

Who does God want leading His Church?, pt. 3

Male Leadership
December 6, 2009

I have been giving a lot of thought to the issue of eldership over the past month or two

- I have been so encouraged as I study Scripture on this subject

I trust that you are growing in your understanding on this topic as well

- It isn't a cardinal issue that will decide where you spend eternity
- But it still a very important issue in the life of every local church

We continue in our study of the topic *Biblical Eldership* this morning

- This will be our 3rd lesson of a 5-part series

2 weeks ago, we studied the sub-heading Pastoral leadership

- Elders are also known as shepherds and pastors, men who aspire to oversee the spiritual needs of the congregation
- They sense an overwhelming desire to this office

Last week, we studied the sub-heading Shared leadership

- It was never the plan of God to place leadership into the hands of one person
- Much to the surprise of modern-day Christianity, the pyramid structure is not only unbiblical, but it is dangerous and unhealthy

This morning, we will study the sub-heading Male leadership

- I completely understand that to make such a statement is to go totally contrary to the culture of our day and age

But I am called to preach the Word of God, in season and out of season

- Not to cater to what people want to hear

To state that God's Word mandates only males to serve in the office of elder may sound biased and discriminatory

- However, it is God's plan

To substitute our opinions and thoughts in the place of God's Word is to usurp His authority over our lives

- God knows what is best for His people

This issue of male leadership falls within the greater scope of male-female relationships as addressed in the Scriptures

- God has certainly gives us His Word
- Are we going to believe it?

It might be helpful to review the Biblical roles and distinctions of males and females

- Our sermon this morning certainly falls within this broader topic

God created Adam before Eve

- He gave to the man headship and authority over the woman (Gen 2:20, 22)
- Thus, he gave to the husband headship and authority over the wife

One of the clearest verses on this topic is 1 Corinthians 11:3, “**But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.**”

- Christ is the head of every man
- The man is the head of a woman
- God is the head of Christ

You can't rationalize this away saying that it was a cultural matter

- This is a creation matter

Furthermore, Paul restricts the woman from teaching or exercising authority over a man in the local church (1 Tim 2:12)

- Women can lovingly correct a man (we have an example in that Priscilla was involved in correcting Apollos)
- Women can lovingly add comments during a Sunday School class, for example

But a woman is forbidden from teaching and exercising authority over a man

- Other ministries that don't violate these two prohibitions are ok

In writing the epistle to the Ephesians, Paul writes, “**For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body**” (5:23)

- Christ is the Head over the Church
- The husband is the head over the wife

I have heard people say that Paul is merely citing a cultural issue at Ephesus

- But if we look at the context, that is not what Paul has in mind

Let's turn to 1 Timothy 2

- “**But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve. And *it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression. But *women* shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint. But *women* shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.**” (2:12-15)

You might say, “But Kevin, this reflects the result of the curse after the Fall. In Christ, the differences in these roles are abolished.”¹

- That would be an unBiblical statement

Paul doesn't go back to life after the Garden

- Paul goes all the way back to creation

God Himself said to Adam about his future wife, “**It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him**” (Gen 2:18)

- Eve was designed to be a “**helper suitable**” for Adam

It's been said before that the Fall resulted when Eve ate the fruit

- Almost as if the women are responsible

¹ John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur NT Commentary, 1 Timothy*, 88-89.

But if you look at Scripture carefully, the finger of God pointed at Adam, not Eve

- Sure, Eve was deceived by the serpent
- But Adam chose to sin of his own accord

In Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, the penalty of the Fall is attributed to Adam, not Eve

- This is because Adam was the leader
- He should have exercised godly leadership in resisting temptation

Even here in 1 Timothy 2:15, Paul reminds Timothy, “**But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.**”

- Does this mean that women will be saved through bearing children?
- What happens to women who can't bear children?

Paul is not advocating some type of works-based salvation for women

- He is reminding them of their greatest responsibility and privilege
- That of being a mother

Eve did commit the first human sin

- There is a certain stigma that is attached to that

But Paul says that women have been given a tremendous privilege in mothering a godly remnant

- Women need to be committed to raising children who honor God, want to obey Him, and ultimately will desire to follow Him
- “...a woman may have led the race into sin, women have the privilege of leading the race out of sin to godliness.”²

Sadly, our society has reversed this

- Our society has told women that it is restricting for women to be home

Husbands and wives, you will have to work out the specific steps in your own family

- But regardless of whether the woman works, there needs to be an absolute, unwavering commitment of the woman to the home
- The home should be the woman's #1 priority and commitment (outside her relationship with Christ, of course)

This may not be popular

- But we must strive to be Biblical in our thinking and practice

This is why this particular issue is so controversial

- People allow personal preferences to be introduced

When someone mentions the topic of male-female relationships within the local church, there is usually quite a bit of interest

- Some men want their wives to hear the sermon, because they want their wives to submit more
- Some women want their husbands to listen to the sermon, because they want their husbands to lead more

The Scriptures are clear about leadership within the local church

- To obey the Scriptures is to call for an all-male eldership

² MacArthur, 89.

To some, this seems very discriminatory and sexist³

- “Who are you to suggest this male dominant thinking is what God intended?”

Let me say a few things at the offset

- Men and women were both created by God
- They are both equal in personhood, dignity, and value
- However, they are distinct in gender roles⁴

We have to ask ourselves a very key, fundamental question at the outset of this study

- Whose authority are we going to follow:
 - o Society OR the Scriptures?

“To restrict women from the church eldership would be unjust and discriminatory if it were done arbitrarily by males for their own selfish ends, but if such restriction was part of the Creator’s wise plan, then it is not discrimination – it is just and good for the welfare of the family, the local church, and the whole human race”⁵

We must understand that this issue of male eldership falls within the overall framework of male-female differences

I. New Testament model of male leadership

The NT is full of instruction that helps us to define what male leadership entails

- Specifically, the NT provides us with three (3) models of male leadership

A. Model of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ provides us with the best model of male leadership

- Christ came into the world as the Son of God
- He didn’t come as the daughter of God

It was not a personal preference, but a theological necessity, that Jesus was a man

Just as the first Adam was a man, so Christ was called the “last Adam” and the “second man”

- Rom 5:14, “**Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come**”
- “**So also it is written, ‘The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL.’ The last Adam *became a life-giving spirit.*” (1 Cor 15:45)**

Jesus was the first-born son of David and Abraham, the true son of promise

- Jesus is the King, not the queen, of Israel
- Jesus is the Lord, not the lady, of the Church and universe

³ Much of this sermon’s outline and flow is taken directly from Alexander Strauch’s book, *Biblical Eldership*. Where there are direct quotations, I cite the page number.

⁴ Ibid., 51.

⁵ Ibid., 52.

According to creation, only the male was invested with authority

- 1 Cor 11:3, “**But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ**”

Jesus Christ was the best example of what male leadership entails

- It was impossible for Him to have been a woman

Not only do we have the model of Jesus Christ, but we also have...

B. Model of the apostles

During His earthly ministry, Jesus trained and appointed 12 men whom He called “apostles”

- Before making such an important decision, Jesus spent the entire night in prayer, asking for the will of His Father to be done
- Thus, the choice of the 12 was the direct, absolute will of God the Father and the Son

Some people claim that Jesus was merely accommodating to His culture in the selection of 12 men

- Is this an accurate assessment?
- Jesus was ultimately crucified because of His stance against the culture

Others say that Jesus’ work of redemption finally eradicated all male-female role distinctions

- In other words, there are absolutely no distinctions between what a man or a woman can do
- [Is this the right answer?](#)

Let me ask you a question...[if Jesus wanted to abolish all male-female distinctions, wouldn’t the perfect opportunity be the choosing of the 12?](#)

- Since these 12 people would ultimately shape the early years of the Church, wouldn’t it be prudent for Him to select at least one woman?

Instead, what we see is Jesus appointing only males to the foundational office of apostle

- Does this mean that Jesus was biased against women?

Much to the contrary, Jesus’ ministry was often strengthened by the ministry of various women

- Jesus truly sought to restore the dignity, value, and respect to women that God desired

Jesus had close relationships with some women (Mary and Martha); however, He didn’t choose one of them to be an apostle

When it came time for a replacement for Judas, the Text says clearly, “**It is therefore necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us**” (Acts 1:21)

- The word here for “**men**” refers only to males
- A different, more generic word for “mankind” could have been chosen

Later in the book of Acts, when there was a need for servants to care for the church’s widows, who was selected?

- Acts 6:3, “**But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task**”
- Once again, this is the specific “**men**,” not the generic term for mankind

Turn to 1 Peter 3

- It is crucial that we see the apostle’s view of women in relationship to the culture they lived in

1 Peter 3:1-7, “In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. 3 And let not your adornment be *merely* external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands. 6 Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. 7 You husbands likewise, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”

Notice that Peter labels women as “a fellow heir of the grace of life”

- She is his equal in terms of essence – neither is more saved than the other
- She is different in function – the role that she serves is distinct than his

Husbands, verse 7 is a tremendous reminder of our responsibility toward our wives, “You husbands likewise, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered”

- If we aren’t leading properly, then our prayers will be hindered!

We have seen the model of Jesus Christ and the apostles...now look at

C. Model of the early church

All of the OT and NT writers were males

- Most of the NT was written by Paul, a male

In the marriage relationship, it is the male, not the female, who has been given the authority to lead

- Eph 5:22-24, “Wives, *be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.*”

Col 3:18, “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”

- Titus 2:1-5, “But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. 2 Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. 3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4 that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 *to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored.*”

Husbands, we are called to lead our families

- To shepherd our families

How well can you answer these questions?

- Are you reading the Word of God and praying with your spouse and children?
- Are you taking the time to discipline your children, teaching them that God requires obedience?
- Do you take the time to point your family back to the Gospel when sin is committed?
- Do you realize that God has required you to be the leader and ultimate decision-maker in every area of your family: finances, worship, time, church involvement, etc.?

Listen to this quote from John Piper – I pray that it impacts you

- “If I were to put my finger on one devastating sin today, it would not be the so-called women’s movement, but the lack of spiritual leadership by men at home and in the church. Satan has achieved an amazing tactical victory by disseminating the notion that the summons for male leadership is born of pride and fallenness, when in fact pride is precisely what prevents spiritual leadership. The spiritual aimlessness and weakness and lethargy and loss of nerve is the major issue, not the upsurge of interest in women’s ministries.

Pride and self-pity and fear and laziness and confusion are luring many men into self-protecting, self-exalting cocoons of silence. And to the degree that this makes room for women to take more leadership it is sometimes even endorsed as a virtue. But I believe that deep down the men – and the women – know better. Where are the men with a moral vision for their families, a zeal for the house of the Lord, a magnificent commitment to the advancement of the kingdom, an articulate dream for the mission of the church, and a tenderhearted tenacity to make it real?”⁶

Men, it does not good to rebuke our wives for exercising leadership in the home if we are not leading ourselves

- Someone has to lead the home
- Shame on us if we are not doing so!

Many marriages are running contrary to Scripture

- Instead of the husband leading and the wife following, the reverse is true
- Ladies, can I urge you to re-examine your God-given function in the relationship?

God’s plan and order is for men to lead in both the home and in the church

- Instead of rewriting Scripture, let’s submit ourselves to the teaching of God’s Word

Most women agree that it is much easier to submit to a husband who seeks to lead according to God’s plan

- Men, can I ask you a convicting question?
- **Could it be that the reason that you wife is not submitting to you properly is because you are not leading and loving properly?**

The marriage relationship is a living picture of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church

- The Church is subject to Christ in everything
- We don’t reject His leadership and expect God to bless it

The wife is subject to her husband

- She should submit to her husband as she submits her own life to Jesus Christ

This submission is the very essence of a good marriage relationship

Paul teaches male leadership not only in the home

- But also in the local church

Turn to 1 Timothy 3

- Paul gives us the entire purpose of his writing this epistle
- 1 Timothy 3:14-15, **“I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; 15 but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth”**

⁶ John Piper, “A Vision of Biblical Complementarity,” in *Rediscovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, 53-54.

Notice the different terms that Paul uses of the church

- “the household of God”
- “the church of the living God”
- “the pillar and support of the truth”

“household” obviously implies that God’s people are a family

- In a family, there must be leadership

It is without question that the basic social unit is the family

- The male is the family leader

Once again, this does NOT minimize the significance of female involvement

- Paul often ministered with women
 - o Phoebe (Rom 16:1)
 - o Prisca (Rom 16:3)
 - o Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2-3)

In the church of Ephesus, some false teaching had crept in

- This false teaching said that the traditional male-female distinctions were no longer true

Paul prohibits women from teaching men

- This does not mean that women cannot teach other women

Titus 2:5 – older women are to teach the younger women

- There is a great need for some older, mature ladies in this church to teach the younger ladies

Paul also prohibits women from “exercising authority over a man”

- This can cover a wide range of topics
- The general principle is found in 1 Tim 2:11, “Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.”

Although women are restricted from holding the office of an elder, they are not restricted from ministry altogether

- There are many opportunities here in this church for women to fill
- You will be making an eternal impact on the lives of others

Notice also that immediately following this section on the role of the woman is the qualifications of an elder

- All of the qualifications assume a male to be in focus
 - o “the husband of one wife”
 - o “one who manages his own household”

Another similar text is 1 Corinthians 14:33-38

- Although addressed to a different congregation, it is the same general teaching

1 Corinthians 14:34-35, “Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. 35 And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church”

- The prohibition is that women are not permitted to speak

Three times, Paul repeats the same thought

- 14:34a, “Let the women keep silent in the churches”
- 14:34b, “for they are not permitted to speak”
- 14:35b, “for it is improper for a woman to speak in church”

What does Paul mean by this silence?

- 1 Cor 14:26 – no restriction on singing, praying and worshipping God

Paul does not allow women to govern or lead the congregation

- Specifically, in this context, women should not question their husbands during times of prophecy
- To question a prophecy was not their place: it was the responsibility of the other prophets to do so (14:29)

If the women had questions, they were to ask their husbands at home

- This way, there would be no dishonor

This does not mean that women cannot sing (choir, congregation, solos, duets, etc.), ask questions during Bible study, etc.

God has ordained that in the local church, men are to be the leaders, “guiding” the service

- “Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension” (1 Tim 2:8)

In this day of Christianity, it is sad to see how many churches are abandoning the clear teaching of God’s Word for the sake of convenience

We have studied the NT model of male leadership: Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the early church

II. Modern-day opposition to male leadership

There is a growing movement in today’s religious movement that seeks to abolish all male-female distinctions

- It is called Biblical Feminism

What Scriptures do they use to justify their teachings?

- Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”

This group of people believes that Christ’s word of redemption totally eliminated the different roles between male and female

Although there are seven (7) distinct passages that deal with women’s submission, they say that these should all be interpreted in light of the clearer Text

- Galatians 3:28

First of all, let’s observe the context surrounding this verse

- One of the key elements of Bible study is the step of observation
- Looking at the context, key words, repetition, etc.

The context speaks of matters relating to salvation, not male-female roles

- 3:24 – the Law was like a Tutor, leading us to faith in Christ
- 3:26 – everyone who is justified is an adopted child of God, through faith in Christ

- 3:27 – those who have been justified are placed into the spiritual body of Christ, the Church

After these steps of observation, we observe that the Text presents a liberating thought

- *Every believer, regardless of race, social status, or gender, is an equal heir of God's grace*

In other words...

- Men aren't more saved than women
- Jews aren't more saved than Gentiles

There is spiritual equality in God's eyes!

- We are all part of the same spiritual family
- We have the same spiritual Father

We do have different functions in the Body of Christ; however, we are still equal members in the Church

Galatians 3:28 does NOT address male-female role distinctions, however

- This text cannot be used to support such a view as the Biblical Feminists espouse
- That was not Paul's purpose

What is sad is that the Biblical Feminists think that they are bringing more dignity, value, and respect to women

- Changing the Scriptures, however, never pleases God

God's Word has actually been used to restore women's dignity, much to the surprise of many

- God has given women a particular role and function in the home and in the church
- The greatest way to receive God's favor is to obey and abide by those passages

Why does Copperfield Bible Church affirm that only males can aspire to the office of elder?

- Because God's Word, interpreted correctly, affirms this truth

Women, let me encourage you to guard your hearts

- Your greatest ministry is in the home, toward your family
- Make your family your priority

Within the church, feel free to serve in the God-ordained parameters

- This church needs godly women serving in many areas

Scripture is clear in teaching male leadership

- NT model of male leadership
 - o Jesus Christ
 - o Apostles
 - o Early church
- Modern-day opposition to male leadership

Be a good Berean...study modern-day movements to make sure that they align themselves with God's Word