

Sojourners Community Church Statement on Women and Men in Ministry

We believe the Bible teaches that men and women were created by God and equally bear his image.

Gen. 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

God's intention was for them to share oneness and community -

Gen. 2:23,24 The man said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

even as the Godhead expresses oneness within the Trinity. Each had a direct relationship with God and they shared jointly the responsibilities of rearing children and having dominion over the created order .

Gen. 1:26-28 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

However, human oneness was shattered by the Fall. The struggle for power and the desire to "rule over" another is part of the result of human sin. Genesis 3:16

"To the woman he said, I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

is a prediction of the effects of the Fall rather than a description of God's ideal order. In the context it is clearly presented as the result of sin.

In Jesus' words,

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. (Matt 20:25-28)

Leadership in University Praise, at any level, by any gender, should be seen in the context of servanthood. We are servant leaders called by God

***“to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”
(Eph 4:12,13)***

Leadership therefore is not primarily a question of authority or giving commands, but an issue of servanthood. In the fallen world we live in, leadership is often an excuse to assert power unfairly and to manipulate others. The Christian pattern of *servant* leadership is truly counter-cultural.

God has acted in Christ to redeem the human race and to offer to all people the opportunity to be part of the New Community, his church. It is God’s intention for his children to experience the oneness that exists between the Son and the Father

John 17:11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name —the name you gave me —so that they may be one as we are one.

John 17:20-23 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

This means that old divisions and hierarchies between genders and races are not to be tolerated in the church where all are “one in Christ Jesus”.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3:28)

In the formation of the church at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on women and men alike as had been predicted in the book of Joel (Joel 2:28, Acts 2:18). In the New Testament women as well as men exercise priestly and prophetic functions:

“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. (Acts 2:17,18)

Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head —it is just as though her head were shaved. (1Cor. 11:4,5)

1Pet. 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1Pet. 2:9,10).

Further, the Spirit gives gifts to all members of the New Community sovereignly, without giving anyone preferential treatment based on gender:

1Cor. 12:7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

1Cor. 12:11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

Every believer is to offer his or her gifts for the benefit of the Body of Christ:

Rom. 12:4 -8 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

1Pet. 4:10-11 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

To prevent believers from exercising their spiritual gifts is to quench the work of the Spirit.

In all attempts to understand and put into practice appropriate relationships between genders in the body of Christ, our sole authority is the will of God as expressed in Scripture.

An Examination of the scriptural texts that appear to restrict the full ministry freedom of women

1Tim. 2:11-12 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.

The interpretation of those passages must take into account their relation to the broader teaching of Scripture and their specific contexts (for example, the context that in this culture at this time, a woman was not taught the Torah and therefore would have a limited understanding of Scripture - this could be a reason for such a disqualification. In fact, some rabbis at the time thought that teaching a woman the Torah was equivalent to selling her into prostitution!) The earlier mention that women should prophesy with their head covered is a case in point, in that it obviously means that a woman in this case does not have to be silent in the church, and we also see the cultural influence with the issue of a head covering.

“After calling on the women in the congregation to adorn themselves properly, he forbids them to ‘teach in such a way as to take authority’ (reading “teach and take authority together as many scholars do, though they could be separate prohibitions). The precise meaning of the rare Greek term here used for “take authority” has been questioned. Some scholars suggest that it normally means simply “have authority” and that the passage thus excludes women from exercising any authority in the church at all. Other scholars have shown that it is often used more strongly than that in this (time) period, and may mean “seize authority”; on this reading, Paul merely forbids women to grasp for authority overbearingly, in the same way he would have forbidden it to men...

The social situation of the letter may represent a more fruitful basis for resolving the meaning of the text than the broad lexical possibilities...both Paul and his readers assumed this situation when reading the text, and the situation which elicited Paul’s response is thus part of his intended meaning. Clues in the text indicate the following situation: male false teachers (1 Tim 1:20, 2 Tim 2:17) have been introducing dangerous heresies into the Ephesian church (1 Tim 1:4-7; 6:3-5), often beginning by gaining access to its women, who would normally have been difficult to reach because of their greater restriction to the domestic sphere (2 Tim 3:6,7), Because the women were still not well trained in the Scriptures they were most susceptible to false teachers...

Whether because the women were uneducated and thus particularly susceptible to error, or because their seizing authority would have injured the church’s witness in a tense social situation, or (most likely) both, the specific situation Paul addresses invites his specific response. Paul again provides a short-range and a long-range solution. The short-range solution is that they should not take ruling positions as teachers in the church. Then long-range solution is: let them learn.

***1Tim. 2:11-14 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.
I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.
For Adam was formed first, then Eve.
And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.***

One must ask whether Paul adds this example as the basis for his point, or whether it is an ad hoc argument made up to support his main point. “His argument from Eve’s deception is more likely to be ad hoc. If he argues that Eve’s deception prohibits all women from teaching, he is arguing that all women like Eve, are more easily deceived than all men; if the deception does not apply to all women, neither could his prohibition of their teaching. It is far more likely that Paul instead uses Eve to illustrate the plight of the particular women he addresses in Ephesus, who are easily deceived because they are untrained. (Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, p.591)

1 Cor. 14:33 -35 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

“... Paul is restricting the only kind of speech addressed in these verses: asking questions. It was common in the ancient world for hearers to interrupt teachers with questions, but it was considered rude if the questions reflected ignorance of the topic. (See Plutarch, *On Lectures*) Since women were considerably less educated than men, Paul proposes a short-range solution and a long-range solution to the problem. His short-range solution is that women should stop asking disruptive questions; the long-range solution is that they *should* be educated, receiving private tutoring from their husbands. Most husbands of the period doubted their wives’ intellectual potential but Paul was amongst the most progressive of ancient writers on the subject. Paul’s long-range solution affirms women’s ability to learn and places them on equal footing with men.

Whatever reconstruction one accepts, however, two points are clear. First, Paul does not enjoin (demand) total silence from women, since earlier in the same letter he expects them to pray and prophesy publicly along with the men (1 Cor 11:4,5); he thus must enjoin only the silencing of a particular form of speaking. Second, there is nothing in the context to support the view that Paul refers here to women teaching the Bible.” i.e. there is nothing to say that this prohibition refers to women teaching the Bible. (Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, p.590)

Women in Ministry

Among the most significant ministers Paul lists in Romans 16:3-16 is Prisca (a diminutive form of Priscilla), possibly mentioned before her husband Aquila because of her higher social status. Luke also portrays her as a fellow-minister with her husband, joining him in **instructing** another minister, Apollos (Acts 18:26).

Paul also lists two fellow-apostles, Andronicus and Junia. “Junia” itself is clearly a feminine name...

In another letter Paul refers to the ministry of two women in Philippi, who, like his many male fellow-ministers, shared in his work for the gospel there. (Phil 4:2,3)
(Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, p.588,589)

Our Beliefs

We believe that, when the Bible is interpreted comprehensively, it teaches the full equality of men and women in status, giftedness and opportunity for ministry.

Therefore, in our attempt to live together as a biblically functioning community, we are committed to the following values:

To provide opportunity for ministry based on giftedness and character, without regard to gender.

To pursue the kind of purity and loyalty in relationships between genders that led the New Testament writers to describe them in terms of family, “brothers and sisters.”

To be intentional where appropriate in overcoming sexist elements of our culture and to offer encouragement to women in areas where their giftedness has been traditionally discouraged.

To teach and model these values to members of our community, to the church and to the world at large.

For further reading:

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| Bilzekian, Gilbert | <u>Beyond Sex Roles</u> | Baker |
| Barton, Ruth | <u>Becoming a Woman of Strength</u> | Shaw |
| Grenz, Stanley | <u>Women in the Church</u> | IVP |
| Hawthorne, G (ed.) | <u>Dictionary of Paul and His Letters</u> | IVP |
| Hull, Gretchen | <u>Equal to Serve</u> | Fleming H. Revell |
| Keener, Craig | <u>Paul, Women, Wives</u> | Hendrickson |
| Ogden, Greg | <u>The New Reformation</u> | Zondervan |
| Spencer, Aida | <u>Beyond the Curse</u> | Hendrickson |

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