

I'm a Female Preacher, but I'm Not the Pastor—Here's Why

As a woman who has been given the gift of teaching and exhortation, I've struggled for many, many years over what my role is within the church body. Because my No. 1 goal has always been to glorify Christ and obey all that He has commanded, I want more than anything to honor Him with the gifts He's given me. Consequently, I studied for quite some time before I landed on how I think my gifting is appropriate within the body of believers in Jesus Christ.

First and foremost, I am a woman. I love being a woman, and I love the unique way God created me as female. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that this created form makes me no less valuable to God than my male brothers, nor does it make me more valuable. Our equality in created nature was established at the beginning in Genesis 1:27-28. Our shared responsibilities in governing God's created work was also established in 1:28: "God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

We start from a platform of equality.

That being said, I also believe that God created *headship* within the confines of His created order. No good organization runs smoothly without someone to lead and someone to manage. I believe the Lord gave this headship to men, the first in His creation, and that He created woman with the unique ability to manage. Both roles are equally vital within the home, equally necessary and equally God-honoring. My husband isn't my lord, nor am I his servant. He simply assumes his God-ordained role of headship, and I assume mine as manager.

I also believe that this order should exist within the confines of the church family. God's created order in the home is only the shadow of that which should be thriving within the church. Consequently, I believe it is God's perfect design that the church be pastored and ultimately led by men. That's not to say that women shouldn't hold offices within the church, and they may even hold the title of "Pastor," but headship should certainly follow God's designed order. For this to be true, even if a female is considered "a pastor," she should not be considered *the shepherding pastor* of the church.

I realize that this is not often a popular viewpoint, but I believe it is biblical.

However—and this is where the rubber meets the road, I think—I do not believe that the office of pastor in the role of *headship* extends to the gifts of teaching, preaching or prophesying. The Bible clearly tells us time and time again that these gifts were given without distinction to God's children and that we are to edify and uplift the body using the gifts He has given (Eph. 4:11-15, Acts 2:17-18, 1 Cor. 12:1-31a) The Bible also gives many examples of female teachers (Priscilla) and female prophets (Deborah), as well as telling us that God will pour out His Spirit, which will be manifested by all manner of people (Joel 2:28).

A secondary argument has long been that women should only be permitted to teach other women or children, but that in the actual church service, they should remain silent and submissive to male leadership. Passages like 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 are often cited in support of these claims. In these passages, Paul is instructing the women in the churches in Ephesus and Corinth to be silent during the church services. These letters, however, were written to specific churches regarding specific circumstances. In both instances, Paul was addressing the issue of disorder in the services due to false teachers, not the roles of men and women

within these services.

In 1 Timothy, Paul was addressing a situation where there was a group of unruly women dishonoring the men in leadership as they spoke out of turn. In 1 Corinthians, Paul was again speaking to disorder in the church where another group of women were disruptive during the services by speaking out and asking questions during congregational worship. It's also interesting to note that Paul didn't just tell women to remain silent within his letter to the Corinthian church, but also tongue-speakers and prophets who were talking over others (1 Cor. 14:28, 30).

When in Titus 2:3-5 Paul urges women to "train the younger women," he wasn't making a church-wide mandate on roles, relegating women to solely teach other women. He was again addressing the problems created by false teachers. As a matter of fact, Paul addressed every faction of believer within this letter—men, women, young men and young women—admonishing them to self-control and godly behavior.

In truth, we can see that Moses listened to Miriam, Abraham listened to Sarah, Barak listened to Deborah and Paul listened to Priscilla. Each of these women represents only a fraction of times within God's Word where women not only taught, they exhorted and preached, to both men and women.

God did not discriminate when He gave out His gifts to His children. Some He made prophets, some apostles, some teachers, and some administrators and those are just a few of the gifts He's given. He makes no distinction upon who He chooses to give which gifts; and therefore, we should make no distinction as to who may manifest these gifts to whom. This simple truth should keep no person—man or woman—from sharing these gifts from any platform available, whether it is from behind the pulpit in a church or around a dining room table in someone's home.

God gifted me with the gift of teaching, preaching and exhortation. Though I submit to headship, both in my home and in my church, I do so through and with the giftings God has given me.

Therefore, I can say with complete confidence:

I am a teacher.

I am a preacher.

And I am a woman. {eo}

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