

Elders at WBC

The Question of Gender Session 2

- A. Quick Review of Session 1
- B. The Commonly Cited 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 and Titus 1:5-9
 - 1 Peter 3:1-7
 - Genesis Creation Narrative



Elders - A question of Gender

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

Session 1 Review

A. Things that make the issue complicated:

- We come into the discussion with our minds already made up - dangerous
- We are often unclear about the specific question being asked and its implications
- Most of us lack a sufficient understanding and consistent application of the biblical texts
- It is a very delicate, personal and volatile issue with a tainted and poorly handled history

B. The dangers of predetermined positions and stubborn posture

- It's not as simple as "I believe what the bible says" (I can argue both sides from scripture)
- It's not a simple matter of the church needing to be "current" or culturally politically correct - that's not how we establish church doctrine or governance. We have to find our place between "friends with the world" [James 4] and "be them to win them" [1 Cor 9]
- Defiance, stubbornness and an unwillingness to be moved in our convictions is the OPPOSITE of what life-long discipleship is about. Hard core committees studied and confident Jews were 100% wrong about Jesus - named as "brood of vipers".

C. Clarified the Question

- throughout the last 4 years, our church has been in the process of redefining the meaning to "deacon", and thus "church leadership", and we have introduced the term "elder", so especially for WBC, we need to be very clear about the discussion we are having.
- NOT about women serving as deacons, team or committee leaders, teachers...
- ONLY about the role of elder
- we recognized that sometimes biblical text is manipulated to serve our own purposes

D. Definition of Terms

- Complementarian (women haters?) and Egalitarian (unbiblical hippies?)

SESSION 2

The Most Commonly Cited Texts

1 CORINTHIANS 11:2-15

1 Cor 11:2-15

²I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. ³But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. ⁵But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. ⁶For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.

⁷A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. ⁸For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; ⁹neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. ¹⁰It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels. ¹¹Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. ¹²For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. ¹³Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, ¹⁵but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering.

Given a little understanding about the environment of the church in Corinth, what is the underlying likely reason for confusion about the Jewish tradition of head covering?
meshing of two cultures (Jew and Gentile), class struggles -the rights of the wealthy and powerful in conflict with the requirements of religious traditions, exterior political influences

What is most valuable for us to extract from this passage ?

this is about personal rights as they sometimes conflict with church practice, the underlying lesson about humility, whatever practice of the church it may be across any culture

Consequently, is this text helpful or directly applicable to discussion regarding church governance?

not particularly, and definitely not with respect to the issue of women as elders, primarily addressing the human tendency to demand my own rights...

1 CORINTHIANS 14:33-35 (where is the punctuation in your bible?)

³³For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people.

³⁴Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. ³⁵If 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.

Does knowing anything about the church in Corinth help you imagine what might have been happening that Paul was addressing in these comments?

chaos and confusion in the church that may have been generated by political pressures, class struggle trump personal humility

What is the literary context for these statements (what is this chapter about)

Expression of spiritual gifts in church gatherings, specifically tongues

Do we typically seek to enforce this scripture in our church today? **Why not?** Why do we not demand “women should remain silent in the churches”?

the statement is not intended to be a cross-cultural timeless principle intended to govern the church for all time, but a statement made by Paul to address a specific issue in Corinth.

This means we agree that some NT Biblical statements are not intended to be adopted as timeless cross-cultural prescriptive commandments, so we will need to learn how to discern one from the other.

Consequently, is this text helpful or directly applicable to discussion regarding church governance or whether or not women should be considered as elders?

No, would need to stretch the principles too far to be rightly applied to governance.

DISCUSSION: The apparent conflict within the letter of 1 Cor

1 Cor 11:5 allows for a woman to pray or prophesy publicly, but 1 Cor 14:34 clearly states that women are to remain silent in church. What principles of **context** help us to resolve this apparent contradiction?

The two sections are dealing with different topics - 1 Cor 11 is all about personal rights vs Jewish traditions. 1 Cor 14 is addressing the issue of discerning and expressing the gifts of tongues and proper conduct in their worship gatherings

Conclusion: BOTH passages from 1 Cor articulate a principle of male leadership / headship, but Neither passage is particularly helpful or applicable to the issue of church governance

GALATIANS 3:28

*²⁶So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸**There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.** ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Does knowing something about the background and purpose for the letter change how you might receive this particular verse?

Absolutely - the historical and cultural context sheds light on his choice of words

Is the historical (cultural) context for this issue the same today as then or different?:

Causes us to ask what demands do modern Christians sometimes place on those coming to faith. Practical issue (circumcision) not the same, but the idea of the "established church" requiring religious practice from new converts probably very similar.

Consequently, is this text helpful or directly applicable to discussion regarding church governance?

NO. Has nothing to do with governance or leadership of the church, helps us to be mindful of cultural and social barriers, demands that we give sober thought to long-standing structures and practices, focussing on our ONENESS in Christ that should be our priority

EPHESIANS 5:21-33

²¹Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

*²²Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. **²³For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour.** ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. **²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her** ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰for we are members of his body. ³¹“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” ³²This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. **³³However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.***

Reminder - what is the CENTRAL theme of the letter?

NEWNESS OF IDENTITY in Christ - viewing yourself NOT through social or cultural constructs, but in light of God’s purposes and redemption of his people

Is there any reason to suggest the principles are historically or culturally limited?

There is no obvious reason to limit the principles in this text either historically or geographically

In this specific passage what are the primary characteristics that this text calls on men to exhibit?

Sacrificial love, selfless expression of love for others (wife)

What are the primary characteristics that this text calls on women to exhibit?

submission to husbands headship

If Paul is writing a generic letter for “all churches”, why do you think he chose these few principles for men and women to be reminded of?

Why do men need to be reminded of the call to selfless love?

Why would women need to be reminded of the respect for their husbands?

Who are most of the comments directed towards? If this passage were considered a corrective or instructional passage for one specific gender, who is it? _____

In what ways is this text helpful for us in the discussion about church governance and elders?
indirect, as it is not specifically about church structure, but helpful, as it is a letter about Christ-like teaching as it applies to the church in general

To the extent that we affirm the principle that the church is a reflection of the family, it can prove to be very helpful (establishes a matter of character and principle for male elders to be sacrificially loving and compassionate)

HELPFUL? - re-affirms the differences between men and women, and targets men as needing to be reminded what headship is supposed to look like

Reminder - what is the CENTRAL theme of the letter?

NEWNESS OF IDENTITY in Christ - we do not view ourselves through social or cultural constructs, but in light of God’s purposes and redemption (redemptive work)

Leadership in the church is supposed to look very different than leadership in cultural norms

1 TIMOTHY 2

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.³ This is good, and pleases God our Saviour,⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.⁵ For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.⁷ And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.⁸ Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.⁹ I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes,¹⁰ but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.¹¹ A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve.¹⁴ And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.¹⁵ But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

What's the problem with using 2:12 as a reference text for arguing they should not serve as church elders?

This section does not appear to be about church governance, we can't "pick and choose" v 11-12 and ignore v 8-10, and 15 (what is v 15 about???)

what is this section about? - poor conduct when the church gathered together

While they are rarely considered to mean the same, the use of "quiet" in verse 2 is the same root word as "quietness" or "silence" in v 11. What does this imply Paul is meaning to say in v 11?

peaceful, properly reverent, not "silence" or the absence of speaking

What is the word to describe the posture Paul is describing of men in v 8? surrender

Given what you know about the overall picture of the church in Ephesus (state of things), what is it that makes sense to ask men to “adopt a posture of surrender” and women to “adopt an attitude of peace and respect”? Does understanding the bigger picture make the verses about “silence” more understandable?

Is this text directly applicable to the issue of church governance?

Not in any way that is helpful to the discussion

This letter, written only 2 years later echoes Eph 5 calling women to submission and quietness. What does that make you suspicious was one of the problems in the Ephesian church?

possible that a group of women who were acting demanding, brash, antagonistic, harsh???

Does this appear to be a good text to use as a reference for establishing church governance?

Probably not - not about church governance, written in response to a church expressing a variety of poor behaviours. It seems its addressing something far too specific to be used a a general framework for church governance.

Within this letter, Paul addresses the **qualifications for leadership in the church**

1 Timothy 3:2-13

²Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. ⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. ⁷He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

⁸In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁹They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

¹¹In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. ¹²A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. ¹³Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

⁵The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. ⁶An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. ⁷Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹He 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

From knowing a bit more about the situation in Ephesus when, why is defining qualifications for leadership important?

the church lacked leadership and the results were misguided teaching, wrong priorities...

Does this text appear to make any allowance at all for female elders (overseers)?

nothing in this text suggests the affirmation of female elders

Does this text appear to make any allowance at all for female deacons?

clearly includes women in leadership roles, versions differ on how v11 is translated

Does the New Testament provide for female deacons in other texts? What might this suggest?

Yes, Paul names and identifies female deacons elsewhere, something unique about the leadership requirements in Ephesus at this time?

1 PETER 3:1-7

Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, ²when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, ⁶like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

⁷Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Does the broader literary context for these statements provide any insight to what the central lesson is from this text? What is the main focus of Peter's letter?

The conduct of God's people under suffering and injustice, especially as a testimony to the pagan world around them

Is this text helpful or directly applicable to discussion regarding church governance:

this is not about church governance, but about the conduct of the church as testimony
question: as testimony, should principles of male / female relationship should be applicable
across all facets of life, including the structure of the church

GENESIS CREATION / FALL NARRATIVE

Gen 2:18-25 - Paul makes reference to this in 1 Tim 2:11-15 when he was explaining to Timothy why he does not permit women to teach or have positions of authority.

1 Tim 2 is not about church governance. Does Gen 2:8-25 help at all?

no, probably to a good reference text for church governance

Does Gen 3:16 make the case for or against women as elders? (...and he will rule over you)

Gen 3:16 highlights that the struggle between man and woman is a consequence of sin, establishes it as an overarching principle, so it neither helps nor hinders the argument about women as elders

Should it be a central text in the discussion regarding church governance?

probably not, 2:18 which names women as man's helper might be more relevant, but even that would lack the definitive or obvious connection

Is there an overall theme in the creation story that establishes a Biblical pattern for thinking of the relationship between man and woman?

God's plan was to have man and woman partner together to over creation, but it also identifies them as two distinct creatures - not identical in origin or purpose.

CONCLUSION

The scriptures that address women as elders most directly are:

- Eph 5:21-33 - def'n of the marriage covenant relationship between man and woman
- 1 Timothy 3:2-13 - qualifications for elders and church leaders

The texts that of a secondary / less direct application are:

- 1 Cor 11 and 14
- Gal 3:28
- 1 Timothy 2:11-15
- 1 Pet 3:1-7
- Select parts of the Genesis creation narrative