



# Women in the Church

**Discuss** – Do you feel there are any differences spiritual between a man and a women?

Do you feel that there is different roles for men and women in the church? (if so why? – if not why?)

Throughout the history of the Christian Church and the history of God's people, women have been seen to have specific roles in line with a created order that God has made. This created order has been used at times to justify both exploitation and oppression of women within the church and society. In recent history many women have fought back and demanded equal rights both in society and the church. As a result many churches ideas have changed and scripture read in a new light. The question for the church today is, "Is there a created order and role structure that is different for a man and a woman?" "If so how is that to be expressed within the church?"

**There are two main view points that summarise the argument today**

Argument 1:-

A) Man was created first to be God's helper – women was created to be the helper of man. Man was created to oversee and be the head of his wife. The women was created to support her husband and bring up the family in the ways of God.

B) This then follows in the church. The man is called by God to lead and oversee the flock of Jesus Christ and although a women can have different ministries in the church she cannot be a elder or a pastor of God's people.

**Evidence used to support this view:-**

**Jesus only** called males to be his twelve disciples

**He only** commissioned males to feed His Sheep.

**Paul's teaching** made it clear that women were to submit to the authority of their husbands and take no active leadership role within the life of the church.

**Historically the church** for most of it's 2000 years has reinforced Paul's view that women should not hold eldership and ordained positions within the life of the church.

**Bible references to support this view of women in the church :-**

**Read and Discuss :-**

Genesis Ch 2 v 18 – 23, 1 Timothy Ch 2 verses 8 – 15, 1 Corinthians Ch 14 v 34 – 35, Ephesians Ch 5 v 21 –33, Colossians Ch 3 v 18 – 19, Proverbs Ch 31 v 10 – 32

Argument 2 :-

A) God created both equal and affirms both are made in His image – division between man and woman only came in after the fall.

Therefore the fall is responsible for the distinction between the sexes. As the Kingdom people of God who live under the new covenant the consequences of the fall have been done away with. Therefore once again man and woman are equal to in the eyes of God in doing His will.

B) Much of the teaching of Paul does not truly represent the will of God for women unless you look at it within the context to which it was spoken.

"women in both Jesus' time and the first century were considered by society to have very little value or importance within society.

Popular teaching declared that women were inferior to their husbands and some even went as far as to put wives into the same category as a slave within a marriage environment. Women walked behind their husbands and were degraded in many ways. Women were discouraged from going to public worship and rabbi's would not talk to a woman in public. The culture of the day did not believe that women could truly learn and understand the deep things of God."

Prayer of a Jewish man in first century:-

"Blessed art Thou, O Lord, King of the universe, who hast not made me a heathen, blessed art Thou who hast not made me a bondman, blessed art Thou who has not made me a woman."

Quote from Rabbi Eliezer ben Azariah - "men come to learn, women come to listen. Women can come to listen to the reading of Scripture but do not expect them to gain any deep understanding."

When Paul writes his advice about women in leadership he is addressing particular issues with the first century church.

For example:-

**In the early church** Jewish women came to worship with their heads covered. This was their custom. As Greek women were converted they came to worship with their head uncovered. This created confusion and unrest – which was leading to division. Paul calls the Greek women to meet the cultural norm of the day and thus end the petty quarrelling. Paul also gives advice on woman's dress because some women are abusing their new freedoms and dressing inappropriately to impress the men of the church. this was becoming a real distraction in the fellowship leading men away from a focus on worship so Paul writes to correct the balance.

**Advice he gave to Timothy** – in the first century women were not allowed to study and have opportunity to learn. As a result their knowledge of Scripture and the teachings of God's people was very limited. Paul calls the women to learn about their faith, but he says they should not teach or have authority because they are not knowledgeable at that time in the Word of God. what Paul is doing here is not forbidding woman forever in taking leadership roles in the church, but he is recognising their lack of knowledge and experience in the Word and so tells them to learn.

When Paul talks about women being submissive to their husbands he does so in the context of everyone being submissive to each other.

C) both Jesus and the early church went against the trend and gave women greater value and worth in the Kingdom of God.

**Scripture which backs up this view:-**

Genesis Ch 1 v 27, Joel Ch 2 v 28 – 31, Judges 4 (Deborah a judge of God's people.) Galatians Ch 3 v 28 ( all equal in eyes of God)

Women in leadership positions Acts Ch 18 v 26, Romans Ch 16 v 1 – 2 (word servant here is translated deacon) Romans Ch 16 v 3– 16 a number who are women who have prominent positions in the church.

Those that argue this way say that God declared men and women equal at the beginning. They are given the same spirit with the same gifts. Both Jesus and the early church treated women differently allowing for cultural norms. Both in the Old Testament and the New there are examples of women in leadership positions.

**Discuss :- Does the God of the universe, who created man and woman equally and in His image, preclude women the chance to serve Him and ministering to others in a official capacity, solely based on their gender?**