

Westwind Church

Scriptural Clarification of Women in Ministry and Leadership

I. General Biblical Requirements For Local Church Ministry

- A. Gender identity does not appear to be found as a requisite for giftedness or ministry in the New Testament. In other words, no one qualifies for a gift or ministry because they are or are not a man or a woman. Humans look on the outside, but God looks on the heart. However, there is a clear distinction between the role of ministry and the New Testament office of Elder. For one to be effective in ministry, one must be saved, have a heart for others, and be gifted in that area of ministry by the Holy Spirit. In contrast, there are a host of spiritual qualities and characteristics articulated in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, which are to be found in the one who serves in a leadership role as Elder or Deacon.
- B. New Testament ministry is a privilege for all of us, not a right. The kingdom concept of ministry is servanthood. In the local church, the opportunity for ministry is a gift bestowed upon us by those who have the authority to do so. No one, whether man or woman, can lay claim to any particular right to minister in any particular way. Those effective in ministry of any nature must share the attitude expressed by the Apostle Paul, “He considered me faithful, putting me into service even though I was formerly... I was shown mercy...”
- C. Although, no one is qualified or disqualified for ministry on the basis of gender, it is clear from Scripture that gender is a factor of consideration when selecting leadership to fill the highest position of authority in the local church. In the structure of Westwind Church that is the office of Elder. This conclusion is based upon our interpretation of I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. It is not to be taken as the only tolerable interpretation, but it is the position of Westwind Church. Clear distinction is to be made between the role of ministry and the office of Elder.

II. Interpretation of I Timothy 2:11-15

- A. Verse 11. The passage speaks of order and authority, not value and ability.
- B. Verse 12. Teaching with authority comes through the Holy Spirit based on the authority of God’s Word. Therefore, men and women alike can teach the Scriptures. The spiritual gift of teaching bears no gender identity at all. The historical context of verse 12 was women who rudely interrupted and disrespectfully overruled the leadership of the public meetings, while at the same time communicating a certain “Christian disrespect” for the historical position of the Jewish male.
- C. Verses 13-14. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to go a little deeper on this sensitive issue of the vulnerability for women that many people today neither understand nor want

to admit. This is the essential theological explanation for why, in the context of the local church, women are to serve in ministry in a capacity under the final spiritual authority of a man. We believe that “All Scripture is inspired by God...” (II Timothy 3:16-17) leads us to the conclusion that the Apostle Paul referenced the Old Testament in this passage to provide a clear theological framework for spiritual authority.

- D. Verse 15. By way of practical application here, God seems to close this bit of controversial instruction by reinforcing His will that the primary ministry of the godly, maturing woman is not to rule over the church (which is the New Testament spiritual job description of the Elder), but to live a life that brings God glory. I Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 6:1-4 reinforce this same principle. In the spiritual structure of God’s economy, Christ is the head of the man, the man is the head of a woman, God is the head of Christ and parents are the head of the children. This places immense responsibility upon both men and women to live in close fellowship and humble obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ as they find great joy and identity in fulfillment of their God ordained roles.

III. Practical Application and Conclusions

- A. The whole Body of Christ is encouraged to experience and profit through the fruitful engagement of women in the multiple ministry roles that are biblically encouraged and deeply needed. Contrary to a common cultural perspective of our time, this interpretation and application is not based on a bias for or against men or women or issues of equality and liberation. Rather, it is based on a desire to be as scripturally accurate as possible and free under New Testament grace to make the very best use of God’s gifts and contributions to His children for His Church.
- B. The opportunity for ministry, in whatever role, is based on character and giftedness. Some men and women who are in positions of authority may not be qualified to be there because they are not “under authority” in their heart. Likewise, some who are in positions of influence, may be completely qualified because of a humble and submissive attitude toward the Lord, His people, and Scriptural authority. Others may be thoroughly unqualified for ministry of any kind because of pride or rebelliousness of heart.
- C. In the governing structure of Westwind Church, the one position that would be impossible to hold without exercising final spiritual authority over men would be the office of Elder. Therefore, this is where Westwind Church has chosen to stand and will confidently lead the Lord’s people as we focus fully on the Lord Jesus Christ and the hope of our calling in Him. Our Elders will direct and lead through every aspect of ministry and will delegate ministry to those who are qualified and gifted through the power of the Holy Spirit. We humbly acknowledge that others in the Body of Christ may be persuaded differently and hope that our common call to glorify God and promote His kingdom on earth will consume our focus.

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