

Should a Woman Be a Pastor?

Within the body of Christ, if you want a fiery debate, bring up the subject of women in ministry beyond the acceptable children's and prayer ministries. And, if you are going to add fuel to that fire, begin talking about women in the role of pastor or apostle. The debate surrounding women has not only divided the Christian community at large but has also divided local churches and even families.

There have been many female pastors, including myself, approached by "well-meaning" men telling us that we are in sin because we are moving at a level in ministry that is not allowed by Scripture. However, is that correct interpretation of Scripture, religious tradition or something else?

With any biblical topic, we must explore the whole of Scripture and ask the Lord to help us to understand. When we look at the whole of Scripture, we discover that 40 authors wrote the Bible over 1,450 years. This timeframe spans both sides of the cross, which encompasses both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The Bible was not all penned in the same country; however, it was composed under the direction and inspiration of Jehovah.

As we dig deeper, we learn that of these 40 authors, only one author prohibited women in ministry, and that is Paul. If we go deeper, we find that he wrote nine letters to churches and only restricted women in three churches. If we take a deep breath and explore deeper, we discover that these three churches were all in areas that worshipped major female deities and that cultural beliefs were becoming mixed in with the church's doctrine. Finally, with another breath, we discover that Paul also empowered women and recognized them as leaders.

Amid this heated debate, what do we do with Galatians 3:26-28?

Within this very passage of Scripture, Paul takes away ethnic arguments as he states there is neither Jew nor Greek. He also strips away socioeconomic class arguments, stating that the positions of free versus slave do not exist in the kingdom of God. In addition, he adds that there is neither male nor female, which should bring peace to our argument about women in ministry.

How do we manage Genesis 1:27, where Scripture states that "God created man in his own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." When we look at the creation account, we see that God did not yet create Eve. Both Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, which means something extraordinary happened when Adam was given Holy Spirit anesthesia, underwent rib surgery and discovered Eve when he woke up.

Speaking of ribs, the word used for "rib" is *Tesla* (yes, like the car), and in most places, translated as side-chamber rather than rib. When I look at this, I see men and women walking side by side in their gifts, talents and leadership, each fulfilling their God-given gift and calling. When we, the body of Christ, put restrictions on which gifts women or a man can operate in, we are effectively operating with one arm tied behind our back.

All through Scripture, we see the Pharisees being reprimanded for their rules and regulations and missing the Messiah. In biblical times, as today, we see people bound by man's laws and religious traditions, which will always cause us to fall short.

Is it possible that we are quenching the outpouring of the Holy Spirit by holding people in bondage? Is it possible that we are not sitting under the teaching, preaching and apostleship that we should be experiencing because a small number has determined that women cannot have those gifts in their lives?

Our God is not a God of confusion, and these words that Paul wrote were not penned to bring bondage or confusion. The heartbeat of God is always to bring healing and freedom.

We need to call forth the modern-day Deborahs, Esthers, Priscillas, Abigails, Phoebes and Junias into their proper positions. We have a mandate to bring heaven to earth, and we can only do this when all the members of the body of Christ are walking in the fullness of their God-ordained destiny. If we were to do this indeed, I imagine the demonic realm would shake as it has not shaken since Jesus rose from the dead.

Are you ready to be equipped and learn more? You can hear the first podcast in the four-part *The Bible and Women in Leadership* series at this link, and please be sure to stop by the website.

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