

## **COMMON QUESTION NO. 13**

### **MAY A WOMAN BE A PASTOR?**

Is this really an important question? Should we not just be thankful that there are those who will lead God's people and preach His word? Does the gender really matter?

- Women pastors are found everywhere today. Yet it has only become common place in the last 50 years or so. Did the Church have it wrong for all the previous centuries?
- This development is parallel to the rise of feminism and the 'equal rights' movement in the world. It is not the world that is following the church, but the church is following the world.
- As Christians, the most important consideration is to find out what God says in the Scriptures. His word is final.

#### **1. The Apostle Paul says No!**

Paul wrote the first letter to Timothy as an apostle of Christ Jesus (1:1). As such an apostle, Paul has all the authority of the One who sent him. To refuse what Paul writes is to refuse the Lord Himself (see 1 Corinthians 14:37-38, 2 Thessalonians 3:6,12,14). Paul clearly states the purpose of the letter, that "you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God" (3:15). He is giving instructions to Timothy what should and should not happen when the church meets. In 2:11-15 he addresses the role of women in the church.

- How women are to learn in church (v. 11). "Quietly with all submissiveness." The next verse makes the meaning quite clear.
- What women are forbidden to do (v. 12). "Quietly" means not to teach publicly when men are present. "With all submissiveness" means not to be engaged in any activity in church which is authority over a man. See also 1 Corinthians 14:33-35. How can a woman be made a pastor (elder) when the work of such an office is to teach (see 1 Timothy 3:2, 5:17)?
- Two reasons why women are forbidden to teach men (vv. 13-14). Firstly, he notes the order of creation, first the man, and then the woman from the man. Secondly, he notes that in the fall of the human race into sin it was the woman and not the man who was deceived. It is she who led the man into sin, thus overturning the natural order. Many seek to avoid what the Bible so clearly forbids by claiming that the reason is to be found in the culture of Ephesus where Timothy was. This is untrue for Paul's reasons are rooted in what is true for the whole world, in the creation and fall.
- The role of women (v. 15). In the context women are instructed where to find their usefulness before God in their lives. It is not in the teaching office in the church, but in the home in connection with "childbearing". "Saved" is a word that is often used in the Gospels for well-being or wholeness, as when a person is healed (for example, Luke 18:42). God has granted women the unique privilege of bearing children and then bringing them up (1 Timothy 5:10, Titus 2:4-5). She is to do this in a peculiar Christian way, "in faith and love and holiness, with self-control". It is in this role that the Lord has greatly used godly women. (Go to <http://www.reformedreader.org/rbb/chantry/motherhood.htm>, and see 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:14-15).

## **2. There were no women pastors in the New Testament church!**

We know of Timothy and Titus, and of Silas who was one of Paul's close companions. We are given the qualifications of those who may be appointed as pastors (elders or overseers). The person must be "the husband of one wife" and "must manage his own household well" (1 Timothy 3:2,4) – this can only be true of a man. It should be noted that our Lord Himself, when choosing His 12 apostles, chose only men. It is not that the Lord despised women, as if He accommodated Himself to the prevailing culture. Luke's Gospel especially emphasizes the importance of women in Jesus' ministry, against the culture (Luke 8:2-3). Nor must Paul be branded a misogynist. Consider his appreciation of the following women, as found in Romans chapter 16:

Phoebe (1-2), Prisca (3-5), Mary (6), Tryphaena and Tryphosa (12), Persis (12), the mother of Rufus (13), Julia and Nereus' sister (15).

Yet none of them were pastors. It could also be pointed out that in the Old Testament there were no women priests, no women who authored Scripture, and none were legitimate rulers (queens).

## **3. Is this really the Biblical teaching?**

Although the teaching we have so far considered is so simple and clear many are unwilling to receive it as God's word.

Objection 1 – Can it be wrong if so many churches have appointed women pastors? Truth is not always on the side of the majority, especially when it is a new development the church. We ask, 'What do the Scriptures say?', rather than, 'What do the Churches do?'

Objection 2 – Hasn't God greatly used women? Yes He has, and even men who were not pastors. Many women leaders in the church today are false teachers even if they have a large following. Godly women like Elizabeth Elliot and Joni Eareckson Tada, who have been so greatly used, have not been pastors.

Objection 3 – The Gospel has destroyed the distinctions between male and female (Galatians 3:28). This is to take the verse out of its context which has to do with redemptive privilege. Whether male or female (Jew or Greek, slave or free), justification is through faith in Christ, and all such are equally Abraham's offspring. Elsewhere, Paul continues to distinguish between the roles of wives and husbands (Ephesians 5:22-27).

Objection 4 – Women prayed and prophesied in church (1 Corinthians 11:5-6). It cannot be demonstrated with certainty that this instruction has to do with church gatherings (the instructions the follow about the Lord's Supper certainly do, v. 18). However, praying and prophesying are one thing, holding to the office of pastor and prophet is another thing! There is the same teaching about the relationship between men and women, and this is the point of the passage (see 11:3,8-9).

Objection 5 – There have been women leaders amongst God's people. Deborah was a prophetess and a Judge (Judges 4:4-5). Huldah was a prophetess (2 Kings 22:14-20). Priscilla, together with her husband Aquila, privately explained to Apollos the way of God more accurately (Acts 18:16). Philip had four unmarried daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9). But none of them held the office of teacher.

#### **4. Conclusions**

- ✓ Women should not preach publicly to men. They cannot be pastors. They may teach women and children (Titus 2:3-5).
- ✓ Men and women are equal before God, but have differing roles. In this 'uni-sex' world we must not abandon the clear Biblical teaching. The woman was created to be "a helper fit for him" (Genesis 2:18).

Men have the very heavy responsibility to lead in all aspects of church life (see James 3:1).