

Pastoral Leadership
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“The Role of Women in Ministry”

As media attention focused on Southern Baptist Convention messengers in Orlando, Florida, and especially on actions there to label the concept of women in ministry as unbiblical and to encourage a more centralized notion of doctrine, American Baptist Churches USA General Secretary Daniel E. Weiss issued a statement urging all Baptists to reaffirm those great Baptist principles and understandings that have enabled the gifts of Spirit-inspired men and women to powerfully serve in all areas of ministry, the cause of Christ.

Weiss cited many American Baptists' historic commitment to women in ministry. In particular he noted the American Baptist Policy Statement on Women and Men As Partners in Church and Society, passed by the denomination's General Board in 1985. In part that statement affirms that the Gospel of Jesus Christ liberates all persons, female and male, to serve in any ministry to which they have been called by God and for which they have God-given talents...women, as well as men, should have access to and serve at all levels of church and society...¹

In another book written by a good friend of mine, entitled “When She hears the Call”, this statement is made in the forward by Dr. Ella Pearson Mitchell, Veteran Theologian at the United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, She says;

Today's belated awareness of the harassment of females must include one more atrocity. Women in ministry all too often have to endure being viciously stripped of their hearing of what they know to be the very voice of God. Unlike any other spiritual gift they might have, their vocation of preaching dare not be made public. The pressures of culture and sexism impede even their very inward recognition of the call.

Male-made traditions about women's place in the kingdom service; the vigorous opposition of other women; and the continuing demands of parenthood all conspire to thwart the very hearing, to say nothing of answering, the voice of God. Small wonder that any woman manages to survive the call.²

¹ Website Women in Ministry, Article entitled, American Baptist Churches General Secretary Opposes SBC Revision, copyright 2000, Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc.

² Green, Jackie L., When She Hears the Call, The Kuumba House Communications and Publication, Phoenix, Az., copyright 1997, forward.

The role of women in ministry has never been an issue for me. The issue of harassment or stripping women of their God-given right to serve with their gifts and talents have never been the examples or paradigms that were taught or demonstrated to me both in ministry experience or in Biblical research. Throughout Biblical history the Bible has clearly documented and chronicled the role of women and how God used them in his plan of redemption and reconciliation of man. Women have been used strategically and dramatically by God to fulfill His purpose and to deliver His message of salvation. From the Old Testament to the New, we see women serving and working for God in various roles throughout the spiritual and secular society.

God used women in ministry throughout the Bible. A cursory review of the roles women played and how God used them in those roles will verify and settle, at least the issue of whether or not, God uses women in ministry.

God used Women in Ministry and the founding of the Church.

As stated earlier, God has used women in ministry from the Old Testament to the New, and in this section we want to do cursory review and present a few women who are examples of how God used women in ministry. These women will not only show how there is no gender restriction with who God uses, they also will show specifically how and where God uses women, then and now. In the Old Testament the women referred to are, first, Deborah found in Judges chapter 4 and 5. Her roles are identified as follows, she was a wife, a Prophetess, an Agitator, meaning to stir up or excite public discussion with the view of producing a change. She stirred Israel up to be concerned about its low spiritual condition. She was a Ruler and a Judge. She was a warrior, having fought with words she went forth to throw off the oppressor's yoke with a sword. She was a Poetess

and she was a maternal figure, as the “mother of Israel” (5:7). Then there is, Esther, who was a Queen, who saved her nation from genocide as God used her for such a time as that to bring deliverance to her people. Finally there is, Miriam found in Exodus 15:20,21; Numbers 12:1-15; 20:1; 26:59; Deuteronomy 24:9 and Micah 6:4; she was the sister of Moses and Aaron, her roles are identified as a Poetess and Prophetess, as she served along side of her brothers.

Other women referred to are found in the New Testament, women such as Anna, found in Luke 2:36-38, who became the first Christian missionary. She was the daughter of Phanuel or Penuel, she was very old and a widow. She served the Lord in the following roles as a Prophetess, with fasting and prayer and through public witness. Then there was Chloe found in I Corinthians 1:10, 11, who hosted and possible lead a home Bible study. Claudia of II Timothy 4:21, whom Paul referred to as a Chief and honorable woman of gentle origin who had heard and believed the Gospel and who possible supported the ministry of Paul financially. For the Scriptures says she greatly encouraged the Apostle Paul in his labor for the Master he dearly loved. Then there was Dorcas, also known as Tabitha, who is found in Acts 9:36-43, whose dressmaking made her famous and helped to further the Gospel ministry. She was a devout Christian businesswoman, who was greatly loved and was raised from the dead. Who also may have support the ministry of Paul financially. Other women were Joanna and Susanna mentioned in Luke 8:1-3; 23:55; and 24:10, who were healed by Christ and served him by financially supporting his ministry and serving him and his disciples throughout their ministry. Not to mention the countless others who served God where he wanted and supported the expansion of

Gospel throughout the then known world. Women like those mentioned by Paul in Romans Chapter 16, which reads;

- 1 I commend unto you **Phebe** our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:
- 2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.
- 3 Greet **Priscilla** and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:
- 4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.
- 6 **Greet Mary**, who bestowed much labour on us.
- 7 Salute Andronicus and **Junia**, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.
12. Salute **Tryphena and Tryphosa**, who labour in the Lord.
13. Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, **and his mother and mine**.
- 15 Salute Philologus, and **Julia, Nereus, and his sister**,

All these women were used by God in the ministry and in the founding of the Church.

But to the question, Does God use women in all the roles in the ministry? My answer would have to be, No! There is at least one role in the ministry that I do not believe that God uses women. The role of Pastor/Elder or as JKV puts it the office of the Bishop.

Does God Use Women in All the Roles in Ministry? No!

The Role of Pastor/Elder/Bishop as described I Timothy 3 is a role that, both biblically and ministerially, is not for women. As describe earlier God uses women and He uses them where and when he chooses, but in the role of leadership of the church body I find no precedent and no biblical background. Why? That 's God 's order; just as in a marriage relationship God choose the man to be the leader or head of his household (Genesis 2; I Corinthians 11:1-3 and 11 and Ephesians 5). So God choose the man to be the head of his body the Church. The examples given earlier set no precedent or give no examples of women as a priest or in any leadership role in the synagogue or in the early Church organization.

I Timothy 3:1- 2 in KJV states, “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach.” The Greek word for **man** is the word;

“**εί τις**”, conditional expression from ei (1487), if, and tis (5100), any. Literally meaning, If any, if someone, used with the sort of emphasis for hóstis (3748), whosoever, whatsoever, everyone who. ³

This word is also found in the Greek in what is called the “**Indefinite Pronoun**” which means that it does not refer to any specific person or persons. It corresponds to the English indefinite pronoun.

The question that this word study brings to mind is, who is the, someone, anyone, whosoever, or the everyone who, that Paul is referring to? To stop at this word would give the idea and impression that man or woman can become a Pastor/ Elder/ Bishop. Yet I would not have a problem with that, if contextually this were consistent throughout the text. But where Paul draws the line in his instructions to Timothy is in verse two, as he begins to describe the characteristics and qualifications needed for one who desires this office. The word Paul uses for “**Husband**” is the defining demarcation as to who can serve in this office. The word in the Greek is the word;

“**Aner**”; gen. andrós, masc. noun. Man, husband.

(I) A man, i.e, an adult male person.

(A) Males as distinguished from females (Matt. 14:21; 15:38; Luke 1:34). Spoken of men in various relations and circumstances where the context determines the proper meaning; e.g., husband. ⁴

³ Zodiates, Spiros, The Complete Word Study New Testament with Greek Parallel, AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN., copyright 1992.

⁴ Ibid.

As opposed to using the word “**εί τις**” or even “**anthropos**”, which either could refer to male or female. Thus, giving the understanding that the text does not contextually agree with the idea of women being in the office of Pastor/Elder/Bishop, which in the Greek is “**episkopos**”, which refers to watchman, superintendent, or more commonly overseer. Also all the following characteristics and qualifications are consistent with gender implication as being masculine.

I further believe that reason for this, is that it is consistent with God’s order of responsibility and accountability regarding the family (I Corinthians 11:11). Especially as it is the first institution established by God. In the home man is to love and care for his wife as Christ loves and cares for the church, and the wife is to submit and respect/reverence her husband even as she would submit and respect/reverence Christ (Ephesians 5). Yet in Hebrews 13:17 we read, Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

Thus if women are allowed to lead as a Pastor/Elder/Bishop’s in the church, then men, including their husbands, would have to Obey her rule and submit to it, as scripture requires. Yet, if she is married and a Pastor/Elder/Bishop at home she would have to submit to husband and at church he would have to obey her, which in my opinion would create a measure of conflict and confusion.

In Summary, I believe God uses women in ministry. Strategically and dramatically in various positions in society and in the church, yet, in the church there is one position that

God has left specially for men and that is the office of Pastor/Elder/Bishop as outlined in I Timothy 3.

Policy Statement on the Role of Women in Ministry

Concerning the subject of Women in Ministry; We at Ecclesia Christian Fellowship believe that God uses women in ministry strategically and dramatically to fulfill His redemptive plan for mankind. We believe that throughout the Bible God gives illustration after illustration of how He uses women to fulfill his plan and to do His will as need. Women are used in various roles of Leadership and partnership with men to accomplish His purpose and the titles and roles vary from Queens to Judges, from Prophetess to Poetess, from Soldier to servant and Prayer Partner to Bible study host and leader. Particularly in the New Testament God used women to further the expansion of Gospel and for the support of the organized Church (Luke 2).

Ecclesia recognizes that God has gifted and called women to serve Him in these last day, even to the proclamation of gospel according to Joel 2. Yet, Ecclesia also holds the belief, according to I Timothy 3, that women, although gifted, called and used by God in various roles, are not called to be Pastors/Elders or Bishops. We believe that God has reserved this position for men, because of the order in which He set up (I Corinthians 11:11), beginning with the family with the man as the head. Because the relationship between Pastor and congregation are similar, as representing the family, the same order applies and to do otherwise is to contradict God's order and to be in disobedience to His word.

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