

Women in Church Ministry

This paper looks at the sometimes contentious issue of whether or not a woman should seek ordination in order to lead a Church. It also looks at the important issue of what gives us value. Is it the position we hold in society or the Church?

Attitudes around the issue of high Church office

The attitudes and behaviour of people around the issue of high office in the Church is an area which is quite interesting and at times even entertaining if you take a step back from the seriousness of the issue. It is a subject which can take up a whole book.

Behaviours and attitudes regarding women in high office in the secular world are sometimes found in the Church. When Julia Gillard became Prime Minister in June 2010 - the only woman to become Prime Minister of Australia up to this point in time - there was great excitement from many women who saw her as someone who was lifting the value of women in society. That role worked for some, at least at a superficial level, until her political ratings plummeted and she lost her high office just three years later in 2013.

In the United States 2016 election campaign, there was quite a buzz amongst some women when it appeared that Hilary Clinton could win the election and become the first woman president of the US. One of her goals was to be a champion for women. That goal was dashed when Donald Trump (Republican) won. I must say at this point that no Christian woman should degrade herself to the point where she needs to look to the successful achievement of a politician to find worth. That is because the one who is the ruler of this universe suffered and died for sinners to bring us to himself. Consequently, it is almighty God alone who gives us value.

If someone were to place 100 billion dollars into the bank account of a destitute Christian, it would not add one cent to his core value in the eyes of God. That is because he or she has been purchased with the precious blood of Christ. A price of far greater value than silver and gold (1 Peter 1:18-19). Conversely, if someone were to take one hundred billion from a very wealthy Christian - leaving him destitute, even so, he could not diminish by one cent the intrinsic value of that Christian in the sight of God.

Further, if a man should become a great scientist and invent many things which save thousands of lives, and then rise in power to become a great leader who governs his country well, even so, his great achievements will not raise his true value by one atom above the Christian man, who in the 1950s went from house to house in the very early hours of the morning, carting away full dunny cans - one of the most despised jobs that a man could undertake at that time. Our value (man or woman) comes from God alone.

Achievement and satisfaction

Children love to play, but there comes a time when playing games fails to satisfy. Young men and women want to make their own mark on life. This is something which is built into our DNA by God. However, because of the fall, our ambitions can become skewed, leading us in a direction to which we are unsuited, or is not in our best interest, or the interest of others. We must not lose sight of the high calling

and value of the ordinary life. Note how highly Dorcas was regarded because of her hard work in the simple task of making clothes for others (Acts 9:35-41). On the other hand, we have the example of a ruler who was very destructive to his eternal condition because he ignored God and those in need (Luke 16:19-31).

Unfortunately, Christian bookshops carry a lot of books on the topic of leadership, but few on the valuable role of service. This emphasis can result in a situation where there are too many chiefs and not enough Indians. In writing this, I am reminded of an exchange between two men that my grandfather told me about back in the 1960s. When one of the men was asked what he did for an occupation, he informed the other that he was a servant. The other retorted, "A servant! I won't be a servant to any man, I serve myself." The servant replied that he was a servant to a great and honourable gentleman, and that it was an honour to serve him. He then went on to state, "If you are serving yourself, then you are serving a fool!" There is a message in that for all of us.

John the Baptist was ambitious, but it was not for himself, it was for the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30, RSV).

The push for equal rights

I have been following the arguments for and against women in a senior role in the Church from time to time since the 1970s. It was interesting to note at that time, the Churches which were pushing hardest for the ordination of women were those which were least interested in the proclamation of the Gospel. One liberal Church in Western Australia saw the issue as a human rights issue and pushed for the ordination of women together with 'gay rights' - which was quite radical in those days. The Anglican Church in Perth, has for a long time, had a very liberal view on same-sex relationships. Back in 2013, the region officially recognised same-sex relationships. It was no great surprise to me to learn in August 2017 that Perth gained the dubious honour of having the first Anglican female Archbishop in the world. The lady who now finds herself in this role is Kay Goldsworthy. Her predecessor, Roger Herft retired after admitting he had 'let down' sexual abuse survivors in the Diocese of Newcastle where he had previously served. Please note, her rise to high office is in a liberal branch of the Church, and it was precipitated by the terrible failure of a man - or several men.

From the perspective of 2018, we find that many pastors in the Uniting Church are women. Conservative Churches such as the Baptists, Presbyterians and the Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church have resisted the social trend for biblical reasons.

In the United States, the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kentucky had slipped into a liberal theological stance. Dr Albert Mohler was appointed president of the seminary in 1983 and given the task of lifting the theological standard. One liberal view which had to be tackled was the ordination of women. Mohler ceased the practice, and some women objected because they *felt* called by God to pastor a Church. Many in the liberal camp declared the Southern Baptist Seminary would suffer because of the strict theological

stance it was taking, however, the very opposite has happened; the student intake has greatly increased under Mohler. In the area of theology, he is no intellectual lightweight. In 2003, *Time* magazine labelled him the 'reigning intellectual of the evangelical movement in the US'.

The Roman Catholics are a separate group because they reject the substitutionary atonement as the sole means by which sinners are saved. They hold to a salvation through following religious ritual, particularly, the ritual of the mass. They reject the ordination of women because there is no support for the practice in the Bible, further, a very long tradition forbids the practice.

Churches that submit to the Bible as the sole guide for doctrine and practice reject the ordination of women for biblical reasons:

The headship of the man

Adam only is given the task of naming the animals and birds, signifying his leadership role. Eve plays no role in this work, and fact, she does not even exist at this time. The Bible states, "So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found." (Gen. 2:20).

God creates a woman to help the man. She is not created from the ground as Adam was, but rather, from the side of Adam. This shows the close relationship that is intended between the man and woman.

"So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man." (Gen. 2:21-22). The fact that God brings the woman to the man, and not vice versa, signifies that he is bringing a gift to the man. She will be a support and blessing to him. That is not to say, a man won't be a support and blessing to his wife.

Things start off well for Adam and Eve, however, the woman is deceived, and Adam follows her into sin. "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it." (Gen.3:6).

The curse upon man after the fall from the point of view of practical living is that he must now work hard to survive.

"To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.'" (Gen. 3:17-19). This curse upon man remains.

The curse upon woman is different, "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.'" (Gen. 3:16). Men and women try to shake off their respective curses, but are unable to. When a woman marries a good Christian man, the sting of the curse (ruling over her) is greatly diminished. Christian husbands are to be considerate to their wives. (1 Peter 3:7).

The consequence of the sin of Eve is with us today, particularly with regard to the way a Church is run. "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or 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." (1 Timothy 2:11-14).

The Bible is consistent on the above point, in another passage it states, "Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says." (1 Cor. 14:34). We do not find a corresponding passage for men that they should be in submission.

The above passage must be seen in its context. The Corinthian Church was a somewhat unruly Church - not solely due to the women. The women were making enquiries in a noisy disruptive manner. The Apostle further states, "If they want to enquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home. ..." (14:35). In summary, the command that women are to be silent in Church is not absolute. Under the authority of male headship, they can pray, give a Bible reading and give a testimony. I will hasten to add, men in the congregation are not completely free. They preach etc under the authority of the elders.

The headship of man is seen in the authorship of Scripture. God guided Moses in writing the first five books of Scripture, and He guided John in writing Revelation - the last book of Scripture. Both those writers are men, and all of the other writers are men. God has successfully kept women out of that leadership role. Furthermore, when Jesus chose disciples to learn from him and accompany him in his ministry, and subsequently lead the Church, he chose men only.

When the Church, over several centuries, drifted into ignorance, superstition and religious ritual, it was men who led the way and shone a light into the darkness. Men such as John Wycliffe (Englishman, known as the 'morning star' of the reformation), John Huss (Bohemian reformer, he was burnt at the stake for his faith), Martin Luther (German, he led the reformation in earnest from 31st October 1517), John Calvin (Frenchman, he led a theological college in Geneva from which many, including John Knox, benefited) and John Knox (He led a powerful revival which transformed the nation of Scotland).

The afore mentioned men rose to prominence in the period of the sixteenth century, with the exception of John Wycliffe who was from the fourteenth century. Under his leadership, the first English translation of the Bible was completed in 1384 - the year he died.

The two great leaders of the eighteenth century awakening were men; George Whitefield and John Wesley. In

more recent times we have Charles Haddon Spurgeon who ministered from 1851 till the end of 1891. He had a powerful influence upon the Church. That influence went well beyond the shores of his native England. He is known as “The Prince of Preachers”.

The person who is credited with preaching to more people face to face than any other person is a man. That man is Billy Graham (Nov. 1918 - Feb. 2018). He conducted more than 400 crusades in 185 countries reaching out to over 210 million people who were personally at his crusades. Many more were reached in the privacy of their homes through the medium of radio and television.

Roles within the Godhead

Men and women have different roles. The reason why the Church honours the different roles is because we see different roles within the Godhead.

The Godhead Covenant

Before the creation of the world, there was a covenant within the Godhead called by many theologians, ‘the covenant of grace’ so called, because sinful humanity does not merit the blessings flowing from the covenant. The Father determined that He would send his Son into the world to die for sinners. The Son determined that he would be obedient to the Father and suffer a cruel death on a cross for the salvation of many sinners. The Holy Spirit determined that He would raise to spiritual life, from spiritual death, all those whom the Father had determined to give to the Son (John 6:44). Those who are led to Christ are marked with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13). They are upheld and sustained by the Holy Spirit through to the time they enter Heaven. From that moment, they can no longer sin. This agreement, or covenant is obviously necessary before God could make a covenant with Abraham by which he would have many physical and spiritual descendants (Gen. 15:5, Gal. 3:6-9, 14, 29. Rom. 4:16-25).

The Godhead covenant is obviously necessary before Christ could come into the world to do what he needed to do. One thing which becomes clear from the statements of Jesus is that he was not on the Earth simply doing whatever he wanted to do - devoid of any consideration of the Father’s wishes. He was following instructions from the Father. He said, “...I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.” (John 5:30, See also Matt. 26:39). “My food”, said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.’” (John 4:34).

He shows his love through what he says, “For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.” (John 12:49). He also said “...I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. ... I always do what pleases him.” (8:28-29). He shows his love through his actions, “...the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me...” (14:31). Even to the point of laying down his life (10:17-19).

It is quite evident from the above passages that the Son loves the Father very deeply. His whole life is a display of love for the Father.

The Father’s love for the Son

It is impossible for the finite human mind to comprehend the pure love which the Father has for the Son. God is perfect, and his love is perfect. He does not act from the viewpoint of selfishness. The actions of the father are in part a reflection of his love for the Son. Of the Father’s love we read, “The Father loves the Son and shows him all he does...” (John 5:20). Jesus told the disbelieving Jews, “My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.” (8:54). The love of the Father is reflected in the high honour and privilege which is given to the Son. “The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands.” (John 3:35).

In explaining his love for the disciples, Jesus uses the love of the Father for his example, he says, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love” (John 15:9).

Jesus reveals something of the Father’s love for him when he said, “Father I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.” (John 17:24).

From the above, it is clear that there are different roles within the Godhead. It therefore follows that there are different roles for men and women, because men and women are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). Further, we should understand that all roles have high honour, even if a person carrying out the will of God should be despised and rejected by men as Jesus was (Isaiah 53:3). Many in this world are despised because simplistic worldly standards are applied, e.g. the poor widow (Mark 12:41-44) and poor Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31).

I have not heard this statement in recent decades, but it was stated in the past, “It is the role of the man to build the house, and that of the woman to decorate it.” This statement on different roles is based on such passages as (Gen. 1:1, 9, John 1:3). The Father and the Son in the Holy Trinity created the earth, and it was the Holy Spirit who hovered over the waters and gave the earth shape, making the dry ground appear (Gen. 1:9). It is the Holy Spirit who shapes and moulds the Christian. Not only do we have the Bible as a guide to roles with regard to the house, it also declares who is the head in the husband/wife relationship.

The headship role of the man in the family relationship

“Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” (Eph. 5:23). See also Col. 3:18, 1 Pe. 3:1-7.

The above command needs to be seen in the progress of the argument which is being presented to the Church. Earlier in this passage, the command to the Church is that they are to address “... one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. ...” (Eph. 5:19). Further, they are to “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (5:20).

When we move to the household situation, the command is that wives are to submit to their husbands. Nowhere in the

Bible do we find a command that husbands are to submit to their wives. A command of that type would require an overthrowing of God's plan that men are to lead the household. The progress in the instructions to households is that children are to obey their parents (Eph. 6:1). Fathers are not to exasperate their children (6:2). Note, the primary responsibility is with the fathers, there is no similar instruction to the mothers. Finally, with regard to the household, slaves are to obey their earthly masters.

It needs to be understood that the command to women that they submit to their husbands, does not mean that men are to dominate their wives. They are to have their freedoms just as men have freedoms within the bounds of work and family responsibilities. Furthermore, it does not mean that women will forever have a menial role.

Jesus informs us that he who wants to be great, must be a servant (Luke 22:26-27). Jesus was talking to men when he gave this advice, but women should take note; here is advice for your advancement. If Jesus (God in the flesh) humbled himself, then received great honour before the Father and his holy angels, it is logical to expect that humble service will bring you honour before God. He who serves best, wins.

Both men and women need to be mindful of the fact that in heaven, there will be no male or female. Jesus made this point clear when the Sadducees (a religious group) put Jesus to the test with what they thought was a difficult question. They put to Jesus a hypothetical situation where a man marries a woman and later dies. The woman marries again, but the man dies. The cycle of marriage and death happens seven times, and finally the woman dies. The Sadducees then state, "Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her? Jesus replied, 'You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.'" (Matt. 22:29-30).

Jesus not only informs the Sadducees that there will be no marriage in heaven; he also states why. In heaven, everyone will be like the angels. Those who were women on earth will not have their characteristic feminine shape, nor will men have a masculine shape. We are not to underestimate the power of God on this point, he is able to make a complete change. Some who were women on earth, serving in a humble role, will have a powerful position in the age to come.

A woman once confessed to me that she liked to get her own way in most matters which caused some friction with her husband. That was until her Church gave teaching on male headship in the family. She then decided to follow the Bible's instructions with regard to being in submission to her husband, particularly as she felt that he was very unlikely to make any bad decisions. To her surprise, the relationship improved, which resulted in her feeling quite calm and relaxed.

Moving on to the Church situation, we see that statements in Scripture regarding the appointment of an overseer in the Church, support the rest of Scripture where we see that women are not to rule over men. In each passage, we

note that men are to be appointed to the most senior position in the Church.

The office of elder

"Now the overseer is to be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?). He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap." (1 Timothy 3:2-7).

"A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well." (1 Tim. 3:12).

The Apostle Paul tells Titus, "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless - not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." (Titus 1:5-9). Please note that in the above passages, the word 'she' is not used.

An insight into the average family gives a clue as to why women should not lead in the Church environment. Many women complain that they can shout at their children to get things done, and not much happens, however, when the husband arrives in the house, he only has to speak one sentence and children take notice. That is because a man's voice has a God given note of authority. In the Church situation, there are many passages of Scripture which need to be declared with a note of power and authority. The few Churches which have a lady preacher are sadly lacking some of the note of authority which comes with good preaching from a man. Preaching is not a trivial thing which is up for grabs for anyone who puts their hand up. It must be taken seriously. In the next passage, we see that it is a man who heads the Church in Jerusalem.

James, leader of the Church in Jerusalem

"The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. When they finished, James spoke up. 'Brothers, listen to me. Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself.'" (Acts 15:12-14).

The ministry of women

Women can be a help in explaining the Scriptures to novices. Priscilla helped explain the scriptures to Apollos.

“Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervour and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.” (Acts 18:24-28).

A notable point from the above passage is that a man (Apollos) is sent out. Nowhere in Scripture do we read of a woman being sent out to lead in the development of a Church in any location. However, the work of women is important in a support role.

Priscilla helped Paul, she did not lead her own Church

“Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.” (Rom. 16:3-4).

“The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.” (1 Cor. 16:19). With the Church meeting at the house of Aquila and Priscilla, it is reasonable to assume they were leading the Church, given their good understanding of Christian doctrine, however, the text does not specifically say so.

We know that Philip the evangelist “... had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.” (Acts. 21:9), however, there is no mention in Scripture of their leading a Church. They would have, no doubt, been a great help to other women in the Church community.

The leadership of Miriam

Miriam, the sister of both Moses and Aaron leads in worship, but it was the women who followed her, not the men. “Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing.” (Exodus 15:20).

What about women in secular leadership?

Some will argue that because women have found their way into leadership positions in secular society, they should be given leadership positions in the Church also. Women such as Julia Gillard, and Margaret Thatcher have risen to the highest government office in their respective lands. Women can rise to the top when there are no strong men in the field. In the case of Julia Gillard, she was helped by strong voter support from women, but that support did not last. Margaret Thatcher had a leadership *position*, but she struggled with leading men. Several men in top government positions resigned - leaving her government weak.

In the providence of God, Great Britain was given Queen Victoria as head of state (1837-1901). Her soft hands-off approach to government affairs has helped advance democracy in Great Britain. A woman was needed on the throne to strengthen the leadership role of parliament in governing Britain.

Leadership in the Church is different to leadership of a country or state. In the Church, God is more clearly conveying spiritual truths. It is at least partly in the Church that we learn the importance of following God’s ways, and not selfish desires.

In the next passage, we will look at a passage of scripture which is often misquoted in order to support the promotion of women to senior positions in the Church.

No male or female

“... nor is there male and female ...” (Gal. 3:28). This verse is sometimes quoted to claim that because there is neither male or female in the family of God, then being female is no barrier to a senior role in the Church. A problem with that view is that it contradicts Scripture in several places. A further problem is that the statement is in the context of the doctrine of salvation. The verse quoted in full states, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). We are all connected equally to God. A little earlier, the passage says, “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God ...” (Gal. 3:26). In practical terms, this means the prayers of the daughter of the lowliest of servants has equal interest before God to that of a king. Clearly, the above scriptural passage is not talking about Church office.

Sin has consequences

We must not lose sight of the fact that sin has consequences, and becoming a Christian does not completely destroy the consequences. We still have to work, we still suffer sickness from time to time, and ultimately, we die. While women have many joys, particularly that of raising children, they also have moments of difficulty which are unique to their sacred role in the home and society. As home makers, they must submit to their husbands. However, where both husband and wife have a servant heart, that is not a particularly big problem.

Beware the standards of secular society

There has been a push for some time to have more women in politics and in the board meetings of large businesses. One lady news reporter suggested women are up to the task of senior positions in business because more women are gaining a degree from universities in recent years than men - at least, that is the situation in Australia. It could be argued that if women are as smart as men, or even smarter (based on a simplistic approach of just counting degrees), then why not place women in pulpits.

A problem with that idea is that the Church is not to follow the values of the world. The task of the Church is to proclaim an eternal message. The world sees its primary task as one of managing the economy - wealth is its goal.

The suggestion that women are smarter than men simply

because they have more degrees needs to be examined. Not all degrees are equal. The large number of degrees that women are obtaining (in Australia) are at the bottom level. Furthermore, the numbers are actually *deliberately skewed* to lift the status of women.

At the beginning of the 1960s, only around 2% of the population had the intellectual capacity to enter university and obtain a degree. Of those who obtained a degree, the vast majority were men. In this decade, there was a push to get women into the workforce, and into roles which are beyond just menial tasks. A barrier to this goal was the perception that many women had of themselves at this time, that being, that they are not up to the physical and intellectual demands of many jobs. To lift the status of women, a plan was developed which involved devaluing the university degree. This plan had the strong support of the Womens' Liberation movement which was quite militant at the time.

It was decided that a major part of the training of nurses should move out of hospitals, and into the universities. That at the successful completion of the training, a Bachelor of Nursing degree be awarded. Because women comprise at least eighty percent of the large nursing workforce, a significant number of women who in former times would not have had any hope of obtaining a degree, now have success in that ambition. So in summary, the plan has worked quite spectacularly, women have not only caught up with men, they have surpassed them in the number of degrees being awarded.

Women and atheism

Some women prefer atheism because of the perception that Christianity, along with many other religions denigrates women. Certainly, many religions *do* denigrate women. For instance, Islam would have us believe that women are used in the next life as sex slaves for the pleasure of men. Buddha was very reluctant to allow women any part in his religion. When he reluctantly gave them a part, he concluded that his religion would only last 500 years because of their inclusion. He has been proven to be wrong on that point.

Atheism is actually quite harsh on women. Darwin held to the view that women are evolutionary inferior to men. This view persists in some quarters today. Back in about 2005 (give or take two years) I noticed an article in the *Courier Mail* which gave reasons as to how women missed out in the evolutionary process. Because men and women have not evolved from a simple microbe as the theory of evolution story would have us believe, we can ignore the claim that women are of less value based on ability. As we saw earlier, our value comes from God, and is not based on ability.

Men have superior physical and mental ability. For instance, in the area of chess, women can challenge the reigning world chess champion if they have the ability, however, no woman has become the world chess champion. When it comes to solving Rubik's Cube speed records, women are not in the race. No woman has ever become world champion. Speeds for the very top ranking men are typically around ten seconds or less. Some men can even study a scrambled cube for a short while, then unscramble the cube blindfolded! Just don't hand me a scrambled cube to solve if

you are planning to get home before Christmas!

Why are men taller than women? Because women have a growth spurt at a relatively young age, then stop growing by about the age of fourteen. Men on the other hand have the growth spurt a little later. They typically don't stop growing till about the age of sixteen, consequently, men become taller than women. Just as well, a woman likes her husband to be taller than herself.

A similar thing happens mentally. Young girls initially have a head start over young boys. In the first year of primary school, girls do particularly well. By the end of secondary school, girls begin to struggle. Having worked with Church youth in the 1970s and 80s, I can testify that girls tend to be fairly mature at the age of 14-15, while boys tend to be as wild as rabbits. Girls have a quick short burst in the mental maturing process, resulting in a fairly mature level-headed girl by the age of fifteen. Now I know some mothers will say, "But you haven't met my daughter!". Please stay with me on this.

Boys continue to mentally mature over a longer period than girls. This results in men being on average, smarter than women. The above partly accounts for why some men have started very poorly in life, yet, in their mature years have achieved greatness. For instance, Albert Einstein was slow in learning to speak. His parents became so concerned they went to the trouble of consulting a doctor. Also, his schooling had a rocky start, partly because he had a rebellious streak toward authority which led one headmaster to expel him, and another to amuse later generations by declaring he would never amount to much.

As for Sir Winston Churchill, he entered Harrow Secondary School as the lowest boy in the lowest class. Yet later in life, he showed great ability. He was at the forefront of leading Britain to victory in WWII. In 1953, he won the Nobel prize for literature.

Even though women have some limitations, that is not the primary reason why they should not have a leadership position over men in the Church. The primary reason is because a woman (Eve), usurped her position over her husband and ate of the forbidden fruit - something her husband (Adam) had told her not to do. The Bible is clear on the consequences of her actions, it states, "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or 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." (1 Timothy 2:11-14).

Having put forward the case as to why women should not seek senior positions in the Church, I feel I should say something about the calling of men and women to their respective vocations in the secular world. One big question which comes to young people is; what type of work does God want me to become involved in. That question is partly resolved by a process of elimination. I sometimes suffer from motion sickness. That means I do not have permission from God to pilot small aircraft or boats. Like most people, I do not have permission from God to perform brain surgery or design

rockets. God has limited my brain power so that I do not get involved in such things.

While God has bless some with considerable brain power so that they study and obtain high degrees - as they should in most cases. There are others who study with the wrong motive.

Pride

Some have taken on a high position out of pride. They are seeking the praise of men - they are men pleasers, instead of God pleasers. This attitude has got many into a lot of trouble before God. The teachers of the law and Pharisees were highly esteemed by the people in the time of Jesus, however, the opinion of God toward these people is, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices - mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean." (Matt.23:23-26).

The religious leaders in the time of Christ thought they were great if they had the praise of men. They loved to be seen praying (Matt. 6:5-6). They also liked to be in control of others; they didn't like to serve.

It is far better to be a woman serving God and others faithfully in a menial task, than to be a man who is self-serving as the above mentioned were or the rich man (Luke 16:19-31). Jesus said, "... whoever wants to be great among you must become your servant." (Mark 10:43).

Finally, I must report that there are mental differences between men and women which make men more suitable to the role of leading a Church.

Mental differences between men and women

In the secular world, the term, 'opposite sex' is often used, while in the Church, the term 'complimentary sex' is used, that is because under the plan of God, male and female compliment each other with their slightly different outlooks and abilities. Women tend to be far more attentive when looking after children than men. They are also more sensitive to their needs. I recall a woman on the radio giving an example as to how insensitive men can be by relating how a man had decided to take his car through a car wash with his young children inside. He wondered why the children were crying by the time the wash was completed! Women are designed by God for a nurturing role which is why they easily gravitate towards positions such as nursing and teaching children. We need each other. The family unit is the ideal place to be to learn how to look after each other. God wants us to be interdependent, not independent.

Women tend to concentrate on matters close to hand which is helpful in the family situation. Men on the other hand like to look at the bigger picture. The two approaches

can be seen in the different ways men and women navigate their way through unfamiliar territory. A woman will take particular note of the immediate terrain, while a man is more likely to take into account distant landmarks.

The nurturing role of women can be a factor in the way women approach theology. A few decades back, I was part of a Church which had a male senior pastor, and a woman was in charge of organising the midweek home groups. The home groups were a place where we studied the Bible, prayed and shared with each other our personal struggles.

At one point, the woman in charge of the home group programme chose a small study booklet which dealt with moral issues. A constant theme in the booklet was, *how would you feel*, if someone did this or said that to you. After quickly looking through the book and noting the emphasis on feelings, I jumped to the front cover to see if it was written by a woman - it was. Feelings are helpful, but they are not sufficient when it comes to the matter of discerning what is the truth.

God has spoken to us clearly from Mount Sinai - so loudly that his voice shook the earth. He continues to speak to us through His Word, the Bible. A major problem with the study was the over emphasis on feelings. It failed to look at the larger picture. The author was like many women who navigate their way through unfamiliar terrain by looking at landmarks close to hand, but fail to take into account distant hills.

Summary

If God wants 50% of preachers to be women, then why aren't 50% of the writers of the Bible women? Why weren't half the disciples women. God could have given a mix of 50% to indicate his intentions for the Church, but he has not done so for His own good and perfect reasons.

A man is the proper person to lead a Church because a man is the head of the household and the Church is a family. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ. Women can easily lead other women, but they struggle when it comes to the matter of leading men. A Church needs a person who can effectively lead men. Most importantly, God has revealed to us through Scripture that men are to lead His Church under the headship of Christ.

Recommended Reading

For those who want to delve into the subject more deeply, I recommend:

"Countering The Claims Of Evangelical Feminism: Biblical responses to the key questions" by Wayne Grudem, Multnomah Publishers, Colorado Springs, Colorado, © 2006 by Wayne Grudem. 319 pages, available in paperback.

The back cover of this book reports that Dr. Grudem is Research Professor of Bible and Theology at Phoenix Seminary in Scottsdale, Arizona. Dr Grudem is the author of several books, including, "Systematic Theology" © 1994.

David Holden
© July 2018

defenceofthefait.org