

## What is Deliberately Ignored, Staring Us in the Face, An Obvious Problem, and Nobody Wants to Discuss It?

"It" is women in church leadership! Let's see if we can put this topic to rest once and for all.

Galatians 3:28 says, *"There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus."* It is almost funny to read commentary on this verse ... if it wasn't sad at the same time. Commentators (all men, by the way) go out of their way to stress that this verse is only about salvation and nothing else. But is it? I believe that verse 29 expounds on verses 26-28, *"And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you."* Who are the true children of Abraham, his heirs, and to whom does God's promise belong? Verse 28 did not disqualify gentiles or slaves or females. It included them. In verse 28 Paul destroys the petty prejudices of man's past. He is saying that man was wrong in giving privileges to Jews over gentiles, free men over slaves, and yes, males over females. He is saying that Jews ought not to think more highly of themselves versus gentiles, that free men should not think more highly of themselves than slaves, and men should not think more highly of themselves than women. Biblical references overwhelmingly support equality between men and women.

Actually, it is no contest and was put to rest early in Biblical history. Shall we start with Genesis 1:27 which clearly establishes that God thinks equally about men and women? *"So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."* The Bible does not say that God created only males in His image, but He created male and female in His image. God confirms this in verse 28 when he gives instruction to male and female both, *"Then God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.'" Who did God bless? He blessed "them"! He didn't just bless the men over the women. Who did God tell to fill the earth and GOVERN it and reign over all the animals? He told "them", not just the males. God blessed them equally and gave them equal instructions to GOVERN and reign over the earth. When we contrast verse 27 versus verse 28 we see that God made male and female human beings in His image, but not the animals; and God gave human beings dominion over the earth. He didn't give males alone dominion over the earth and he didn't give males dominion over females.*

The word GOVERN in verse 28 is interesting. The King James Bible Dictionary defines govern as, *"To direct and control, as the actions or conduct of men, either by established laws or by arbitrary will; to regulate by authority; to keep within the limits prescribed by law or sovereign will."* Most Bible translations use the word "subdue" instead of govern. The King James Bible Dictionary defines subdue as, *"To conquer by force or the exertion of superior power, and bring into permanent subjection; to reduce under dominion."* Regardless of which translation you choose, the authority to govern or subdue the earth was given to BOTH men and women.

*"God chooses leaders by his standards, not ours."<sup>13</sup>*

God did not create males as superior to females. To be created in the image of God means that they were both on equal footing when He created them and nowhere in the Bible does God change that. Only man's petty prejudices and insecurities made that change. What does the Bible say about changing God's Word? God instructs mankind not to change his Word in Proverbs 30:5-6 and Deuteronomy 4:2. He gives special emphasis to this in Revelation 22:18-19, *"And I solemnly declare to everyone who hears the*

words of prophecy written in this book: If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book. And if anyone removes any of the words from this book of prophecy, God will remove that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city that are described in this book."

*"Deborah is among the  
outstanding women of history.  
God chose her to lead Israel."<sup>131</sup>*

In an article online titled, *The Role of Women in Scripture*, Randall Johnson discusses the significance of Deborah's role as a leader of Israel, "Here was a woman who was acting as Israel's leader (judge) and daily meeting with those in disputes to apply the wisdom of the Law to their particular issues. Not only that, but she was exercising the gift and office of prophet, as did Moses. This was a role of tremendous responsibility and influence." Johnson goes on to say, "We must recognize that it is God who gave Deborah this position and these gifts. It was God who put her in a position to rule over men and teach men. Did God change His mind between Judges and the time of Deborah's leadership to the time of Paul and the letter to Timothy? Was God simply allowing Deborah to do something that He did not endorse?" The answer to that question is, not at all, because Judges 2:16 tells us that it was God who put the judges into authority over the nation of Israel. In the article, Johnson talks about Deborah's leadership and authority, "The fact of the matter is that Deborah was a great leader. If the reason for present day limiting of women's roles in leadership is based on ability, there is no basis for that argument in this part of Scripture. If it is argued that Adam's priority over Eve prohibits Deborah from having authority over Barak, that argument finds no basis here. God put Deborah in this position of authority." Thousands of years ago, God placed a woman in authority over men. I encourage you to read the entire article at <https://thimblefulloftheology.com/the-role-of-women-in-scripture/>.

Steve Johnson says this about how God values women:

1. The Bible indicates that men and women are equal in the eyes of God as they are both created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27)
2. Men and women are equal partners in God's gift of new life (1 Peter 3:7). Women are not mentally or spiritually inferior

You can read Steve Johnson's article titled, *What Does the Bible Teach about All People Being Equal?*, at [insightforliving.ca/read/articles/what-does-bible-teach-about-all-people-being-equal](http://insightforliving.ca/read/articles/what-does-bible-teach-about-all-people-being-equal).

<sup>1</sup> Timothy 2:11-12 says, "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet." Many church leaders use these verses to suppress the participation and leadership of women in the church and, unfortunately, many women go right along with it. However, my study Bible discusses this at length in the context of the environment of the church at the time it was written, "To understand these verses, we must consider the situation in which Paul and Timothy worked. In first-century Jewish culture, women were not allowed to study. When Paul said that women should learn in quietness and full submission, he was offering them an amazing new opportunity to learn God's Word. That they were to listen and learn quietly and submissively referred to an attitude of quietness and composure (not total silence). In addition, Paul himself acknowledges that women publicly prayed and prophesied (1 Corinthians 11:5). Apparently, however, the women in the Ephesian church were abusing their newly acquired Christian freedom. Because these women were new converts, they did not yet have the necessary experience, knowledge, or Christian maturity to teach those who already had extensive scriptural education. Some interpret this passage to mean that women should never teach in the assembled church; however, commentators point out that Paul did not

*forbid women from ever teaching. Paul's commended coworker, Priscilla, taught Apollos, the great preacher (Acts 18:24-26). Paul frequently mentioned other women who held positions of responsibility in the church. Phoebe worked in the church (Romans 16:1). Mary, Tryphena, and Tryphosa were the Lord's workers (Romans 16:6,12), as were Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2). Paul was very likely prohibiting the Ephesian women, not all women, from teaching. Paul did not want the Ephesian women to teach because they didn't yet have enough knowledge or experience. Paul was telling Timothy not to put anyone (in this case, women) into a position of leadership who was not yet mature in the faith. The same principle applies to churches today.”<sup>23</sup>*

My study Bible, in discussing Galatians 3:28, goes on to discuss the prejudices that many, if not most, Jewish males learned growing up and carried with them into adulthood, *“Some Jewish males greeted each new day by praying, “Lord, I thank you that I am not a Gentile, a slave, or a woman.” The role of women was enhanced by Christianity. Faith in Christ transcends these differences and makes all believers one in Christ. Make sure you do not impose distinctions that Christ has removed. Because all believers are his heirs, no one is more privileged than or superior to anyone else.”<sup>23</sup>*

*“What many men will do out of their own insecurities or fears is try to supplant their wives from developing the skills and gifts God has uniquely given to her. Rather than having wives who feel free to climb, these men wind up with wives who feel frustrated or controlled. A frustrated or controlled vine, men, will fail to produce any fruit. For your wife to be the kingdom woman she was created to be, you must provide a place of security that is so strong and stable that she will not only be able to, but also want to, cling to you. By enabling and encouraging her to cling to you, you will keep her from clinging to something else that is not legitimately positioned to put her in a place of personal growth and nurturing.”<sup>23</sup>*

It is interesting that 1 Corinthians 11:5 talks about women praying and prophesying. In the ancient church, prayer and prophecy were not done in silence. In fact, a person could not deliver a message of prophecy without speaking out loud to the congregation. Therefore, it was not unusual for women to speak out loud to the congregation at that time. Verse 11:5 goes on to admonish a woman who would pray or offer prophecy with her head uncovered, but it does not condemn women for the acts of prayer or prophecy. My study Bible discusses 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and the role of women in the church, *“Does this mean that women should not speak in church services today? It is clear from 11:5 that women prayed and prophesied in public worship. It is also clear in chapters 12-14 that women are given spiritual gifts and are encouraged to exercise them in the body of Christ. Women have much to contribute and can participate in worship services. In the Corinthian culture, women were not allowed to confront men in public. Apparently some of the women who had become Christians thought that their Christian freedom gave them the right to question the men in public worship. This was causing division in the church. In addition, women of that day did not receive formal religious education as did the men. Women may have been raising questions in the worship services that could have been answered at home without disrupting the services. Paul was asking the women not to flaunt their Christian freedom during worship. The purpose of Paul's words was to promote unity, not to teach about women's role in the church.”<sup>23</sup>*

It is important that Paul uses the phrase, *“brothers and sisters”* (NIV, NLT and other translations) several times in the book of Galatians. He is giving equal attention to the women as he is the men. The Greek word used here is translated to *“philadelphia”* meaning *“love of Christian brethren”*. Paul is referring to all believers, he is not elevating the men over the women. In Galatians 4:12 Paul is pleading with the believers, *“I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you.”* Paul didn't plead just with the men to become like him, he was pleading to both men and women equally. Galatians 5:13 says, *“You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh;*

*rather, serve one another humbly in love.*” Here Paul is saying that both men and women believers were called to be free and he is encouraging both men and women to serve each other. In verse 6:1 Paul says, *“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.”* Paul didn't tell just the men to restore a person in sin ... he called both men and women to do so equally. Also note that women were prominent in 5 of 6 house churches in the New Testament.

*“God can choose anyone to lead his people, young or old, man or woman. Don't let your prejudices get in the way of those God may have chosen to lead you.”<sup>31</sup>*

Pastor Rick White of Christian Fellowship Worship Center in Beaumont, Texas asked why we allow women on stage to sing worship songs and sing gospel truths, but we won't allow them to speak the same words from stage without music?

*sidetrack: As I'm writing this book in November 2016, our church is asking its members how they would like to serve in the church. My wife and I selected 3 areas of service one of which was 'ushers'. When I went to the head of ushers to tell him we would like to participate, he was somewhat speechless and looked like he didn't know how to respond. I immediately knew what was going on ... our church, with regular Sunday attendance of around 450 people, had never had a woman usher before! I didn't say anything and he went off to obviously consult with someone else about it. Later he came back and told me that it was going to be 'okay' and he would order name tags for us. I wanted to respond to him that 'I was glad he was going to be okay', but I refrained from doing so. The next day, I emailed the commitment cards to our church secretary. One for me and one for my wife. Well, she calls me up and tells me that she received the forms, but there was a problem. I asked what the problem was and she said both the forms were exactly the same! I said 'yes, we would like to serve together' and she said 'but your wife selected usher and she can't do that!' I explained to her that I had already received the approval of the head of ushers and she said, 'okay, I've just never seen that before!' I asked her why it was a problem and she said she didn't know. Isn't it amazing that our medium-sized, progressive church, representing a Christian faith that had Deborah as a judge over the whole nation of Israel, an entire book in the Bible about Ruth, and allows women to act as prayer partners in front of the congregation ... but was uncomfortable with having a woman as an usher! Interestingly, church leaders later approached us and told us that they really needed more help with the parking lot crew than with ushers and would we be willing to work in the parking lot instead of ushering? We agreed to go where they needed us and so they took us off the ushers roster and put us on the parking lot assignment. Even more interesting is that I have since discovered that some of the parking lot crew also serve as ushers and sometimes they don't have enough ushers and they ask other men to participate, but never me. To my knowledge this church still has never had a woman usher!*

*“Both men and women have been given the ability and authority to lead. Leadership is not gender specific.”<sup>35</sup>*

*“Some time after Jesus sent out His twelve, hand-picked disciples for on-the-job training (Luke 9), He expanded His training to include 70 unnamed disciples who followed Him (Luke 10). We have reason to believe both men and women made up this group of 70 trainees, and what they accomplished greatly multiplied Jesus' ministry in Judah.”<sup>35</sup>*

I believe that many women serve as "discreet ministers". What do I mean by this? From personal experience I have seen wives running the church vicariously through their pastor husbands. I suspect this has been happening for centuries and is more prevalent than men wish to admit. I am quite sure that many women have significant impact on churches from behind the scenes as influential wives of pastors, elders, deacons and other male ministers. The Bible describes many influential women working "behind the scenes" serving the church and serving God. It is time to bring these women to the forefront and utilize their talents to further the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

I could go on and on with even more Biblical evidence of women in leadership positions, but I feel we have sufficiently addressed the issue. Qualified women are fully accepted by God (just as men are), indeed encouraged, as leaders in businesses, communities, governments, families, and churches. Regardless of women's leadership positions in society and church, we do believe that in marriage, women should be submissive to their husbands according to the Biblical qualities of husbands and wives.