by his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois, as Timothy’s father was a pagan.
- c. Acts 18:26 *“He [Apollos] began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”* Here, you have a woman, along with her husband expounding the Old Testament Scriptures to Apollos.
- d. Paul’s prohibition in 1 Tim. 2:12 is set in the context of the gathered church. He does not permit women to publicly teach Scripture to men in the formal church gatherings. “Paul makes this distinction because teaching the church is not just a matter of passing on information, it includes exercising authority over those who taught.” (Alexander Strauch, *Men and Women, Equal Yet Different*, p. 77)

4. What does Paul mean by, “I do not permit a woman... to exercise authority over a man”?

- a. Feminist interpreters say this verb “authenteo” (“exercise authority”) means to “misuse authority,” “to instigate violence,” “to domineer” or “usurp authority.” Thus they believe that Paul is forbidding women from domineering, usurping or abusing men’s authority when they teach.
- b. Scholars have shown extensively this is an incorrect interpretation. The verb “authenteo” means “to have authority over.” Therefore Paul forbids women from leading or governing the local church.
- c. Scripture teaches that the elders (overseers, pastors/shepherds) of the church are to be men: “husbands of one wife,” (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6). “He must manage his own household well...” (1 Tim. 3:4). They have been tasked to govern (1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Pet. 5:2-3), protect (Acts 20:29-31; Titus 1:9), care for (Acts 20:28), watch over (Acts 20:28), lead by example (1 Pet. 5:3b) and teach (see above scriptures) God’s people.
- d. Summary: this passage doesn’t imply that women have no ability to teach or lead. A woman may be a very gifted schoolteacher, a business owner (like Lydia) or doctor. But when the church gathers, male elders take the lead in teaching and governing the church and men and women submit to and defer to that leadership. In this way, the church displays the relationship of headship and submission of Christ and His church.

5. What is Paul’s rationale for these commands?

- a. Paul backs up his argument with two reasons that are rooted in the Creation account and the Fall.
 - i. **Reason #1: Order of Creation.** 1 Tim. 2:13 “For Adam was formed first, then Eve.” The first-born was accorded special rights in the family and had responsibility for leadership and headship if the father died.

ii. **Reason #2: Eve was the one deceived.** 1 Tim. 2:14, “and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” This has been interpreted in two ways:

1. Paul might be making a statement about the nature of women, namely that they are more easily deceived than men.
2. Paul could also be making a statement about what happened when roles were reversed in the Garden. Adam sinned by abdicating leadership and Eve sinned by taking leadership. In highlighting the difference, Paul may be basing his argument in God’s original design for male and female, which was overturned in the Fall.

6. What does Paul mean that women “will be saved through childbearing.”

- a. “Giving birth is one of the ways in which a woman demonstrates obedience to her God-given identity. Instead of casting off all order and decency, a godly woman embraces her true identity in dressing modestly, learning quietly, bearing children, and continuing in faith, love and holiness. Understandably, some women will not have children because of medical reason or singleness, but in so far as it is possible, childbearing is one of the unique ways in which a woman can accept in obedience her God-given role.” (Kevin DeYoung, *Freedom and Boundaries*, p. 87).

III. Conclusion

A. The Scriptures paint a picture of ministry that is liberating.

1. **All are ministers:** For men and women who desire to minister, the fields of opportunity are endless. God intends the whole church to be on active duty making an impact for the Kingdom of God.
2. **Some are leaders:** God has called a few men (qualified by character, gifting and calling) to take primary responsibility as servant-leaders to govern and teach the church. These elders (pastors) are to equip the saints for the hundreds of ministries for both men and women to serve in for the cause of Christ.

B. Resources

1. ESV Study Bible (footnotes)
2. *Freedom and Boundaries, A Pastoral Primer on the Role of Women in the Church*, Kevin DeYoung
3. *Men and Women, Equal Yet Different*, Alexander Strauch