

What We've Gotten Wrong About Women in Ministry

Recently I sat watching as my young son's frustration grew. When I went over to see what the problem was, Noah was trying to put a puzzle together and battling a particular piece he could not get to fit. It seemed to belong, but he couldn't find its place. He was about to disregard the piece as a misfit, so I gently told him, "Try again, Noah, only this time turn it around."

Within seconds, it clicked into place. What had seemed useless became useful. The piece had always had a place; it just needed turning around.

As a woman in ministry, I have often felt the role of women can present the same dilemmas this puzzle piece presented my son. The church around the world has had a jarring response to this issue. Some have viewed the "women piece" as a misfit, while others keep turning this topic around in discussion and thought, trying to find where it fits.

God didn't create Eve as a random piece. He made her to fit Adam both naturally and spiritually; they were a perfect fit. They were called to rule and tend the garden together. Eve was called to be Adam's helpmate, his partner:

"Male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (Gen. 1:27-28).

God knew it required them both to make this picture complete. He wanted Adam's strengths to fit with Eve's and for them to be used across the whole garden. He didn't ask Adam to divide the garden into sections, so as to contain Eve's influence as

a woman. He didn't separate all the female animals for Eve to feed and nurture so her authority would be gender-specific. God created a power team and entrusted them both to outwork that **empowerment** together.

So why is it still so awkward in some places to allow both men and women to function together in this way? Why do we divide what God united so beautifully?

For years I have led in my local church alongside incredibly gifted men. I have not seen them as my competition nor my enemy. I have seen them as I believe God wants me to see them: as gifted leaders I am called to lead alongside. My husband and I have found our fit in our home, and we don't feel we have to change that in God's home, where we also pastor, teach, train, preach and lead the house together. The house we are building has the voice of a mom and a dad. I don't just speak on Mother's Day or at women's events. I speak to our house, to the men and the women, to the young and the old.

Though it has not always been this way.

My personal journey as a woman in **ministry** has been to experience the diverse and sometimes dysfunctional ways this "piece" has been handled. I grew up with a huge passion for God's house and from the age of 14 was dedicated to playing my part to the full. The only problem was that at that time, the church I was a part of saw women in ministry as a misfitting piece. I remember being told I could speak to women about women's issues but not to the church. I was required to wear a head covering if I was going to speak to the wider body, and while I submitted to my **leadership** at the time, I was left feeling like a burden when all I wanted to be was a blessing.

My desire as a woman was to help, not hinder, and therefore I had to persevere to keep trying to play my part even when I was told my part was not that necessary. Over time, the church I belonged to changed, and as it adapted, my "piece" became

more accepted.

Today I have the privilege to speak and teach across the globe, and as a woman I can see the church embracing more this piece of the picture—yet we still have work to do. We have to ask, Why are we trying to make fit what God has already perfectly made to fit? My prayer is that the church across the globe will harness the power of women and let it add color, depth, insight and beauty to every aspect of God's house.

I pray that where the issue of women in **leadership** has become overcomplicated, we will be willing to “turn the piece around” like my son did, see it differently, and discover the wonderful fit God created each of us to be. God did not make any misfits; there is place for us all. My simple prayer is that every piece will take its place so we can get this picture finished, complete in all its beauty, just as our Creator intended.

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