

Strong Women in Ministry Are Not Jezebels

Some years ago, J. Lee Grady asked a pointed question in his Fire in My Bones column: What part of Galatians 3:28 don't we understand?

Galatians 3:28 declares, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Lee went on to debunk "6 Gender Myths in the Church."

Some may say Lee was asking for it with the headline and even the subject matter, for that matter. His heart may have been on his sleeve as he defended the God-given rights of women to find their place in ministry. But in reality, his six points weren't all that edgy.

At that time, I offered a hearty amen to Lee's points but I hadn't experienced any of what he was talking about. No one had ever suggested that I should sit with the kids or stay in the prayer closet. Nobody ever told me to stick to raising my daughter or that I couldn't teach from the Bible. Much like Joyce Meyer, by the time anyone told me I couldn't do these things, it was too late. I had already been doing it for many years!

When Religious Spirits Attack

Recently, I've come under an especially vicious attack as a woman in ministry. I've had male pastors gang up on me and spew false accusations. I've had spies sitting in my house of prayer make up stories about ungodly public encounters with me.

The nasty comments, flesh and wrong attitudes expressed toward women who are on fire for God and making an impact in ministry

makes me scratch my head. Sure, there are honest disagreements over Scripture. I'm not talking about a difference of interpretation, even an unbending one. I'm talking about doing everything you can to tear down a woman who's clearly anointed and appointed. I see this far too much. Oh, how it must grieve the Holy Spirit!

Something else that grieves the Holy Spirit is false Jezebel accusations against strong women. Some people like to accuse women in ministry of being Jezebels. I just wrote a new book on the spirit of Jezebel trying to show what Jezebel really is—a spirit of seduction. “Jezebel” is not merely a controlling woman and making a Jezebel accusation is essentially claiming that someone is leading people into immorality and idolatry (Rev. 2:20).

But Scripture Says ...

1 Timothy 2:12-13 says women should not teach or assume authority over a man. Others point to 1 Timothy 3, which lists the qualifications for bishops and deacons as reasons not to allow women in ministry. But what do we do, then, with Deborah, a prophetess and a judge who led Israel into victorious battle when a man would not take charge? What about Anna the prophetess? What about Priscilla, who traveled in ministry with her husband?

Look at Aimee Semple McPherson. What about Kathryn Kuhlman? How about Marilyn Hickey and Joyce Meyer? All of these women have been a blessing to the body of Christ, and they have all faced persecution from people who don't agree that they should speak and teach. Jesus certainly didn't prevent women from entering ministry so I am unsure as to why there is so much resistance in some camps within the modern church.

I would like to end the heated debate over women in ministry. There are too many examples in Scripture of women serving in leadership or other key roles for men to deny women a seat at

the leadership table. That said, I'm not calling for affirmative action here. Church roles should be assigned by the Holy Spirit. That means leadership needs to pray and fast without preconceived notions—and without bias toward women—before they appoint people to positions.

We Need ALL Hands on Deck

Paul wrote, “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for the common good. To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But that one and very same Spirit works all these, dividing to each one individually as He will” (1 Cor. 12:7-11).

Paul didn't say women can't operate in spiritual gifts and I don't believe Paul intended for women to be denied opportunities to serve in various ministries, even leadership positions, within the church. I think locking women out of ministry can actually work against God at times. God is the one who calls people into ministry—men and women. If we were all obedient to the Holy Spirit in this matter, there would be much less strife and much more effectiveness in ministry for the glory of God.

It's going to take all of us laboring together to turn around our nation. Can we quit attacking women who are trying to do what God has called them to do?