

Can Women Be Pastors?

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It is becoming more and more common to hear of women preaching with authority over men and calling themselves “pastors.” Is this authorized by God? It is understood that this can be a sensitive subject, especially because of modern culture. No disrespect is intended toward women at all, but the honest child of God will seek to know God’s will on this topic. Those who truly love God will allow Him to transform our minds, instead of allowing our minds to be conformed to the ways of this world (Rom. 12:1, 2; cf. 10:17).

Before discussing whether women can be pastors, the word “pastor” should be defined. Most in the religious world misunderstand the word “pastor,” as if it simply means a preacher or evangelist, but there is a great deal of difference between pastors and evangelists. Pastors and evangelists are listed separately in Ephesians 4:11, because those are two separate roles in the church. Evangelists mostly focus on evangelism and preaching (2 Tim. 4:2-5), but pastors actually have authority over an entire congregation. The word “pastors” literally means “shepherds,” and they are also called elders, overseers, and bishops (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 3, 5:17; Titus 1; 1 Pet. 5). They rule over the local congregation with whom they worship in matters of expediency, such as deciding when to assemble, how to use the money given, etc. (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 5:17; cf. Heb. 13:7, 17). There was always a plurality of these in each congregation (Acts 14:23; 20:17; James 5:14, etc.), they must meet strict qualifications (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1; 1 Pet. 5), and there is no example of a woman being a pastor in the Bible, because God expressed very plainly that pastors/elders/bishops must be men! (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

In fact, God has consistently shown that men are to be the leaders in the Lord’s church. Jesus was/is a man (1 Tim. 2:5); Jesus only chose men for His twelve apostles (Matt. 10:1-4; 1 Cor. 9:5); the inspired writers of the Bible were men; the “Jerusalem council” was comprised of men (Acts 15); elders/pastors overseeing a congregation must be men (1 Tim. 3:2); those serving in the office of deacons must be men (1 Tim. 3:11, 12); and those preaching/teaching with authority over men must be men (1 Tim. 2:11, 12).

If one simply reads 1 Timothy chapters 2 and 3, he will see very clearly what God desires regarding the roles of men and women in the church. Notice a few words from 1 Timothy 2:

*I will therefore that **men pray** every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. **Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.** For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety (1 Tim. 2:8-15; cf. Titus 2:3-5; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14:37).*

The word translated as “silence” in 1 Timothy 2:11, 12 regarding women means “quietness” and comes from a root that literally means “to keep one’s seat” ([Strong’s Greek Lexicon](#)). The woman should not “stand up” to speak with authority over men, as if she will be their instructor. Paul says the woman should not teach over the man, because: 1) God made man first; and 2) The woman was the one deceived in the garden (and was thus given a submissive role, Gen. 3:16). After Paul addresses the role of women, he continues into the next chapter explaining that bishops/pastors/elders and deacons must be men (1 Tim. 3:1-13). Paul also wrote similar words to the Corinthians:

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church (1 Cor. 14:34-35).

Please notice that in both 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14, Paul makes it clear that the submissive role of women is not simply something related to the culture of the first century A.D. In 1 Timothy 2:13-15, Paul goes all the way back to Adam and Eve, and in 1 Corinthians 14 he teaches that this is a longstanding principle from *“the law,”* the Old Testament Scriptures (cf. Gen. 3:15; Num. 30:3-14). In other words, the submissive role of women has been decreed by God since the Garden of Eden for all cultures and generations! Passages like these are so plain, one would have to have a lot of help to misunderstand them. Let the reader also remember that Paul was an apostle, an ambassador of Jesus Christ, and the Scriptures Paul wrote were the commandments of the Lord Himself (1 Cor. 14:37; cf. Jn. 17:8; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

Satan is the one who tempted Eve to go beyond what God authorized. Let women beware that Satan is still tempting them to go beyond their God-given roles today! May all women look to the example of Jesus, who stayed within His submissive role to God, even though He could have used His power to do otherwise (Matt. 4:1-10; 26:53; 1 Cor. 11:3; Heb. 4:15).

Satan has always twisted God’s Word to accomplish his goals (Gen. 3; Matt. 4), and the devil still has people who serve him, appearing to be ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:13-15). The only way to know if they are speaking Truth or error is by comparing their words to God’s Word (Acts 17:11; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Tim. 2:15-18).

So, are there people today twisting Scriptures, attempting to justify women preaching to mixed assemblies of men and women? Of course, just as they will twist passages about salvation, marriage, worship, and many other subjects, attempting to justify whatever they want (2 Thess. 2:12; 2 Pet. 3:15-18). Many misuse Galatians 3:28, in which Paul said *“there is neither male nor female,”* but that context is all about people being saved, whether men or women, Jews or Gentiles, bondservants or free (cf. 3:26-29). It has absolutely nothing to do with the role of women in the church. In the parallel passage of Colossians 3:11, Paul goes on to say that wives must submit to their husbands (Col. 3:18; cf. 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22-24; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1). Why would women need to submit, if the phrase *“there is neither male nor female”* means there are no more distinctions between the roles of men and women? Obviously, the submissive role required of women has not changed, the commandments of 1 Timothy and 1 Corinthians are not going anywhere, and Galatians 3:28 has been ripped out of context to try to justify something that is against God’s will. By the way, when something is against God’s will, there is another word for that—it’s called *“sin,”* and *“the wages of sin is death”* (1 Jn. 3:4; Rom. 6:23).

There is no doubt that there are women who honestly believe they are serving God in the role of a “pastor” or of a preacher. They may say things like, “God would not have called me to do this without a good reason,” but God does not call people to violate His Word. Saul of Tarsus was doing all kinds of things contrary to God’s will, even though he thought he was serving God faithfully in his zeal (Acts 23:1; 26:9-11; cf. Jn. 16:2). We can sometimes convince ourselves that we are doing what is right, but ultimately God’s Word must be the criterion for determining right from wrong—not our own hearts or experiences. *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Prov. 14:12; cf. 12:15; 16:25; 28:26; 30:12; Jer. 10:23; 16:12; 17:9; Rom. 10:1-3; James 1:22).

Much more could be said, and more objections could be answered, but those who truly want to obey God will not support such a blatant deviation from the authority of God’s Word (Rom. 16:17; Eph. 5:11; 2 Jn. 10, 11). Women can do many wonderful things in the Lord’s church, in the home, and elsewhere, but they are not authorized to be pastors or preachers, and they will only be saved if they remain in their submissive role, as Paul clearly explained in 1 Timothy 2:9-15.

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