

CF View: How Men and Women Serve at Christ Fellowship

Creation: God created humanity in his image as male and female, and both men and women equally image God. Men and women each reflect God in unique ways, and each should be appreciated (Genesis 1:26-27). We are men and women, not just humans; husbands and wives, not just spouses; and fathers and mothers, not just parents. At Christ Fellowship we appreciate our maleness and femaleness as wonderful gifts from God. We need both men and women to become vitally involved in the ministry of Christ Fellowship.

Redemption: In Christ, men and women share equal access to God, and in Christ cultural barriers are overcome (Galatians 3:28). All believers are equally adopted by the Father, united with Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We are all to help people find and follow Christ. All believers have direct access to God the Father, as priests did in Israel (1 Peter 2:4-5). All believers serve God to build up the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:12-16) All believers disciple others, baptizing and teaching them (Matthew 28:18-20). In Christ, all men and women are authorized to carry out God's mission. We are all to evangelize and disciple as Christ's witnesses and ambassadors.

Roles in Christ Fellowship:

Pastors: All believers care for others, helping them to grow spiritually, which in the New Testament is expressed by a verb meaning "to shepherd." In Greek, the noun related to the verb "to shepherd" is often translated as "pastor." Pastoring (shepherding) is a gift, not a role, and a function, not a position (Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14). Men and women are both to "pastor," lead, and protect others, to care for them and to help them grow. At Christ Fellowship men and women both serve as pastors on our staff.

At Christ Fellowship when we hire a person for a role, we are appointing (or ordaining) them to that position with a job description and a salary. When a particular staff role carries out functions that are commonly recognized as those of a pastor, we officially ordain the person filling that role, with prayer.

Elders: The qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 specify males in the standard to be husband of one wife. All of Christ's original Apostles and all elders in the New Testament were male, so that's our practice for our elders, including the Senior Pastor. We see a biblical pattern with males, including fathers in a family. God calls the church a family, a household. This pattern reflects Old Testament examples. Abraham, Joseph, Moses, all the kings and priests, and most (but not all) of the prophets and judges were male.

Preaching and teaching: Men and women are both called to teach as part of Christ's Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). Preaching and teaching are gifts not roles (Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14). All believers are to teach one another (Colossian 1:28; 3:16). Men and women both prophesied, which overlapped what we call preaching today (Acts 2:17-18; 1 Corinthians 11:4-5; 14). At Christ Fellowship capable men and women both teach and preach God's Word in worship services. (See more in the appendix.) We expect anyone who teaches

children, students, or adults in any ministry context to be biblically accurate and capable.

We celebrate the unique gifts men and women bring to the body of Christ and look to both men and women to serve and lead in Christ Fellowship.

Appendix on Specific Passages and Questions

Who can preach at Christ Fellowship in our worship services? The Senior Pastor and Executive Spanish Pastor carefully and prayerfully invite those who can speak in addition to themselves. They also give the elders visibility into who we invite to preach. Although most of the preaching comes from the Senior Pastor and Executive Spanish Pastor, we believe it is good for the congregation to learn from more than one voice. We only invite people to speak in Christ Fellowship worship services who are biblically grounded, theologically sound, and capable speakers.

Galatians 3:28

²⁸ *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* Paul makes a three-fold statement in verse 28 that goes to the heart of our individual identity—our ethnic group, our socioeconomic class, and our biological sex. Jews do not get to lord it over Gentiles, nor Gentiles over Jews. The “free” are not more worthy of inclusion into God’s household than slaves. Men are not more valuable than women. The equality and unity of all diverse people flows from the gospel.

Paul’s point in Galatians 3:28 is that we are all heirs of God, and cultural distinctions are overcome. Discriminations that worldly cultures make have no place in the church. In Christ, our differences are not erased but embraced. We appreciate our varying perspectives and gifts, which come from who we are and what we have experienced.

In God’s family, the church, there can be no discrimination, no partiality, especially any rooted in ethnicity, economic status, or biological sex. Our differences are gifts to the family. Our unique experiences and perspectives benefit the whole family.

1 Corinthians 14

Verse 34 may be one of the most notorious in the Bible: *“women should remain silent in the churches.”* What is the Bible teaching us? First, we know the command is not absolute because in chapter 11 women prophesy, and in this chapter, all are to bring a word of instruction, men and women. People from Corinth sent Paul a letter telling him the problems there. If we had that letter, we would better understand what the problems were in Corinth. Without it we must try our best to reconstruct what was going on. Since Paul mentions husbands in verse 35, he is probably addressing wives directly in verse 34 rather than addressing all women. (The Greek noun translated “women,” can also mean “wives.”) Since this passage directly follows those about evaluating prophecy, it appears that the focus of wives

speaking is on evaluating what others have said. So, Paul is not talking about all speech, but about an abuse of speech.

It is interesting to note something hidden in most English translations. The Greek verb for “be silent” appears three times. In verse 28, without interpretation a tongues-speaker is to be silent. In verse 31, the one who prophecies is to be silent if another person has an insight to share. The concept has to do more with controlling speech than with silence.

Most likely, Paul is saying that wives should refrain from evaluating what their own husbands share in a church meeting. This is a matter of respect and propriety. This becomes clearer when we see that the Greek verb for “ask,” as in “ask their husbands at home,” can mean “interrogate.” This same verb was used when the high priest interrogated Jesus. It would be embarrassing for a wife to interrogate her own husband in a church meeting, undermining him in front of everyone. It was more appropriate to question her husband at home.

The translation “disgraceful” in verse 35 references cultural appropriateness. It was inappropriate in ancient cultures to embarrass or criticize your husband in public. In the Roman world, an honor-shame culture, such speech in public would have been shameful.

1 Timothy 2:8-15

This is a notoriously difficult passage. Even the best evangelical scholars disagree in various ways on how to read it. Such unclear passages should not be used as a basis for doctrine or church practice.

Often when Paul speaks to one group of people, he is not excluding other groups. For instance, when he tells older men to be temperate (Titus 2:2), he does not imply that younger men or women can be intemperate. In Timothy 2:8, he tells men to lift up holy hands in prayer without anger and disputing, so should women. In verse 11 he tells women to learn in quietness and submission, and so should men learn in humble submission to God’s Word and under those who know more than they do.

Our current best understanding of 1 Timothy 2:12, is that Paul prohibits women from teaching men *in a domineering way*. Teaching and authority in Greek seem to be connected as one idea. The Greek verb translated “exercise authority” is only used here in the New Testament and means “to domineer.” [See “Lexical Fallacies in Rendering ἀυθεντείν in 1 Timothy 2:12: BDAG in Light of Greek Literary and Nonliterary Usage” by Linda Belleville in *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2019), pp. 317–341].

While Paul is addressing a specific problem in Ephesus, this command is grounded in the order of the creation and the fall, so we believe this prohibition applies to all churches. However, his commands are not gender limited. Much as women too should lift up holy hands in prayer without anger, so too, men should not teach in a domineering way. The point is not teaching itself, but how it’s done, with good training and humility.

As with other CF View papers, please contact any Christ Fellowship elder or pastor with your questions.