

The Role of Christian Women in the Church

I Corinthians 11 & 14

INTRODUCTION: Each year church's from our denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, sends messengers to the Annual Meeting. During that meeting we hear reports from various entities, seminaries, mission boards, etc. We also tackle challenges faced by our churches around the world.

This year there arose a concern about one of the largest churches in our denomination - Saddleback Church in Lake Forrest California. The founding Pastor Rick Warren, author of the Purpose Driven Life is nearing his retirement. When it came time to select a replacement, the Elders of the Church selected a Husband and Wife team to lead Saddleback into the future - Andy and and Stacie Wood.

A messenger had previously asked the credentials committee to look into the appointing of the wife, Stacie as one of the Lead Pastors of Saddleback due to **ARTICLE 11** in the **Baptist Faith and Message** which states, *"(the Church's) scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture."*

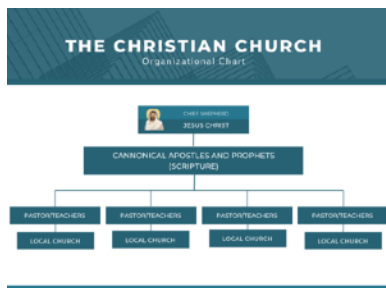
The **credentials committee** reported back stating that they needed to seek more clarity on what exactly constitutes a **PASTOR**. Folks, if our leaders don't know what a Pastor is, we have big problems as a denomination.

Common Doctrine is meaningless without a Common Dictionary

Saddleback was not reprimanded or discouraged in any way from its appointment of a Female Pastor despite the Doctrinal Statement to the contrary.

I cannot speak for where Southern Baptists or any network of churches will land on these things. I can, however, teach you what the Bible says. And that really is where our focus needs to be - ***Denominations come and go, but the Word of the Lord endures forever.***

A reporter once chastised **Billy Graham** saying, *"your religious convictions have set the church back 50 years"* to which Dr. Graham replied, *"Well that's a shame, I'm trying to set it back 2,000 years"*.



Notice this **ORG** chart for the **Christian Church**. This is how we are to function. Our mandate is not to, "keep in step" with culture. Our mandate is to obediently follow Jesus and to subject ourselves to the Authority of Scripture.

Of course there are issues the scriptures don't directly address (style of music, the times when we meet, etc) for those God gave us Pastors to wisely apply the principles of scripture in a way that best furthers our primary mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

So progress is not our goal - faithfulness is

Well in the words of that great Montana theologian **John Dutton**, *"if it's progress you seek, I'm not your man. I am the opposite of progress. I am the wall that progress bashes against it, and I will not be the one who breaks."*

Why? Because friend one day we will appear before Jesus Christ and we will be held accountable for our administration, our stewardship of HIS Kingdom.

So what about the issue of a woman's role in the church? Should a woman be a Pastor? Should a woman seek to preach the sermon on the Lord's day?

Let's do our best to lay aside all preferences, all traditions and honestly ask ourselves, "what do the scriptures teach?"

CONTEXT: When the first letter to the church at Corinth was written, A feminist movement was sweeping the Greco Roman World. It seemed to take root most effectively in the City of Corinth. The Patron goddess of the city was Aphrodite, the female Goddess of Love.

What is the problem with that?

- Well the chief problem was in the **home**. The family unit began to break down.
- Disorder in the Family leads to Disintegration in the **Church**. The Lord's Day gathering was disorderly and chaotic. Pastors could not lead and the body was falling apart.

This is the concern that Paul is addressing in chapter 11 -

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 11:1–16 (ESV)

¹ Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

So there you see, that Paul begins by aligning himself under the authority of Jesus Christ. It's very important - you can't lead others effectively until you first lead yourself. Men we will talk more about this tonight.

² Now I commend you because you remember me in everything **and maintain the traditions** even as I delivered them to you.

So as Paul was under the Authority of Christ, we align our church under Paul's authority. You see, Jesus never wrote a word that we have record of. The only evidence we have of him writing was in the sand and we don't know what he wrote. ALL WE HAVE.

Interestingly, Paul doesn't begin to speak to the disorder in the **CHURCH** first, Paul starts with the **FAMILY**.

You see, that's where the battle is fought - in the home.

Disorder in the home, leads to disintegration in the church.

1 Corinthians 11:3 (ESV)

³ But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ,

The Word, "head" means leader. Jesus is the sanctioned leader of every man.

the head of a wife is her husband,

It does not say - the head of a women is men in general, but rather the head of the WIFE is her HUSBAND, very particular.

I would never tell my daughters to, "just do whatever men say". That's very bad advice. You are not called to submit to men everywhere. But God did ordains authorities or leaders -

In the home - it's the husband

In the church - it is the Pastors

In the workplaces - it is the Boss or Owner.

In the government - we have police officers, city officials, state officials, federal officials, etc.

If you can't follow the loving leadership of your husband, you will have difficulty following the leadership of every other legitimate authority.

and the head of Christ is God

If anyone in all of history was able to say - I don't have to submit to Authority it was Jesus Christ. Yet, he willingly, faithfully, submitted to the will of His Father, even to death. "NOT MY WILL, BUT THINE". So this was no sign of weakness, but rather faithfulness, propriety and order.

I've never seen a church where the ladies are more honoring, supportive, and encouraging to their husbands. It is very rare that you will hear a woman speaking ill of her husband. That is to your great credit and I honor you for that. If this is a struggle of any of you - seek to correct that.

Then in verse 4 Paul speaks to the place of cultural norms...

⁴ Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, ⁵ but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven.

Ok, so that was the cultural tradition for gender. When performing a religious service - men would uncover their head, women would cover.

- Today if you visit Israel you will see that men wear the Kippah, or skull cap especially when praying. That was not the case in Paul's day. That practice started in the 17th and 18th century. In Paul's day it was considered dishonorable for a man to cover his head while praying.
- Married Jewish Women, would wear a head covering in the presence of their husbands as a sign of willing voluntary subjection to her husbands leadership.

Apparently this was the tradition in the Corinthian Church as well.

⁶ For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. ⁷ For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.

Paul teaches the men and women of the Church of Corinth to acknowledge and adhere to ***cultural norms related to gender***. In other words respect and embrace your God given gender roles.

- **If you are a guy** - make every effort to embrace your masculinity. If you want to know how to do that better - ***COME TONIGHT at 6pm to the Biblical Manhood Conference***. I will assume that everyone who truly sees themselves as a man will be there. If you are not there, we will certainly pray for your masculinity.
- **If you are a gal** - make every effort to embrace femininity.
- If you are raising a **son**, teach him to embrace his masculinity and a **daughter** her femininity.

ALSO, Notice in **VERSE 4** that it seems that in the context of the Church at Corinth there were times in the local assembly that

- MEN PRAYED and times that WOMEN PRAYED.
- MEN PROPHESED and times that WOMEN PROPHESED

Prayer is talking to God about People, Prophecy is talking to People about God.

Prophecy is not to be understood primarily as foretelling the future, although it may include that, but rather forth telling God's word. Sometimes men did that sometimes women did that - ***yet they were to each do that while honoring their gender role and embracing the appropriate cultural norms.***

⁸ For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. ⁹ Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.

How do we reconcile the fact that Paul acknowledges both men and women praying and prophesying with teaching of 1 Timothy 2:11–15 (ESV)

¹¹ Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority **OVER** a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.

I've never seen that verse on a coffee mug, or a tshirt. It has historically been one of the most controversial verses in Christian history.

The source of the confusion is whether when Paul says, "teach or exercise authority" he is referring to two different things or one single thing.

In other words is Paul saying, *"I don't let women teach OR exercise authority over a man"*

OR is Paul saying, *"I don't let a woman exercise authority over a man, which in the context of the Christian church is primarily done through teaching"?*

The church I grew up in, would not allow a woman to ever lead in prayer certainly not teach. Other churches seem to think this verse doesn't prohibit a woman doing ANYTHING a man can do.

Here is where I'm at - The verse has to be prohibiting something. I tend to believe it is referring to a woman teaching in authority OVER a man. This would be in keeping with the fact that at Corinth women both prayed and prophesied. This would also be in keeping with the 1st Timothy command that a PASTOR is to be the husband of one wife, a male.

The emphasis is on the word **OVER**...The role of a Pastor or Elder is a position of authority in scripture. The Pastors are to give **Doctrinal** and **Practical** leadership for the church. Paul did not allow Christian women to fill that role.

Notice he roots his position in CREATION and in the FALL.

¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve;

So God created the woman to complete the man, not the other way around. She was to be a helper to him, making him a better man and a better leader.

¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

This is NOT saying that the woman was in some way more gullible, it IS saying that when Adam and Eve disordered their roles that Satan capitalized on the disorder. The same thing happens to families today.

NOW - The topic of gender roles in the Church comes up again in **Chapter 14**.

1 Corinthians 14:33–35 (ESV)

³³ For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴ the women should ***keep silent*** in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. ³⁵ If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. ***For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.***

Now how are we to **reconcile** the fact that in Chapter 11, Paul commanded the women, that if they are **Praying** (talking to God about humanity) or **Prophecying** (Talking to Humanity about God) they are to do so while embracing readily understood cultural norms with this command to keep silent?

- Does Paul mean that women shouldn't speak at all in the Church? Don't say, "Hello" or "excuse me"? Stay quiet.
- What about singing? Even today several women sang truth with electronic amplification.
- How are women to pray or prophecy at all if they must remain silent?

Paul is saying - they literally must be silent. **But rather Paul is referring to speaking as one in authority. Don't function in the role of Pastor. Leave that function and role to God called, qualified men.**

Here at First Baptist - we would not exist without the faithful women of this congregation. They serve in a variety of positions.

- **Committees or Teams** - We have women who serve on the Stewardship Team, the Personnel team. I recommend that women serve on all of our committees because they see things men don't see.
- We have fantastic women **teachers**. We have ladies who travel and speak, several authors, informally I've learned much from these ladies as they share insights from the Word of God. Here at this Church the Sunday morning teaching is so tied to the office and authority of the Pastor, that we don't have ladies speak on Sunday mornings. Not because they wouldn't do a fantastic job, but because convictional we see that as the Primary responsibility of the Pastor.
- Every day have women to teach children
- We have women who teach and mentor teen girls
- We have women who serve as greeters
- Women lead in prayer from the stage
- Privately, if a woman sees a man is out of line biblically, she has every right and even RESPONSIBILITY to challenge him and call him out. In **Acts 18** we see this when Aquila and Pricilla reprovved the errant Apollos for teaching a works based Gospel.

- Scripture gives NO restrictions to secular offices that a lady may hold. A woman mayor, governor, senator, president is NOT a problem. Deborah eventually became the political leader, the “president” of Israel (Judges 4). Women can be executives, presidents of banks, you name it.

CONCLUSION:

- **God told EVE, you may eat freely of all of the trees in the garden except for one.**
- **God tells ladies of the church, you may serve freely in all roles, except for one.**

- **Let me ask you men** - are you fulfilling the role God has called you to fulfill in the home? In the Church? In the Community? If not - step up and lead. Lead yourself first... a good place to lead yourself is to our Biblical Manhood Conference tonight at 6PM.

- **Ladies** - understand, Jesus Christ has not diminished your role in the Kingdom, He has maximized it.

- Jesus, the Eternal Son of God, entered the world via a woman. That in itself was significant. He could have simply materialized. He didn't.
- Jesus allowed a woman with a 12 year menstruation to touch him, then commended her for her faith. No Rabbi in Jesus day would have been anywhere close to her.
- His conversation with the Samaritan Woman at the well for example was shocking to her as well as those who saw it.
- Mary sat at the feet of Jesus as a student would sit below a Rabbi. It was very counter cultural.
- Martha and Mary were two of Jesus' closest friends.
- In the Synagog's of Jesus day men and women are taught separately but Jesus taught them together as did the church.
- On the first Easter Sunday the first people to witness the resurrection of Christ were women. The first proclaimer of the resurrection was a woman.
- Keep in mind that in first century Judaism women had been treated like a combination of a household slave and a concubine. Men were permitted to divorce their wives for any reason - yet Jesus significant raised the requirements for divorce as we saw in a previous sermon.

Paul made statements like Galatians 3:26-28 (ESV)

²⁶ for in Christ Jesus **you are all sons of God**, through faith.... ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, **there is no male and female**, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Some have sought to create gender neutral versions of the Bible. Doing so would be a great disservice to our sisters in Christ. Remember, the daughters had no right of inheritance in most ancient cultures, but this passage elevates male and female followers of Christ to the level of SONS.

So men and women have a completely equal standing before God in the church. No superiority no inferiority. My two daughters are not less valuable to the Kingdom than my one son.

However we see certain clues from even in the ministry of Jesus that the ***standing is equal but the roles are different.***