

Hot Topics

Be A Man

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1 Kings 2:1-3; 1 Corinthians 16:13, 14; 1 Timothy 2:12-14

Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying: ²“I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. ³ And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn (1 Kings 2:1-3).

Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all that you do be done in love (1 Corinthians 16:13, 14).

And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression (1 Timothy 2:12-14).

Introduction

The short list of current Hot Topics must include the Southern Baptist Convention ousting Saddleback Church from its denomination. Saddleback was the largest church in the denomination, boasting over 90 churches in Orange County, tens of thousands of baptisms, 15 U.S. campuses and four international campuses. Their impact has been massive. In an effort to ward off this expulsion, their pastor highlighted all they achieved at their convention. Clearly, it did not have the desired impact.

So, what was their great crime?

In the Spring of 2021, Saddleback announced it ordained three women as ministers. The SBC's doctrinal policy states, “While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.” The founding pastor, after citing

the churches astonishing success, called out those who were behind this ousting as “bickering over secondary issues.”

I am not going to be unclear on this. I think the SBC was right in what they did. I think that arguing based upon how “successful” you’ve been is that type of pragmatic approach to ministry that opens the door to compromise, creating a ministerial wagon that is hitched to the world. To argue that it is a secondary issue is not an argument at all, but an attempt to sweep the issue under the carpet. Is gossip a secondary issue? Is gluttony a secondary issue? Perhaps. But if your church started a gossip ministry, would it be allowed because its secondary?

Among the efforts to de-escalate the issue was the watering down of the title, minister or pastor. This is a common phenomenon. I’ve seen churches where they have the pastor of parking or coffee ministry. Of course, this dramatically alters the meaning of the word. There certainly is a sense in which we should all do the work of a ministering, shepherding, serving, etc. But the Scriptures do talk about specific offices with specific requirements (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1).

If this is the case, this redefinition needs to be made clear. We all know that neither Dr. J nor Dr. Dre are actual doctors. And I’m pretty sure that Queen Latifah is not an actual queen.

But the redefinition of these terms is not the true issue. There is a full-fledged effort to either ignore, or entirely miscalculate what the Scriptures say on this issue. I daresay that the moment people (many Christians) hear that our church only has male elders, that becomes a deal-breaker for them. But one is hard-pressed to find a topic that is more perspicuously biblical than the mandate the elders and pastors (sometimes called teaching elders) are to be men.

And though we will not dig too deeply here, I chose the opening passages because we live in a unisexual type of era where our culture is seeking to blur the distinctions between men and women altogether. For now, we’ll primarily address the call of men to these defined ministerial offices.

Men Called to Ministerial Office

Briefly, in the Old Testament Noah was a preacher, not his wife. The twelve tribes of Israel were established by the sons of Jacob, not the

daughters. In the New Testament/Covenant Jesus chose twelve men to be His apostles. The Apostle Paul, when laying out the requirements for elders and deacons indicates that they are to be the **“husband of one wife” (Titus 1:5)**, which is literally a **“one woman man”** *mias gunaikos aner*, not a one man woman.

Paul then becomes very specific in his writing of a pastoral epistle, which details precise instructions regarding the functioning of the church.

And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression (1 Timothy 2:12-14).

Notice that this is not based upon some cultural era, but it extends back to creation. In another passage addressing worship, Paul makes a similar statement:

But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God (1 Corinthians 11:3).

This design extends back before the fall.

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him” (Genesis 2:18).

So, this hierarchical structure is not, as some argue, a result of the fall and should be reversed as the world is sanctified. And so far from this being a secondary issue, the Bible presents this model from Genesis to Revelation.

Before everybody runs out screaming ‘chauvinist,’ hear the arguments against this complementarian (as it is often called) view. Then we’ll finish seeking to clear the air on what has become a heated and twisted topic of headship or leadership.

The arguments against the passages I’ve presented (and many others like them) can be distilled into three sorts:

First, that during the time of Christ (and certainly before Christ) women were viewed as belonging to an inferior category, which often dehumanized them. That ended with Christ.

Second, during the period in which Christ (or other New Testament writers) lived, women were uneducated. That is no longer the case.

Third, the New Testament appears to present a number of women who are notably significant in a ministerial capacity. It is argued that it is unreasonable to conclude that they would not have been pastors, elders or (at least) eligible for the office.

Did Jesus and Paul Cave?

Those who argue that women belonged to an inferior category (which is very likely a historical truth) must also argue that Jesus and Paul (and others) caved when it came to that view. When Jesus picked twelve men to be Apostles, was He capitulating to the functions of a sinful culture? That hardly seems like Jesus. He certainly wasn't in the habit of de-escalation when it come to the habits and convictions of the world into which He was born!

This militates against those who argue that He was merely being sensitive to the worldly ways by which He was surrounded. If He enlisted a female apostle, He would have unnecessarily alienated His culture. Again, not something Christ seemed terrible concerned about. Let us not forget that Jesus was in the habit of giving sermons that caused **“many of His disciples to turn back and no longer walk with Him” (John 6:65).**

Also, if this were a major concern for Jesus, He would have never spoken to the woman at Jacob's well. The disciples marveled “that He was talking with a woman” (John 4:27). In fact, there were multiple reasons Jesus was defying His culture in this encounter. She was a woman. She was a Samaritan. She had a questionable reputation.

Add to this (as egalitarians so eagerly point out) Jesus will engage women in some very significant roles. If He were caving to the culture, why would He do that? You can't have it both ways. You can't say that He was being sensitive to His culture while, at the same time, changing the boundaries. This first point seems to die on its own sword.

Uneducated

The second argument was that women were uneducated in those days. Would Jesus disqualify someone from service due to a lack of formal education? Scripture is not silent on this:

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

The notion that women were excluded from these offices due to a lack of education, or intellect, is clearly inconsistent with the biblical record. Priscilla is prominently mentioned, along with her husband, as taking Apollos (who was “eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures”) aside and explaining “the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26). We also have a clear account of Mary sitting at “Jesus’ feet” hearing His word (Luke 10:39).

There is no indication that the women surrounding Jesus, and operational in the New Covenant church, were less educated than the men. Yet we do not see them either occupying, or called to occupy, offices of pastor, elder or deacon in the church. This naturally brings out attention to the significantly ministerial women in the New Testament.

Significant Women in Scripture in Ministry

The final argument is that women like Mary Magdalene, Phoebe, Priscilla, Junia and others give a clear indication that women can fill the roles of pastor, elder and/or deacon. After all, Phoebe is called a deacon!

N. T. Wright argues that when Jesus tells Mary Magdalene to tell the disciples that He had risen and would soon ascend (John 20:17, 18) that “all bets are off” regarding women pastors. It was the most important message in Scripture and Jesus entrusts it to a woman!

Of course, no one is remotely suggesting that women can’t tell people that Jesus is resurrected. No one is suggesting that the Samaritan woman in the fourth chapter of John should not have gone into the city to tell everyone of her encounter with Jesus. But Wright conveniently ignores the (what should be) obvious fact that Jesus did not then make Mary an

Apostle. What seems obvious to Wright was not as obvious to Paul when he wrote that elders should be men and that women should not hold the office of teacher.

Wright makes two more arguments along these lines which reveals a methodology that, in my opinion, show him to be a very dangerous resource. He argues that Phoebe was a deacon without given any explanation that the word deacon, though sometimes referring to the office of deacon, is also a word which simply means servant. That would be like calling someone an elder simply because they happen to be elderly.

Add to this his assertion that there is about a seventy percent chance that Phoebe (delivering the letter of Romans to Rome), also read and taught that what the letter meant. Wright gives no biblical warrant for this assertion. It is, little doubt, a conclusion he drew from extrabiblical studies regarding first century culture. This is a common practice of Wright, causing him to reinterpret Scripture based upon historical phenomenon rather than Scripture itself.

Finally, Wright states unequivocally, that Junia was an apostle, based upon Romans 16:7, which reads:

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me (Romans 16:7).

Both in English and Greek the above sentence can possibly mean Junia is an esteemed apostle or that the apostles held her in high esteem. But to state authoritatively that she was an apostle (based upon this single verse) is simply false.

And, as stated earlier, we have Priscilla. That she was involved in the correction of Apollos does not make her a pastor, elder or deacon. On the contrary, her obvious intellect militates against the notion that women in that culture were uneducated.

True Leadership

God calls men to lead. Perhaps people have such a strong, and often negative, reaction to that because we have a dark and twisted understanding of leadership. I've heard many women give very agitated

responses to this, often with some accusation of men wanting power. Maybe there is some truth to that. But if people think it's about power, and they want it, maybe there is something else going on.

But true leadership is not about glorying in the power or control over the lives of other people. True leadership can best be described by Jesus, the head of the church, who said,

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷ And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave — ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:25-28).

Allow me to parenthetically state here that in all of what we're saying, we should not place some type of inherent superiority in one sex over the other. In His own image, God created us "**male and female**" (**Genesis 1:27**). Let it also be stated that when it comes to being "**one in Christ**" there is "**neither male nor female**" (**Galatians 3:28**).

I've also chosen not to get into details as to why God has made the determination to have men in this role (though it is a topic addressed at some level in Scripture). But even if it seems arbitrary to us (like not eating from a certain tree in the garden), the Scriptures are not unclear on who is to hold these offices.

Instead of looking at the way men are, and bemoaning their inclusion, and even incompetence, perhaps we should look at the way men should be. The men in the room should pursue biblical manhood. And the women in the room should encourage (and by this I mean a wise, patient, loving, thoughtful encouragement) men to be what the Scriptures call them to be.

In my preparation for this message, I came upon a female, feminist pastor trying to paint Jesus as a 5'1" thin, weak metrosexual. I am under the conviction that we should not consider what Jesus looked like at all (Isaiah 53:2). She was clearly seeking to undermine the masculinity of Jesus. But Jesus was a man and, no doubt, exhibited all the attributes of a godly man.

Though I am running out of time here, I will say two things that sum up biblical manhood, the neglect of which has opened the door to this widespread disobedience in the issue under our current consideration.

First, it is (as seen above) servanthood. Men, especially in leadership, are called to serve. Whatever authority has been given to men, should be used for the benefit of those they have authority over.

Second, men must take responsibility. The elders of this church are responsible to God (more than others) for what happens in this church.

...for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account (Hebrews 13:17).

As a husband and father, I am the primary one who will give account for my household. Keep in mind, that even though it was Eve who was deceived and ate first (Genesis 3:6), Adam is the one God held responsible for the fall (Romans 5:14, 15).

We saw in our opening passages a call to **“prove yourself a man”** to **“act like men, be strong.”** In our current muddled affair regarding sex, do we even know what passages like that mean?