



It's a Woman's World... Too

A Christ-Centered Case for Women in Ministry

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- The Gospels reveal that Jesus emancipated first-century women from second-class citizenship in God's Kingdom; he challenged the dominant culture of his day and overturned the accepted interpretations of the Hebrew Scriptures.
- For Jesus, his radical inclusion of women and elevation of their status was in keeping with his overarching ministry to defeat Satan and heal the destructive consequences of the Fall.
- So why have so many in the church failed to accept women as equals? Is this a "conservative versus progressive" issue? And what about those restrictive verses in Paul's letters? Did the Apostle Paul believe and teach in accordance with Jesus?
- In *It's a Woman's World... Too*, we will look at the biblical foundation for seeing women as equals in life and ministry.

Reasons for Believing that Men & Women are Equal in Christ

Poor Reasons

- “We don’t live in the dark ages anymore.”
- “Only fundamentalists deny freedom to women.”
- “I’m a feminist.”
- “All the cool, *progressive* people believe it’s right.”
- “Most people agree with me on this issue.”

Good Reasons

- According to the Gospels, Jesus elevated women, giving them equal status, reflecting the divine design
- While patriarchy was at work in the ANE, women in the NT are given positions of influence with men; the trajectory is set for human freedom

Paul, Galatians 3:26-28 NLT

²⁶ For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Roles & Views of Women in First-Century Judaism

- Betrothal was arranged on the onset of menstruation; women were expected to be fruitful and bear sons
- Divorce was common, but only men could initiate
- Palestinians were bound to duties of home and farm
- Required 10 men (no women) to start a synagogue; learned separately from men in worship; little education
- The testimony of a woman wasn't valid in law court
- Varying views of women throughout the Jewish world; some women enjoyed more freedom than others
- Nevertheless, the overall view of women was that they were lesser in status—they lived within a man's world

“Blessed are you, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe,
who has not made me a Gentile, a slave, or a woman.”

Hebrew Prayer, circa 2,000 years old

“There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male
and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Paul, Galatians 3:28

How Jesus Included Women

- Jesus told parables with women as the main characters (Lk 15:8)
- He used feminine metaphors when describing God (Matt 23:27)
- Jesus spoke to shady women in public (Jn 4:1-26; 8:1-11)
- He healed women of sickness & diseases (Lk 8:40-56)
- His no-divorce view protects women & he elevates singleness (Matt 19:1-12)
- He let women follow as disciples, a practice unprecedented among Jewish Rabbis (Lk 8:1-3)

Luke 8:1-3 NIV – Women Follow As Disciples

¹ After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, ² and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; ³ Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

Let's Not Forget

Female disciples (plus John) remained with Jesus at the cross and were the first to discover the empty tomb.

Also, it was women who first witnessed the resurrection of Jesus and were told to tell the good news (evangelize) to the rest of the male disciples who were in hiding.

Q: If Jesus can entrust the greatest news in the universe to women, why can't we entrust them to preach?

Women Witnesses for Jesus in the NT

Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32 in his sermon at Pentecost!

- Women served as leaders of house churches (e.g. Priscilla, Chloe, Lydia, Apphia, Nympha, the mother of John Mark, and possibly the “elect lady” of John’s second epistle)
- Phoebe & Tabitha both mentioned as deacons (Rom 16:1)
- Philipp’s daughters were prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9), “belonging to first stage of apostolic succession” Eusebius
- Priscilla & Aquila serve as apostles/pastors in Corinth and then Ephesus as “co-workers” with Paul (Acts 18)
- Junia is “outstanding among the apostles” (Rom 16:7)

So Why the Oppression of Women?

1. The old order and thinking of Law-based Judaism (Galatians 3:28) threatened aspects of the emerging Christian faith, including its liberating views on women
2. The later influx of Greek philosophers, who didn't think highly of women, brought their views into the faith, e.g. Early Church Fathers (Augustine, Origen, Jerome)
3. The Apostle Paul has been used out of context for centuries, especially among the 16th century Reformers, to limit the role of women in both life and ministry, e.g. Martin Luther, John Calvin, King James, etc.

Paul, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 NIV

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

Paul, 1 Timothy 2:11-15 NIV – To the Church in Ephesus

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.

Who can do ministry in the church?

Any person who is called, qualified, and equipped to build up the church into the fullness of Christ.



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Sermon audio & slides in PDF can be downloaded at:
www.christiansburgmennonite.org