



Women's Role in the Church

Defending the Biblical Pattern in a Radically Feminist Society

According to a recent (2016) Barna survey, 79% of Americans are comfortable with a female pastor, but only 39% of evangelicals feel the same way. Accordingly, 30% of mainline congregations and 3% of evangelical congregations have a female senior pastor. Still, nearly 73% of evangelicals would be comfortable with a female preaching on a Sunday morning. Such would have been unheard of a century ago. The culture has indeed changed. How should Christians respond to these changes? What does the Bible say about the roles of women in the church?

The New (Feminist) Norm

- The feminist movement has radically affected our culture (and our churches) in both positive and negative ways, but the bad side of feminism is not a new issue (Gen 3:16).
- In the United States, "first wave" feminism (late 1800s and early 1900s) addressed suffrage, "second wave" (1960s) reproductive rights and workplace inequality, and "third wave" (1990s) diversity and intersectionality.
- Changing societal norms do not trump Scripture, and we must be watchful (1 Cor 14:36-37; 2 Tim 3:16-17).

What Does the Bible Say?

- The most (in)famous passage regarding women's role demands silence and submission (1 Cor 14:34-35; cf. vv. 28, 30; 11:2-16; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; 1 Tim 3:1-13).
- Another well-known passage that deals with women's role expects "silence" and submission and not usurping authority over a male (1 Tim 2:9-15; cf. v. 8; 2 Thess 3:12).
- God commands women to teach within their assigned roles, not over men but among other (younger) women and their children (Titus 2:3-5; cf. 2 Tim 1:5; 3:14-15).

What Does the Bible Say?

- Outside of the local assembly, women may (respectfully) teach men (Acts 18:24–26; cf. 1 Pet 3:1–6).
- What conclusions should we draw from these passages?
 - Negative: Women may not take an authoritative role in church (e.g., mixed classes, worship, congregational meetings).
 - Positive: God has given women a vital role in the home, in the church, and in society. Women exemplify the submission of the Lord and by their words and works teach others.
- The biblical teaching is countercultural. What will we do?

Ready to Give a Defense

- As (radical) feminism exerts its influence, demanding that we conform to its ideas, we must stand with God and be prepared to answer others. But how?
 - First, we should start with God's character and Scripture's authority, never apologizing for what God has said (Deut 6:24).
 - Second, we should stress the diverse roles in the Godhead, particularly the submission of Jesus (Phil 2:5-11; cf. vv. 12-16).
 - Third, we need to demonstrate individually and collectively the satisfaction (fulfillment) that comes from surrendering ourselves to the Lord (John 13:1-20; cf. Eph 5:22-33).