

10. Women in Ministry

****According to Genesis 1:27-28, who was made in God's image, the man or the woman? See 5:1-2.

Application: There is no room for either chauvinism or feminism within the body of Christ.

Based on Genesis 1:28, was it the man or the woman who God designed to subdue and rule over God's creation? They were to be co-regents, a joint effort.

****In Genesis 2:4-25, who was created first, the man or the woman? 2:7, 15, 18, 21-22.

1. What is implied in Genesis 2:4-25 about the significance of Adam's creation before Eve? Compare 1 Corinthians 11a, 1 Timothy 2:11. Moses wrote nothing specifically about the significance of this order in creation, but the NT does attribute significance to it (to be studied later, 1Ti 2:11ff). It should be observed that

- 1.) God gave a commission and instructions to the man prior to Eve's creation (2:15-17).
- 2.) Adam was made out of the dust, whereas Eve was made out of Adam (2:22).
- 3.) Eve was made specifically to be Adam's helper (2:18-20), and so that he would not be alone (2:18).

Based on Genesis 2:18 & 20, why was Eve created?

Note: Adam enjoyed perfect fellowship with God and yet it was not "good" for man to be alone. Only the woman could meet the man's needs.

2. In English, what is the difference between receiving "help" (Ps 20:2, Ps 121:2) and having a "helper" (Ge 2:18, 20)? In English, there is a definite difference between receiving "help" (as from Jehovah) and having a "helper" (such as a servant, employee, or assistant). The Hebrew root behind "helper" also appears in Psalm 20:2 & Psalm 121:2 (with reference to Jehovah). Thus, in Hebrew, "helper" does not necessarily denote an inferior role or position. The KJV probably renders it better, "help-meet".

****In Genesis 2:21-23, how was Eve's creation different from Adam's (2:7)? The woman is an extension of the man. This is even seen in the Hebrew for "man", *ish*, and "woman", *isha*.

****Who did God go looking for in Genesis 3:8-9? Why not Eve? This suggests the man was the one who was in charge.

****According to Eve's own testimony (Ge 3:13), why did she eat of the forbidden fruit?

3. Facing the same temptation, the woman was deceived while the man knew he was doing wrong. What might this suggest about a creation designed difference between men and women? See 1 Timothy 2:14. The facts are simply recited here as they occurred. Woman took the leadership; man submitted; disaster resulted. God created each gender with differing spheres of ministry, and confusing the two invites trouble. Perhaps due to her mothering instinct, Eve was more trusting, more giving, less suspicious. In contrast, Adam sinned knowing full well that what he was about to do was wrong. So whereas both sinned in eating, each had a different perspective to the same temptation. Thus, men and women were created to be different not only physically but also in the roles they assume in society, family, and the church.

Evidently there was at least some time lag between when Eve ate the fruit and when Adam ate the fruit. At what point in the process were their “eyes opened”? See Genesis 3:6-7. Interestingly, only after Adam partook of the fruit. This implies some sort of headship.

******What curse did God place on male/female relationships in Genesis 3:16b?**

4. Comparing Genesis 3:16 to 4:6-7, exactly what is it that Eve would “desire”? Due to the curse, her “desire” was to master Adam, just as sin desired to master Cain.

So Says Chaucer: Asked by the queen to discover what thing women most desire, the knight, after much inquiry, was finally ready to answer. “Everyone was commanded to keep silence, and the knight was commanded to tell in open assembly what thing it is that secular women love best. This knight did not stand in beast-like silence, but answered to his question at once with manly voice, so that all the court heard it: ‘My liege lady,’ he said, ‘generally women desire to have dominion over their husbands as well as their lovers, and to be above in mastery; this is your greatest desire, though you may kill me; do as you please, I am at your will here.’ In all the court there was neither wife nor maiden nor widow who contradicted what he said . . .” (*The Wife of Bath*, p. 229).

If this was Eve’s “desire” after the curse (3:16), what was it like before the curse?

According to Genesis 3:16, despite Eve’s “desire,” what role would the man play in God’s curse on woman? Despite the woman’s “desire” to control her husband, the man would still “rule” over her. This “rule” is evidently a harsh, insensitive, domineering control. It is an abuse of his proper, original function as servant-leader.

******Notice the wording of Genesis 3:17 carefully; what reason did God give for cursing the ground?**

Even though Adam and Eve both sinned, and even though Eve ate first, who alone gets the blame for the whole incident in Romans 5:12-21?

5. Why so you suppose that Adam got the total blame for the fall of man (Ro 5:12ff)?

See Numbers 30.

- 1.) Adam received the prohibition directly from God (**Ge 3:16**), whereas Eve only heard it indirectly from Adam.
- 2.) Adam knowingly sinned, but Eve was quite deceived.
- 3.) Adam was the leader, the one in charge, and as such was ultimately responsible for what went wrong (**Ep 5:23, 1Co 11:3**).
- 4.) As is evident from **Numbers 30**, the father/husband was responsible for his wife's decision and had veto power.

******In Genesis 3:20, how did Eve get her name?** Adam named her, again showing his authority.

Big Picture Question: Starting with Abraham, was Hebrew society patriarchal or matriarchal? How so? Theirs was clearly a patriarchal society. The men were the heads of their families (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph) and their clans (each of the twelve tribes were named after 12 brothers), served as the elders of the cities, functioned as the priests in their religion, and with few exceptions led their country in national politics (as judges, kings, governors). Some women did serve as prophets, but very few, and always in a private (rather than public) ministry. **Why was it this way? By accident? By God's sovereign purpose?**

******How did Zipporah save Moses' life in Exodus 4:24-26?**

6. What ministry did Miriam (Moses' older sister) exercise in Exodus 15:19-21?

To whom did Miriam minister (15:20-21)?

******What was the source of the legislation that made up the Old Testament law?** *Exodus 19:1, 3, 5, 20-25, 20:1, 22, 21:1*. The laws of the Old Testament were given directly by God to Moses. It will be interesting to note the role that God Himself designed for women to play in priestly worship!

******What sacrifice was required after the birth of children in Leviticus 12:6-8?** Note that the requirement was the same regardless of the sex of the child.

7. Could women serve as priests under the Old Covenant? How so? *Numbers 3:5-13, Leviticus 10:1-3*. Absolutely no Gentiles, few Hebrew men and no women at all could serve as priests. Even a Levite had also to be an Aaronite also.

8. What important function did priests serve, according to Leviticus 10:8-11 and Deuteronomy 21:5? See *Malachi 2:7*. They taught the Law & served as judges. Under the Old Testament women could not be priests, and under the New Testament women may not be elders nor teachers.

Based on Leviticus 10:1-3 & 2 Chronicles 26:16-20, how particular was God about having His rules for priests followed?

In Numbers 27:1-11, what provision did God make for the daughters of Zelophehad?

In Numbers 30, what did the LORD command concerning obligations taken on by women?

Of what gender were the musicians listed in 1 Chronicles 15:16-22, 2 Chronicles 35:25, and Nehemiah 7:67? Sometimes all were male Levites and on other occasions the choir was made up of both genders. The temple singers were always men. The women sometimes sang at other events (weddings, funerals, dedications, etc.), but not temple worship.

9. In the following texts, who raised up each of these men to be judges over Israel? Judges 3:9, 3:15, 6:14, 11:29, 13:24-25 (14:6).

10. Who raised up Deborah to be judge (Jdg 4:4)? Whereas the text specifically indicated that God raised up many of the other judges, in Deborah's case it simply records the fact that she had become judge.

If God raised up Deborah to be judge, then why would He be against women as elders in the church?

What legitimate spiritual ministry did Deborah have, according to Judges 4:4?

As prophetess, what did God instruct Deborah to do in Judges 4:6-7?

Notes: 1) All the other judges were military leaders as well. In Deborah's case, the Lord used Deborah's prophetic gifting to reveal His will that Barak lead the army. 2) As this case illustrates, it is acceptable that a woman prophet have a ministry in a man's life.

11. Based on Judges 4:6 and 4:14, was Deborah's prophecy designed for one person (personal) or the whole nation (public)?

Who sang the song of Judges 5:1ff? Barak and Deborah sang a duet!

How did Deborah describe her political career in Judges 5:6-7?

What sad commentary does Judges 21:25 offer?

12. How might Judges 21:25 apply to Deborah's judgeship? It may indicate that society was so weak that no man was able to lead Israel, so Deborah filled the need. The fault is not with Deborah so much as with the weak men. Significantly, it is not explicit from Scripture that it was God who raised her up to judge, especially since God instructed her to enlist Barak to fight the oppressors.

13. Why is Deborah absent from Hebrews 11:32? Barak is listed, but Deborah is absent! This suggests that Barak is the real hero (main figure) in the Judges narrative, not Deborah.

******What valuable service did Abigail render to her foolish husband in 1 Samuel 25?**

Of all the monarchs who ruled over Israel and Judah (there were thirty nine), only one was a woman (the evil Athaliah, 2Ki 11:3). What does this percentage suggest about the normal social order of Hebrew society?

******What ministry did the woman Huldah hold in 2 Kings 22:8-20?**

14. Was Huldah's prophetic ministry public or private (2Ki 22:8-20)? How so? She privately relayed God's revelation for the king to the messengers who sought her out.

According to Nehemiah 8:5-6, in what manner did the women of Ezra's day express themselves publicly?

15. With what praiseworthy activities is the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10-31 involved? 31:16, 23, 24.

16. Based on the tenor of Isaiah 3:1ff, what was the Lord's attitude toward women in positions of authority (3:12)?

How does Isaiah 3:12 square with the historical fact of Deborah serving as a judge?

17. As concerns women, what did Joel 2:28-29 predict about New Testament times? See Acts 2:16-18, 21:9.

******In what sense did Miriam "lead" the people in Micah 6:4?** The Hebrew literally states that God sent Moses, Aaron and Miriam before the Israelis. As all three were prophetically gifted and since nothing much is known of Miriam besides her gift of prophecy, this prophetic ministry is no doubt is what Micah had in mind. Also, she did lead the women in singing in Exodus 15.

Interesting: Some say that the tsunami wave of Old Testament women in ministry crashes onto the shore of the New Testament with such force that any New Testament texts seeming to limit women's involvement in ministry are washed away. This tsunami wave has just been studied. Rather than a mighty wall of water towering hundreds of feet high, it turned out to be a small, one inch tall ripple! The New Testament sea walls still stand firm.

******When predicting Jesus' birth, to whom did the angel appear first — Joseph or Mary?** See Lk 1:26-38 & Mt 1:18-25.

Note: A similar thing happened regarding the birth of Samson and Samuel. However, an angel appeared first to the father of John the Baptist!

18. What prophecy did Anna make during Jesus' infancy (Lk 2:36-38)?

****In Luke 8:1-3, how did some women help make Jesus' public ministry possible?

19. What social barrier did Jesus seem to break in John 4:27? See Jn 4:1-16.

****How many of Jesus' apostles were women? None.

20. Why do you suppose that Jesus only chose men to be His apostles? See Matthew 5:17.

Good Points: "G. Bilezikian says that Jesus chose twelve men to be His apostles because of the "cultural constraints" that would have made the ministry of women "unacceptable." There are at least two problems with this view. **1)** Nowhere else does Jesus give in to cultural pressures when a moral issue is at stake. To imply that He gave in for this reason impugns His courage and integrity. Jesus associated with tax-collectors and sinners, healed on the Sabbath, commended Gentiles who had great faith, and rebuked the scribes and Pharisees. All of these actions brought considerable cultural pressure on Jesus, and yet He continued to do what He thought was right. Thus, it is unlikely that Jesus did not appoint a female apostle because of merely cultural reasons. **2)** If, as Bilezikian asserts, Junias (Ro 16:7) was an apostle, then Jesus' reluctance to appoint a woman apostle becomes even more blameworthy. For just a few years after Jesus' resurrection, the church (according to Bilezikian) is willing to appoint female apostles. Had the culture changed so dramatically in the few years since Jesus' ministry that now such appointments were feasible? Bilezikian's view suggests that the early church was even more courageous than Jesus, and this is surely incorrect!" (*Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, pgs. 221-222).

****Who was the first person to see the resurrected Jesus? See John 20:10-18. (God is not anti-woman!)

21. On what mission did Jesus send Mary in John 20:17?

22. With what various spiritual activities were women involved in Acts 1:14, 2:17-18, 5:14, 8:12, 9:1-2, 16:13-15, 21:9*?

*Even though women prophets already lived in Caesarea, the Lord spoke to Paul through Agabus, who came down from Judea! Perhaps this was because the prophecy was delivered in a public setting (21:12).

****What ministry did Priscilla and Aquila have with Apollos in Acts 18:24-26?

What information did Luke give about Apollos in Acts 18:24-25?

23. Where did this explaining (Acts 18:24-26) by Priscilla and Aquila take place? 18:26.

Who did most of the explaining, Aquila or Priscilla? This was an informal discussion. Notice that the text never explicitly states who did most of the explaining.

Where is the word “teach” found in this paragraph? It is not used in the passage.

24. How is “explained” (Acts 18:26) different from “taught”? See Acts 11:1-4. The difference is a position of the heart, a difference of intent, and a difference of authority. “Explained” is from *ektithemi* (1620); *ex* means “out of” and *tithemi* means “to place, lay, set.” Thus, “to set forth, expose.” Figuratively, “to declare, expound.” Used also in Acts 11:4, where Peter explained to a skeptical Jerusalem church how he happened to baptize a Gentile into the church. Notice that the word “teach” is not used in the context of Acts 18. There is a difference between these two words. For instance, I *explain* to my boss why I was late for work, but I do not *teach* him why I was late. Thus, they simply gave an account of what had happened.

Insight: There is nothing wrong with men learning from women. That a woman can function as a prophetess or Priscilla explain things to Apollos illustrates this.

25. What words did Paul use to describe the ministries of the women named in Romans 16:1-12 (Phoebe, Prisca, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis)? As Jon Zens is fond of pointing out, they did more than just stay home and make bagels!

26. What does “servant” mean in Romans 16:1? It is from *diakonos*, “servant, minister” (basis for the word “deacon”). This, however, does not necessarily mean that Phoebe was an official “deaconess.” Of the 30 times *diakonos* is used in the New Testament, it only refers to an official “deacon” three times. It is translated as “servant” or “servants” 19 times (NASV). Even if Phoebe were an official deaconess, the role of deacon in the New Testament was not one of management (as was the role of elder).

Notes: 1) In Romans 16:3-5, just because the church met at their house did not mean that they were co-pastors! 2) In 16:7, Junias *may* be a woman’s name. The Greek reads *iounian*, a name found only three times outside the Bible, twice with reference to a man and once to a woman. However, it is probably a shortened form of the common male name “Junianus” (BAG, p 380). Also, that Junias was named among the apostles can also mean that the apostles spoke highly of him, not that Junias actually was an apostle. For more information, see *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, pages 79-81.

****What activities were open to women in 1 Corinthians 11:5?

27. Comparing 1 Corinthians 11:3 to 11:5 & 11:10, why was Paul so concerned about head coverings for women prophets and women who prayed?

****What does Galatians 3:26-29 indicate about the equality of the sexes?

Considering the context of Galatians 3:26-29, with respect to what is there neither “male nor female” in Christ? See 3:15-6:7. With respect to salvation; all are saved equally and only by faith in Christ. The ground is level at the cross.

28. What evidence is there from other Scripture as to whether the equality of the sexes (Ga 3:26-29) should cancel out any male/female distinctions or gender specific roles? See *Ephesians 5:22-33 & 6:5-8*. If Ga 3:28 means that all male/female distinctions are eliminated in Christ, then it should be permissible for two men to marry each other (since there is neither male nor female in Christ). Even though men and women are perfectly equal in essence, they are quite different in function and makeup. Men and women simply have different job descriptions in marriage and in ministry, each suited to their unique biological makeup.

Further, the fact that there is neither “slave nor free” in Christ did not annul the need for slaves to be obedient to their Christian masters (Ep 6:5-9). Also, within the Trinity, though Jesus is perfectly equal to the Father, He was submissive to the Father’s will while on this earth. Submission does not necessarily denote inferiority.

Galatians 3:28 should not be used as a lever to overturn all the other texts that signal specific roles for men and women within the body of Christ.

******What report did Paul give about Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4:2-3?**

Note: 1 Timothy 2:11-23 will be dealt with in a separate lesson.

29. What in 1 Timothy 3:8-11 indicates that women might have served as deacons in the New Testament church? “Wives” is from a Greek word that literally means “woman” (there is no Greek word for “wife”). Thus, it is at least possible that 3:11 lists the qualifications for woman deacons, not deacon’s wives.

What is the fundamental difference between an elder and a deacon? See *1 Timothy 3:1-7 to 3:8-13*. Unlike deacons, elders must be “able to teach” (compare 1 Timothy 2:11-12).

Conclusion

30. How would you briefly summarize the role of women in ministry throughout the Scriptures?

Observation: Believing women play a vital role of ministry with the body of Christ. The church would be severely crippled without them. Their input and contribution should be recognized and appreciated by the men of the church.

Optional Further Reading: An excellent source for further reading is *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, by Piper and Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991). See www.cbmw.org. Also, see on-line articles on women in ministry at www.ntrf.org.

**** = Ask this question before having someone read the text aloud.

Next Lesson: E-mail the next set of discussion questions out to the class (or print them up and hand them out at the end of this lesson). Ask everyone to consider the issues, answer the questions and be prepared to discuss them at the next meeting.

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