

Uncommon things commonly believed among us

On the first Sunday of each month we have been exploring some of the things we commonly believe in the Churches of Christ that many in the religious world around us do not commonly believe. When such differences exist, I believe we have a responsibility to offer a reasoned, biblical explanation for our different belief. This morning we will consider our beliefs about the role of women in church leadership.

***We believe the Bible teaches a male-centered pattern for leadership
(I Timothy 2:12-14)***

Beginning Considerations

- We understand the need to take into account our own cultural history when considering this subject.
- We do believe that history reveals an unfortunate pattern of bias against women.
- While we believe the Bible gives the responsibility of leadership to men, the Bible also clearly describes the character of their leadership - loving servant-leaders and not authoritarian dictators.

Examining the Bible's evidences for our claims

- God ties gender roles to the order of creation (*I Timothy 2:11-13*).
 - God created Adam first (*Genesis 1:26-27; 2:15-25; I Timothy 2:13*).
 - With that first-born status comes the responsibility of leadership (cf. *Deuteronomy 21:17; Numbers 3:11-13*).
 - Physical (*Genesis 3:17-19; II Timothy 5:8; I Peter 3:7*).
 - Spiritual (*I Timothy 2:8-14; Ephesians 5:23-24; 6:4*).
 - The God-given responsibility of leadership preceded all customs and cultures (cf. *I Timothy 2:11-13*) - it is a principle God caused to be in place that takes precedent over any practices or ideas we may hold.
 - The responsibility of leadership that God gave to men must be characterized by sacrifice and not authoritarian rule (*Mark 10:42-45; John 13:3-17; Ephesians 5:25-30*).
 - We must note that the connection between gender roles and the creation does not however have anything to do with innate qualities or abilities - men are not better than women because of their leadership responsibilities.
- The punishments that God placed on Adam and Eve additionally play a role in how we should understand the responsibilities He gave to men and

women (*Genesis 3:8-19; I Timothy 2:11-14*). Because of their disobedience, God used the roles He gave to Adam and Eve as the framework for their punishments.

- Adam's role became a burden tied to hard work, sweat, and conflict with the creation (*Genesis 3:17-19*).
- Eve's role now involved pain in childbirth and submission to her husband (*Genesis 3:16*).
- While God has restricted leadership responsibilities to men, we need to consider the larger biblical picture.
 - Deborah stands out as an example of a woman to whom God gave a leadership role (*Judges 4*).
 - Deborah worked as a judge during one of Israel's darkest periods of history (*Judges 2:16-19*).
 - God's appointment of Deborah as a judge reflected the pervasive spiritual corruption of the nation - her role served as an indictment against the men who had failed in their leadership responsibilities (cf. *Judges 4:4-9, 17-22; 5:24-27*).
 - Leadership responsibilities do not therefore have to do with innate abilities or perspectives.
 - Despite the exception God made in Deborah's case, the Bible clearly limits leadership roles to men (*I Timothy 2:12*), and we do not have the right to modify God's laws (*Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18-19*).
 - But the limits God places on leadership do not mean that women have no teaching responsibilities within the church (cf. *I Corinthians 14:34*).
 - We all teach one another when we sing together (*Colossians 3:16*).
 - Therefore Paul's comment that women "keep silent" in the church must not be taken in an absolute sense (*I Corinthians 14:34*).
 - Women have God-given responsibilities to sing (*Colossians 3:16*).
 - Paul's comment in *I Timothy 2:11* that women should quietly receive instruction refers to their manner and attitude and not their voice (*I Timothy 2:2, 11*).
 - Also, in *I Corinthians 14*, Paul commands that others keep silent in the church too, but their silence is not understood to mean that they can never talk (*I Corinthians 14:28, 30*).
 - Instead, Paul's comment in *I Corinthians 14* refers to specific issue of the use of the miraculous gift of speaking in tongues during a worship setting and not the general place of women in worship (*I Corinthians 14:6-40*).

One of the great challenges in living for Jesus resides in balancing the influences of this world with God's expectations for our lives. Given the charged environment of gender roles in our culture, we have to be careful to not allow those conversations to inappropriately shape our understanding or practice of God's expectations.