"WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT THE GENDER OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP"

9/27/95

INTRODUCTION:

***Can women lead a church in the position of elder (pastor or overseer)?**

Note five Bible principles establishing male leadership in the church assembly.

I. The distinct ROLES in the family illustrate God's intention for male leadership (both in domestic and ecclesiastical relationships)
I Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22-25; Col. 3:18-19

II. The QUALIFICATIONS of the pastor (*"bishop"* = overseer) **demands male leadership in the church**

A. I Tim. 3:1-7

B. Titus 1:5-6

III. The RESTRICTION of I Corinthians 14:34-38 prohibits female leadership in the church

IV. The COMMANDS of I Timothy 2:11-15 prohibit female leadership in the church

Paul gives two reasons for why women should not lead men in the church:
1) Creation order (v. 13)
"Adam was first formed, then Eve."
2. The Fall (v. 14)
(A woman's proneness to certain deceptions)

V. The EXAMPLES of the New Testament pastor (elders) **evidences male leadership in the church**

--There is not one example of a woman leading a New Testament assembly.
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INTRODUCTION:

I realize that not everyone is going to agree with this message. However, I will preface my remarks and exposition by saying:

--I appeal to saved believers in Christ
(the unsaved void of God's Holy Spirit will not appreciate what is sad)

--I appeal to those who love God and His principles
(God's principles are for God's people)

--I appeal to those who hold to the Scriptures as their only rule for faith and practice

The modern feminist movement (coming under the guise of being a savior for women) has gone to great lengths to:

1. Minimize the unique significance of our maleness or femaleness
2. Blur God-given sexual distinctions
3. Incite dissatisfaction and discontentment with bible domestic relationships and roles
4. Re-define femininity and masculinity by erasing the distinctive features of both.

There are clear differences between the male and female gender -- differences not of inferiority and superiority, but different strengths and functions. There are differences in make-up physically and emotionally; these differences should not be weapons to fight with but tools to build with. Each is to complement the other, fill in the weak spots, round out the edges, etc.

--What is wrong with being feminine?

--What is wrong with distinctive roles and responsibilities?

What I see in Scripture is not a difference of essence, but a difference of function. Not differences of worth or value, but of role and responsibility.

***Can women lead a church in the position of elder (pastor or overseer)?**

Note five Bible principles establishing male leadership in the church assembly.

I. The distinct ROLES in the family illustrate God's intention for male leadership (both in domestic and ecclesiastical relationships)

I Cor. 11:3 - *"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."*

Eph. 5:22-25 - *"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husbands is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."*

Col. 3:18-19 - *"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them."*

Male leadership in the home and church is simply a difference in role (function) and responsibility for the sake of order and unity.

(Even the three Persons of the Triune Godhead have distinctive roles [a headship is seen in the Trinity - I Cor. 11:3] - Example: The Father planned creation, the Son performed Creation.)

With the erosion of male leadership in the home has come the erosion of male leadership in the church (what is happening in the church today is a mirror of what is happening in the home).

Leadership is a servant role; the man is to serve the woman in the home and church by providing unselfish, benevolent, sacrificial leadership.

A leader serves the ones led by providing:

--An example to follow

--Protection

--Direction

--Initiation

--Instruction

II. The <u>QUALIFICATIONS</u> of the pastor (*"bishop"* = overseer) **demands male leadership in the church**

A. I Timothy 3:1-7

In the New Testament God uses three words to describe the ministry of church leadership:

1. Bishop (*"episcopos")* (I Tim. 3:1-7; Ti. 1:7)

2. Elder (*"presbuteros")* (Acts 14:23; I Tim. 5:17; Ti. 1:5)

3. Pastor (*"poimen")* (I Peter 5:2)

These three words are used to describe three facets of the same office (three descriptions of the same person).

In Acts 20, Paul called the *"<u>elders</u>"* ("*presbuteroi")* (v. 17) of the Ephesian Church. He refers to these same men as *"<u>overseers</u>" ("bishops - episcopoi")* (v. 28), and commands them to *"<u>feed</u>" ("poimaino - pastor")* the church of God (v. 28b).

Peter exhorted the "*<u>elders</u>"* to *"<u>shepherd</u>"* (pastor) the flock by taking the *"<u>oversight</u>"* (I Peter 5:1-2).

I Tim. 3:1-7 - *"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."*

"If a <u>man</u> desires the office" (v. 1)

"The <u>husband</u> of one wife" (v. 2)

"He (v. 1). . . *he* (v. 5) . . . *he* (v. 6) . . . *he* (v. 7)"

"If a <u>man</u> know not how to rule his own house..."

B. Titus 1:5-6 - *"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly."*

"Ordain elders (v. 5) . . . *the husband of one wife* (v. 6) . . ."

"He . . . he . . ." (v. 9)

III. The RESTRICTION of I Corinthians 14:34-38 prohibits female leadership in the church

V. 34

"Keep silent. . . not permitted to speak" -

--In the context this prohibition would definitely apply to speaking in tongues.

--It does not mean that women cannot pray in church or give testimonies (because I Cor. 11:5 speaks of women *"praying"* [not necessarily leading in prayer] and *"prophesying"* or uttering in plain language a truth God has revealed to her).

The *"speaking"* in this verse refers to an authoritative leadership role over men as evident by the qualifying phrase *"but they are commanded to be under obedience* (submission) (i.e. to male leadership)."

It is vitally important to note that God's restriction (given via the Apostle Paul) is not one that only applied to his time, generation or culture. He states: *"As also saith the Law"* (v. 34). This reference to the Old Testament shows this New Testament teaching to be an eternal principle [not one limited to Paul's day].

V. 35

The Apostle Paul further applies the *"speaking"* of women to questioning the male leadership in public worship. Such disruptive, divisive questions by women who were flaunting and abusing their Christian liberty would undermine the leadership and cause a divisive, disunited spirit in the church body.

God calls it a *"shame for women to speak in church"* (v. 35) (that is: it is a shame for a woman to verbally usurp or interrogate the male leadership of the Church). The women were to hold such questions to ask their husbands at home (v. 35).

IV. The COMMANDS of I Timothy 2:11-15 prohibit female leadership in the church

In the context, Paul is describing true Godliness (by men [v. 8] and women [v. 9-10]).
I Tim. 2:9-10 - *"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.*"

Paul now further delineates how a Godly woman will act in church in verse 11.

V. 11

"Learn in silence" - to be taught without opening her mouth to refute what was taught.

"With all subjection" - Her being taught requires a submissive heart toward the one doing the teaching (she is to have a submissive attitude both toward her reception of truth and in her response or obedience to it).

V. 12

"I suffer not (do not allow or permit) *a woman to teach"* -

The teaching in view is that of teaching *"men"*.

--Women can teach women (Ti. 2:4-5)

--Women can teach children (Lois and Eunice to Timothy - II Tim. 1:5)

--But women are not to teach men

The Bible does not specifically prohibit a woman from *"preaching"* (per se) but from pastoring (or leading an assembly [church] with men present).

Example: In the Great Commission, we are all (male and female) commanded to *"preach* [proclaim] *the Gospel to every creature"* (Mk. 16:15).

Example: Christian women are exhorted to *"teach"* the younger women (Ti. 2:4-5 - *"That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed"*).

--A woman may [with her husband] be involved in the personal discipleship of a man (EX: Priscilla with her husband Aquila - Acts 18:26 - *"And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.")*.

--A woman can serve in many capacities in the church like Phoebe did (Rom. 16:1).

--It is proper for women to teach children and other women in a church setting.

V. 12 - "Usurp authority" - lit. Does <u>not</u> mean to seize authority (as if, on the other hand, she can have that authority if it is <u>given</u> to her). It means to exercise her own authority over the man (in terms of giving direction or instruction in the church context - 3:15).

It is interesting how many Evangelical Feminists are quick to interpret these verses based on first-century Jewish culture, when the writer himself by-passes his own culture and goes back to the beginning of time (Gen. 2 & 3) to prove his point.

Paul gives two reasons for why women should not lead men in the church:

1) <u>Creation order</u> (v. 13)

"Adam was first formed, then Eve."

By creation order, God is showing which gender was the leader (head) and which was the helper.

Paul's reference to creation order shows that his teaching is not based on temporary cultural norms, but on permanent facts of creation.

2. <u>The Fall</u> (v. 14)
(A woman's proneness to certain deceptions)

Women--being generally more emotional (more feeling oriented), responding with her heart more than her head, responding more to emotion than to reason, to feeling than to fact, to the subjective rather than the objective--are easier victims to Satan's temptations.

--Many cults were founded by women (Ex: Mary Baker Eddy - Christian Science; Ellen G. White - Seventh Day Adventists)

--Many extra-Biblical revelations which have brought so much confusion and chaos to Christianity came about by women seeing apparitions of Mary or receiving the supposed gift of tongues.

--The 70 Elders Moses chose to assist in the leadership of Israel were men (Num. 11:16).

--The 12 Apostles, who also functioned as elders, were men (Lk. 6:13).

--Those who led along with the Apostles were men (Barnabas, Silas, Luke, Timothy, Titus).

--Every elder selected by the local churches was a man (Acts 14:23, 20:17; I Tim. 5:17; Ti. 1:5; Ja. 5:14; I Pet. 5:1).

V. The <u>EXAMPLES</u> of the New Testament pastor (elders) **evidences male leadership in the church**

--There is not one example of a woman leading a New Testament assembly.

--Every reference to an *"elder"* is to men in the Bible (Old Testament and New Testament)

Didn't God use Deborah to lead Israel (Judges 4)? Yes.

1. Israel was not a "church" and she was not a "pastor" (she was a judge)

2. She lived at a time when *"every man did that which was right in his own eyes"* (Jud. 17:6, 21:25)

   The book of Judges is filled with examples of people whose roles and behavior was not necessarily normative.

   Note: Deborah prophesied privately, <u>not</u> in public forum.

Doesn't Paul say in Gal. 3:28 that in Christ *"there is neither male nor female"*? Yes, but Paul is not denying the differences of sexuality, he is saying that there is no distinction between how God <u>saves</u> each (the context is soteriological; not describing functional differences).

CONCLUSION:

The issue is not one of ability, but does one fit the qualifications of the New Testament (some women may be very articulate speakers, but this does not decide the issue).

The issue is not one of public acceptance, but does God accept female rule in the church as revealed in His Word (society may say it is okay, but the Bible does not).

The issue is not cultural but Biblical (times and societies may change, but God's principles do not).

The issue is not popularity (many may be filling ecclesiastical positions now though it was never intended by God; but the prevalence of something has never been used as a measuring stick of its rightness).

The issue is not what is traditional but what is Biblical.

The issue is not male chauvinism nor male ego abut being faithful to God established without feelings of superiority.

God's will never contradicts God's Word. He will never lead someone to violate His Holy Scripture. (God has never called one woman to pastor a church! How do I know? Because His Word prohibits such) (Jer. 23:32 -*"Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord."*)

My counsel to women pastors:

1) Let the Bible not society be your authority on matters of Christian service.

2) Re-examine the bible's teaching on the role of leadership and the New Testament teaching of the pastoral office.

3) Upon being convicted of God's design for Godly male leadership, humbly resign your position and pray for God to use your life and gifts according to His will and purpose for you.

May God give us Christian women who have the inner qualities of humility, gentleness, holiness, Spirit control, and contentment so that each willingly and gladly submits to her God-given role and utilizes her great God-given gifts and abilities in His way and His will.

Recommended Book: **Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (A Response to Evangelical Feminism)** (Edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 1991)

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