

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. **Enjoy discovering more about Him!**

"GENDER IN A HEALTHY CHURCH" | ACTS 18:25 | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

Who is an example of a strong woman of faith that comes to mind?

"A DISPARITY ISSUE And A JUSTICE ISSUE" (Isaiah 61:8)

Pastor Brian shares that it's easy to see gender disparity in other religions of the world but not as easy in our own community.

What issues about women's roles and responsibilities are there in our community?

"A BIBLICAL ISSUE" (Judges 4:4)

Throughout the Bible, from the ancient tribes of Judah to the house churches in Roman empire, there are women serving in all kinds of roles with all kinds of gifts. **What does this show about God? What does that mean for His followers today?**

"A CULTURAL ISSUE" (Luke 10: 38-41)

Jesus was counter-cultural at times with His interaction with women, having them be the first witnesses and messengers of His resurrection or allowing Mary to learn with the other disciples. **What are ways to know when it's good to go against the culture and when to be culturally sensitive?**

REFLECTION QUESTION:

God gave women all kinds of roles and responsibilities throughout history and continues to do so today. **How have you benefitted from women of faith? How can you encourage women to pursue God's gifting and calling for them? Pray that God will give you opportunities to encourage and challenge others this week.**

Gender in a Healthy Church

I. Announce:

- A. Welcome to those **online** and in the *additional seating* area.
- B. **Slide1 Food Pantry:** Let's help stock our local MURRIETA Community pantry. We are collecting **cereal, canned veggies, and soup**. Please no expired items. You can bring the food to church on the **Sun, Oct.15 & 22**, or office during the week.
- C. **Slide2a Israel** - (deadliest Terrorist attack in their history) I reached out to **Guy** our friend/guide. His response: *Hello Pastor, So good to hear from you! I hope Kelly and you are doing good. We are safe and secure, I am actually **guiding a group**. But in Israel the general atmosphere is very bad. One of the worst days in the history of Israel. This is our 9/11 or Pearl Harbor.*
1. **Slide2b Prayer for Members of the Israel Defense Force:** *He Who blessed our forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - may He bless the fighters of the Israel Defense Force, who stand guard over our land and the cities of our God from the border of the Lebanon to the desert of Egypt, and from the Great Sea unto the approach of the Aravah, on the land, in the air, and on the sea. May Hashem cause the enemies who rise up against us to be struck down before them. May the Holy One, Blessed is He, preserve and rescue our fighting men from every trouble and distress and from every plague and illness, and may He send blessing and success in their every endeavor. May He lead our enemies under their sway and may He grant them salvation and crown them with victory. And may there be fulfilled for them the verse: For it is Hashem, your God, Who goes with you to battle your enemies for you to save you. Now let us respond: Amen.*
- D. **Prayer:** Israel. Nepal.

II. Slide3a Intro: Gender in a Healthy Church

- A. We finished 2 Thes, & will be starting Corinthians next sun. Today/Topical.

1. I want to discuss women's spiritual **giftings** and **biblical roles** here at CM, to create a healthy church.
2. It's been on my heart to share with you **positive changes** we've made in the last few years.

B. Walk with me this morning on my journey.

1. Twice I've sat on the plane bound to **Israel**, where a very religious rabbi, kept the whole plane from taking off. **Reason**, because he would not sit next to a woman (the 2nd time it was a lady on our team). **After** rearranging seats we were able to take off. **But** that wasn't right. **Yet** he seemed pretty proud of **his stance** for **holiness**. (*where has the church done the same?*)
2. I've been studying this topic these last 4-5 years, reading books, good conversations with the board, good conversations with Jen who has asked me the best questions, asking other pastors their thoughts. I also thought before I shared on it **that** I had to have it **all** figured out. **So I sat Paralyzed**. **But** I would like to share now what I'm proud of.
 - a) We **shifted** our **organizational culture**: Not only looking for the best "**man**" for the job, **but instead** truly **the best person** for the job.
 - b) We started giving women **titles & benefits** that match their level leadership (not trying to tuck them under a male pastor *just for optics sake*, if they really weren't)
 - c) There's definitely been a thick culture in the **church at large** that women bump up against.
 - d) I invited women in to my non-negotiables monthly mtg (next gen leaders, *notes in a bottle*)
 - e) **And I am thinking about the next generation of young ladies also**, those in here this morning, **and** to you parents ... *your daughters*.

C. **Brian what's your goal in sharing on this?** My goal is to **I want to value & dignify** every person here at CM. **I want to honor & celebrate women** like **Jesus & Paul** did. **And I want to** open the conversation, to talk about, and lead through this topic *with you the congregation*.

D. **Brian what's your fears?** My fears are ... you sitting there worrying about, *Oh no!* **What is CM is going to do, or where we are going!**

1. Relax, I simply want to share what we've **been doing**, and why.
- E. Brian are you going to start ordaining women? No, that's not what this is about.
1. In the past, if I had **Kelly** teach (1x) or **Jen** come up and share about *Building on Faith*, people have been so rude, and say such mean things to them, or others, but never to me? I want to make myself *more approachable* if that's the problem. I want to encourage anyone, come talk to me. I don't have all the answers, but *neither do most*, so let's talk.
 - a) Not *fight* about it. I want to open the conversation. It's an important one.
 - b) Some will ask/think but aren't **Men** important? Yes, I don't believe we have to **put anyone down to lift anyone else up**.
 2. Slide3b *It never diminishes the church to empower women to lead and use their gifts and skills to spread the love of Jesus. Women can stand confident that each of us have a particular purpose and are uniquely designed to fulfill that purpose.*
- F. I believe *inside the church* ... how women have been **viewed**, and how women have been *underutilized*, is a **Disparity** issue. A **Justice** issue. A **Biblical** issue. A **Cultural** issue.

III. Slide4a **A DISPARITY ISSUE** *unjust, inconsistent*

- A. There has been a great disparity for the last 2000 years.
- B. The Church for so long has had a **highly restrictive view** of women's involvement in the church (usually women's ministry & children's min). Rarely ever in leadership positions.
 1. We were very *patriarchal* in our church: a women couldn't usher, couldn't pass out communion, or lead most any other ministries? (seems so strange now, but that was only a few years back, and that was because of *me being unfair to women*. I could say, it's what was modeled for me. But can't leave it there).
- C. Slide4b *"Women hold up half the sky"* says the Chinese proverb, but when it comes to **the mission field**, did you know it's actually more?

1. 70% of the mission field is women. And the churches are commissioning to them go **preach** the gospel, go **disciple** the nations, **start schools, clinics, and plant churches**. But if you come home, you can't!
 - a) Slide4c Or even better said, *The world needs Jesus, but America needs a man!* This shows you it's *cultural*.

IV. Slide5a **A JUSTICE ISSUE** *also a discrimination issue*

- A. If Justice means the quality of being *fair* and *reasonable* then this is a justice issue.
- B. Slide5b Is.61:8 *For I the Lord love justice.*
- C. Prov.31:8 NLT *Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed.*
- D. There's a saying, "*The tongue can paint what the eyes can't see.*" Thus the need to talk about it. So my desire was/is to bring justice to this issue. To *right the wrongs*. I have to admit it's really easy to see *gender injustice* with my muslim friends, in a different culture over in Nepal. Those are much easier to see, *then* back at home.

V. Slide6a **A BIBLICAL ISSUE**

- A. In Scripture we see women are allowed to *speak, serve, lead, sing, prophecy, teach and preach*. [I'm going to quickly move through these, see notes later]
 1. Slide6b In 1 Cor.11:5 it talks about *but every wife who prays or prophesies*, like it's a normal thing. [ps: prophecy = *foretell* in OT; *forthtell* in NT. It's teaching/instructing]
 2. In Romans 16, Paul concludes, mentions **18 people** ... **10** are women!
 - a) 1st person he mentions, sister **Phoebe** & she is a *deacon*. *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant (diakonos) of the church at Cenchreae.*¹
 - b) Oh and **Julia** is an *apostle* and a women (16:7). [some argue, they meant *Junias*, but there's never been a Junias ever recorded].

¹ Romans 16:1

3. **The woman at the well** was used by God to run back to town *to tell the men of her city about her finding the Messiah* (Jn.4). And many came to Christ because of her doing so.
4. Paul makes sure in **Acts 17** both while in **Thessalonica** & after in **Berea**, that **many prominent women** came to faith listening & learning in the synagogues that day.
5. **Slide6c Chloe** in (1 Cor.1:10-12) While we do not know the exact role of Chloe in the church at Corinth, we do know that **she was aware of and concerned about the divisions** in the church. Paul obviously trusted her input so much that he wrote a letter to the church to address her concerns.
6. **Nympha** in (Col.4:15) Paul recognizes Nympha as *hosting a church in her home*.
7. **Apphia** in (Philemon intro) Apphia was considered by Paul to be a dear sister. She and her family *host the church in their home*.
8. **Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time**. (Judges 4:4). [cuz no men? maybe, but **God** choose her to lead!]
9. **Miriam** - a **prophetess** in Ex.15:20. In Micah 6:4, *I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam*. (cuz there wasn't a man to lead? Uhh no)
10. **Rahab**, a gentile Canaanite prostitute, **God redeems and places her** ... not only in **His Son Jesus'** family tree, **but also** in the **Heb.11** hall of Faith.
11. In Acts 18:25 (speaking about **Apollos** being eloquent, competent in the Scriptures) *He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately*. Expounding on bible doctrine.
 - a) **Priscilla**, a woman specifically used of God to touch people in at least 3 diff nations w/her husband: *Rome, Greece, and Asia Minor*. (Joined Paul in Eph.)
 - b) **Priscilla's name is almost always listed 1st**, some scholars suggest that *"the wife was more prominent and helpful to the Church."* It is perhaps most interesting to note that *her role in cross-cultural service, leadership, and*

teaching were perceived as so normal they did not require special comment or explanation by the writer of Acts.

VI. Slide7a A CULTURAL ISSUE

- A. When talking about *culture* it's just a little bit *complicated*: there is *subculture*, *counterculture*, *Super-culture*, *Supra-culture*, and *multiculture* to name a few.
1. Slide7b Christianity is **about** culture. Christianity **is a** Culture. Christianity is **against** culture. Christianity is **above** culture. (I will talk more thru Corinth)
- B. The difference between a *supra-cultural directive* and a **principle**.
1. **Supra-cultural** means that the directive is to be applied **in all places at all times, irrespective of cultural norms or shifts in mores**/customs. "*Do not commit adultery*" would be a great example.
 2. **A principle** is an idea that can be applied in *a variety of ways* depending on cultural realities. Eg: Jesus said to his disciples, *Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you must do as I have done for you.*
 - a) So, does this mean foot washing is a necessary exercise for Christians, because it was *commanded* by Jesus? *Alternatively*, does the principle here have *little to do w/washing feet*, but that we must serve one another in humility?
- C. Did you know the church hated **playing card games** not too long ago. Did you know they had over **20 versus** to back that up? (**not** gambling, just playing *go fish*).
- D. Slide7c **In the first century**:
1. The *testimony* of a woman was **disregarded** (Mishna: Rosh Hashanah 1:8). **And yet** Jesus told a *parable* about a **widow** beseeching an unrighteous judge for relief (Lk. 18:1-8).
 2. **Men** were not even permitted to speak to **women** in public. **And yet** **Jesus** spoke truth publicly to the woman at the well in Samaria (Jn.4:1-42).

3. **Jesus** had women in his traveling group. **And his treatment, approval, and recognition of women were nothing less than culturally radical.** So the night Jesus treated **Mary** as a disciple, allowing her to learn at his feet, was a **watershed moment** for women **and** a strong message to the church (Lk.10:38-41).
- E. **Two seemingly contradicting ideas:** Women **learn in silence**, 1 Tim.2 (**& not teach or have authority over men**) **and then Jesus commands** (5x's), *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*
- F. I've personally been most convicted about **Jesus' focus** on **viewing and valuing women**, **and giving women some of the most important roles**, *and that*, back in the 1st century.
1. **Women** were chosen to be **the 1st witnesses of the res of Jesus** (Jn.20; Mt.28; Mk.16). *Not just Mary Magdalene, but Joanna, Susanna, Mary the mother of James, Salome, and "other women" who were not identified.*
 2. Jesus's attitude toward women was His vision of them as **persons to whom and for whom He had come**. He did not perceive them primarily in terms of their **sex, age, or marital status**; He seems to have considered them in terms of **their relation to God**.
 3. **Jesus had such a countercultural view of women:** He demonstrated only **the highest regard for women** in both His life and teaching. **Jesus** valued their *fellowship, prayers, service, financial support, testimony & witness*
 4. From a biblical perspective, ***I still believe a covering of male leadership in the church and in the home. I also believe** women can and should hold positions of leadership in the Church. The question for **many roles & positions** should be ... *who is best for the job, regardless of gender.*
- G. **Slide8 Jesus** protected women. Empowered women. Honored women publicly. Release the voice of women. Confided in women. Was funded by women. Celebrated women by name. Learn from women. Respected women. And spoke of women as examples to follow. *Our turn.*

H. **End: Women** I would sum up what I've said with: *Love Jesus. Love Well. Serve Well. Lead Well.*

I. (after worship)

J. **Slide9** Dedicate this Space - The fellowship hall will be complete and open for ministry *in just a few weeks!* We thought it would be great if we put *our special Calvary Murrieta touch* on it before we put down flooring. If you have **5 minutes**, go out to the fellowship hall, grab 1 of the **sharpies**, and *write a verse, write a thought, write a prayer, a picture, or just write your name*. **However you want to personally dedicate this space** before we begin to fellowship together as a community in it. You can do it anytime this morning.

K. Keywords: gender, women.