

Elders at WBC

The Question of Gender Session 1

- A. Complications in Addressing the Issue
- B. Dangers of Predetermined positions
- C. Clarity of the question
- D. Definition of Terms



Weekly Breakdown of the Study

Session #1

- A. Complications in Addressing the Issue
- B. Dangers of Predetermined positions
- C. Clarity of the question
- D. Definition of Terms - complementarian and egalitarian

Session #2

Identify the Relevant Texts:

- 1 Cor 11:2-15
- 1 Cor 14:33-35
- Gal 3:28
- Eph 5:21-33
- 1 Tim 2:11-15
- 1 Tim 3:2-13 / Titus 1:5-9
- 1 Peter 3:1-7
- Genesis Creation Narrative

Session #3

- 1. Understanding Biblical Narrative and Historical Context
- 2. Redemptive Movement Hermeneutic
- 3. The Critical Passages - Learning and Discerning

Session #4 - Conclusion

Moving Ahead on the Issue
Open Discussion

Elders - A Question of Gender

A discussion towards maturity of thought for Wyoming Baptist Church with respect to women serving as Elders.

A. Complications in addressing the issue:

1. Our minds are already made up
 - do I enter this discussion to learn or to defend?

2. What exactly is the question being asked? (any church office, elders only, teaching roles...)
 - women in any church office?
 - teaching or roles of leadership / authority?
 - specifically the role of elders - and therefore pastors / paid ministry staff?

3. Proper understanding and Application of Biblical Texts
 - To what extent does cultural context matter when discerning Biblical text?
 - Does scripture establish principles that are unspoken?
 - Inconsistent application of relevant scriptures (1 Tim 3)
 - Apparent contradictions (1 Cor 11:5 vs 1 Cor 14:34-35)

4. Deeply Personal and Very Important Issue
 - “this is not carpet colours”
 - gender limitations are interpreted as determining the value of a person
 - historically hotbed of controversy
 - men have historically done a terrible job of protecting the value and rights of women
 - culture has RADICALLY redefined gender, increasingly argues NO difference between them. To state otherwise is increasingly unacceptable.
 - So, how can we uphold the Biblical definition of gender in this culture without making the same careless and unacceptable mistakes of the past?

Elders - A question of Gender

“As leaders in the 21st century church, we need to honour and respect each other as we hold to differing positions on the role of women in ministry, recognizing that this has nothing to do with belief or unbelief in biblical authority and everything to do with a very difficult hermeneutical issue.”

David Barker M.Div, Th. M, Th.D.
Academic Dean-Seminary
Head Professor of Pastoral Studies

B. The Danger of Predetermined Fixed Opinions

1. This is not simply a matter of whether or not one is committed to believing / following the Bible, because:

By being selective about which texts I choose to highlight, I can quite convincingly argue both perspectives from scripture.

Examples:

Gen 1: 27-28 - no observable framework of hierarchy based on gender

1 Cor 11:3-9 - clearly male headship, submissive women

God fearing, Christ-following disciples who are deeply studied scholars of scripture come to different conclusions about this issue. What does that suggest to you?

Notwithstanding what the Bible says about women and church leadership, it also says:

Phil 2:1-4:

HUMILITY OF CONVICTION - consider others better than yourselves

Eph 4:2-6:

SEEKING PEACE = VALUE TO POSITION - primary goal is unity of the spirit

Col 3:12-17:

PEACE, GOSPEL DWELLS, TEACH ONE ANOTHER - not ultimatums

2. This is not simply a matter of the church needing to change a long standing position on something in order to be more culturally relevant because:

In order to minister effectively, churches cannot afford to be ignorant of cultural standards and norms, but Church doctrine cannot be determined by them

James 4:4 - a willingness to set aside the foundation of scripture just to be culturally “friendly” puts us in opposition to God...BUT

1 Cor 9:19-23 - We must always push ourselves to be culturally relevant, and we hold to the foundational principles of the word of God as we do so as to win them for the gospel.

Conclusion: Although our cultural realities will not determine our church governance, we must not ignore the cultural realities around us - we must consider and appreciate the context in which God has placed us.

3. The life-long process of **discipleship** is grounded in the experience of scripture challenging our current understanding. We should be **seeking** to be challenged and changed, perhaps ESPECIALLY in the matters where our minds are “made up”.

The moment we decide “I have no more room for growth in this matter” is the moment we prove ourselves to be in need of further development - perhaps even with respect to that very issue.

C. Clarifying the Question

Refresher on Biblical definition of Elders and Deacons

Describe Elders: _____

Describe Deacons: _____

The Question is not:

Women as deacons, since: the New Testament names women deacons, elders are not deacons, one does not necessarily preclude the other

Women as teachers, since: not only elders teach, teaching gift is not limited to elders

Women in leadership or authority, since: eldership is one one form of leadership

The Question is:

When we establish the office of elder for our church, will that role be reserved only for men or will it include both men and women?

Problem: The consistency of scripture citing.

Example: The inconsistent application of 1 Tim 2 - v 12 (not teach or have authority), but what about v 8, 9 and 15? It is often used as an argument against women as elders without ever asking WHAT IS SPECIFIC TO THAT CONTEXT?

The danger is manipulation of the text such that it serves my perspective rather than the original intended purpose.

Example: 1 Tim 2

D. Definition of Terms

Complementarian - limits on women in church ministry to complement the leadership of men

***This view is most often argued as the “more biblical view”

What is the most significant concern with a church adopting this view?

Egalitarian - no limitations of differentiation of church leadership roles on the basis of gender

***This view is most often argued as the

“more realistic / culturally sensitive view”

What is the most significant concern with a church adopting this view?
