

Elders at WBC

The Question of Gender Session 3

- A. Previous weeks Review
- B. Understanding Biblical Narrative and Context
- C. Redemptive Movement Hermeneutic
- D. Review the Critical Passages



Review from Session 2 (the familiar biblical passages)

1 Cor 11:2-15 - head coverings, authority of man over women

1 Cor 14:33-35 - women remain silent, ask at home

Not particularly helpful with respect to the issue of church governance. Understanding the context proved that both passages were addressing very specific problems and situation.

Gal 3:28 - neither male nor female...

Not direct helpful, text is identifying the oneness in Christ for all believers, not a principle about church structure or governance.

Eph 5:21-33 - wives submit, husbands love...

Relevant, even though not directly addressing church governance, since it is addressing the new identity we all have in Christ, and if our new identity as it relates to our marriages is in any way intended to be related to our church as family, then it is helpful.

1 Tim 2:11-15 - a woman should dress modestly, not teach or have authority...

This section of Paul's letter is not about church governance, and using it to defend male leadership has frequently been done inconsistently in the past (some verses are overlooked or ignored while others are emphasized).

This section of the letter is more about overall conduct while in gatherings, instructions for all

1 Tim 3:2-13 and Titus 1:5-9 - description of elders and deacons

This section is specifically about defining qualifications for church leadership. It does not appear to make any allowance for women as elders. It does appear to allow for women serving as deacons, or at least somehow closely connect to church leadership in some way. Cross referencing with other texts in which Paul names women as deacons supports the theory that this passage would also endorse the practice.

1 Peter 3:1-7 - similar to Eph 5 - commentary on the ordained plan for marriage and husband/wife relations

Relevant in the same measure as Eph 5, although Peter's letter is written specifically to encourage Christians who must persevere under persecution, instructs believers on how to maintain biblical relationships and standards. Given that the letter is written for a specific situation, we reference it for church governance discussions with an extra measure of care.

Genesis Creation Narrative

Only select section of the creation narrative may be helpful when discerning the place for men and women in church structures. Some principles may be present, but dedicated care must be taken to treat the text with respect to its original intent.

SESSION 3

- A. Understanding Biblical Narrative and Historical Context
 - B. Redemptive Movement Hermeneutic
 - C. The Text - Learning and Discerning
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A. The Importance of Understanding Biblical Narrative and Context

- last week - understanding the context for certain passages helped us to better understand why the author chose the topics and phrases they did:
 - Corinthians class struggles impacted church harmony
 - Ephesians - lack of focus in the church, letter gives focus of new identity in Christ

There is more to “bible study” than simply knowing the words on the page, at some point, it is no longer enough to know what the text says, but what is the principle being taught.

Ex: The Levitical law on harvesting field - (Lev 19:9-10) is not about farming.

So, if Lev 19:9-10 is not ultimately about how to correctly harvest, what is it about?
how to do life as a community in a way that displays the nature of God - compassion, generosity, etc

We connect with the truest value of scripture when we understand the context and an appreciation of the principle of intent.

Impact of Historical Context:

Example #1 - Deuteronomy 22:28-29 - penalty and response to rape

The Biblical commandment rapist marries the women, pays “damages” to her father

The commandment / practice is 100% unacceptable for our culture today

The Biblical Principle protection for women, especially protection for abused, oppressed, those who would be powerless to help themselves

The principle embedded is 100% applicable and relevant for today

How do we accept the principle but set aside the practice/commandment?

We move beyond the demands (tangible practices) of the actual text and adopt the principle embedded

Example #2 - Exodus 21:20-27 and Eph 6:59 — treatment of slaves

If we are committed to the bible, why would we not be willing to adopt these very specific commandments and guidelines?

How did we conclude that rape called for completely different consequences than the bible states or that slavery should no longer be practiced despite a lack of biblical teaching that would clearly state that?

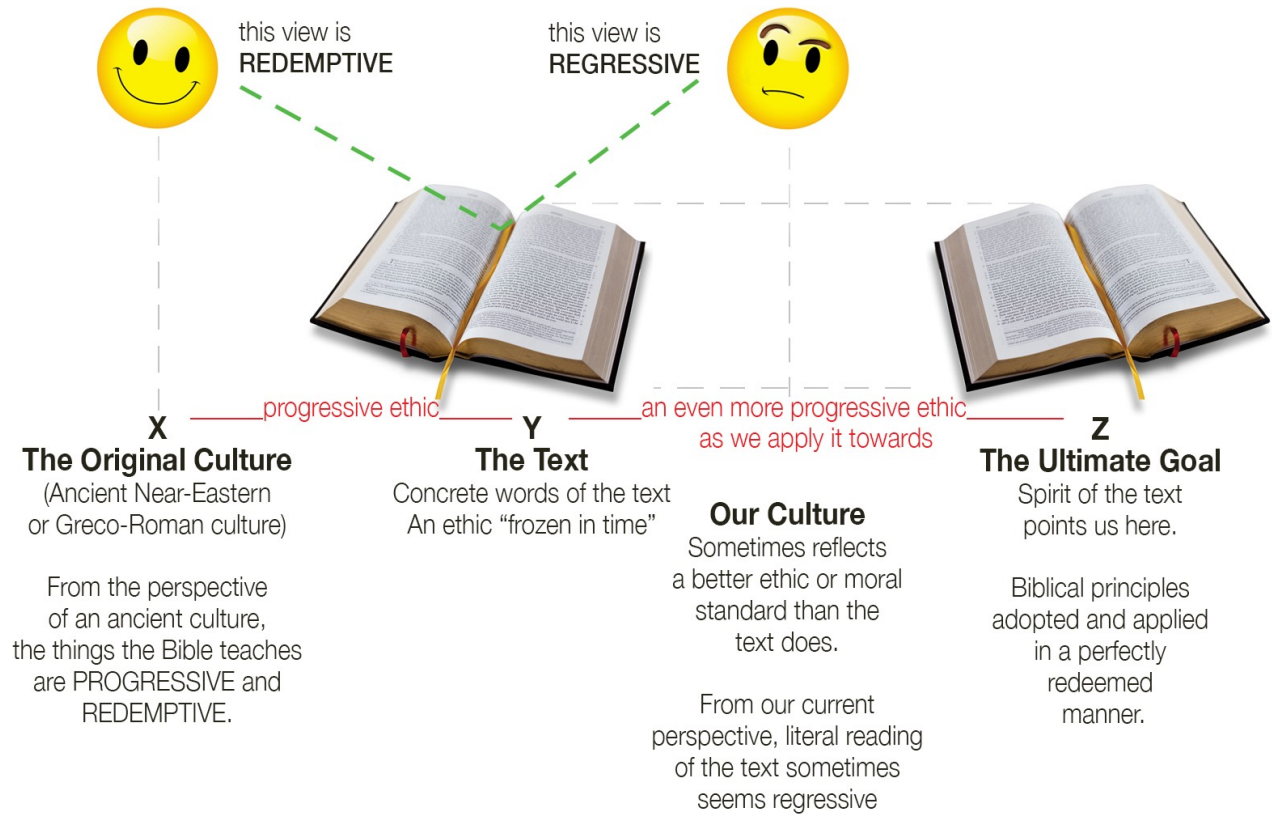
We move beyond the demands (tangible practices) of the actual text and adopt the principle embedded

The principles and ethics of scripture remain fixed, but the practical application of those principles will be different from one cultural context to the next.

The word of God often teaches us principles that extend beyond the words in the text.

Understanding this is the basis for understanding
The Redemptive Movement Hermeneutic

B. Redemptive Movement Hermeneutic



God's work is not static, and neither is scripture.
Ancient texts are not a ultimate ethic, they point to the ultimate ethic and moral goal.

The **principles and ethics** of scripture remain fixed, but the **practical application** of those principles will be different from one **cultural context** to the next.

The word of God often **teaches us principles** that extend beyond **the words in the text.**

C. Learning and Discerning from the Most Relevant Texts

Ephesians 5 / 1 Peter 3, 1 Timothy 3

EPH 5:21-33

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

The clear and predominant point of the passage is that both male and female have responsibilities of submission in the covenant relationship, and that there is a very specific manner in which men are to lead - with an attitude of sacrifice and love for their wives, not a attitude of entitlement or domination. The message to men with regard to leadership here is

The Principle of Intent of Eph 5

What is the BASE principle that this passage teaches:

There is a biblical model for man/ women relationship that calls BOTH to standards that are not likely “naturally” expressed

There is a clear emphasis on the men to be humble, sacrificial, selfless in character

**Is the focus of the text male leadership or male character?

How was this principle to be expressed in practice:

for women:

for men:

As we hold to the biblical principle across every generation, the question becomes: how will this principle be rightly practiced in the church today?

1 TIMOTHY 3:2-13

Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He 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?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. 8 In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. 9 They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. 11 In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. 12 A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. 13 Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus. Genesis Creation Narrative

The Principle of Intent of 1 Tim 3

What is the BASE principle that this passage teaches:

There are very specific qualifications for those elected / requested for leadership in the church
To the extent that leadership should = example, influencer, there are certain qualities that should
be true and necessary

How was this principle to be expressed in practice:

For the church at that time, male elders, deacons and women in leadership to have the same
kinds of qualities

As we hold to the biblical principle across every generation, the question becomes: how could / should this principle be rightly practiced in the church today?

Minimum: those elected to leadership (elders, deacons...) should be considered through the
lens of these qualities, the question of gender looms - is male eldership a **principle** for the
church, or was it meant to be a time and culturally limited **practice**?

IF YOU ARE EGALITARIAN IN YOUR THINKING

(woman should serve as elders)

YOU'RE BIGGEST CHALLENGE IS:

Scripture teaches a consistent principle of male headship in the marriage relationship as well as in the church. (EPH 5:21-33, 1 Peter 3:1-7 and 1 Timothy 3:2-13)

Notwithstanding the fact that the model and practice of male leadership that the Bible describes has been sadly inconsistent throughout our history, it nevertheless does clearly identify the principle of male, compassionate and sacrificial leadership as the unwavering standard for the home and the church.

In the 21st century church, perhaps now more than ever, we MUST NOT set aside portions of scripture simply because they are difficult, offensive or hard to reconcile with our cultural surroundings. Either the Bible is our unwavering ultimate authority, or we risk making it subject to our own accommodations.

IF YOU ARE COMPLEMENTARIAN

(men only as elders)

YOU'RE BIGGEST CHALLENGE IS:

The Redemptive Hermeneutical Argument. What is the humble and rational response to the fact that we have abolished slavery despite the lack of biblical teaching to do so? **The bible often teaches us principles that extend beyond the actual text.** This cannot be ignored when we consider the matter of women serving as elders in the church.

A person who is 100% committed to the authority of the bible may still come to the conclusion that the church should have women serving as elders, and that doesn't mean they disregard the authority of the Bible.

THEREFORE, as we take this matter to a vote of the membership of the church, we have a couple very critical things to bear in mind:

1. This is NOT a clear and simple matter. It causes frustration and offence to speak of this matter as though simply believing the bible solves the tension. Scripture instructs us in this matter, but it also commands us to bear each others burdens, encourage each other, be gracious and kind to each other, and to actively seek unity of SPIRIT.
2. We must respect each other's thinking and perspective. We will learn how to disagree in grace and humility as we support each other.