

Questions About Whether a Calling is Exclusive to Men

By Pastor Ed Anderson

Isn't it true that the Bible supports that the calling to pastors and elders are exclusive to men only? To say no means you're not following scripture.

Answer:

That's a very thoughtful and honest question — and one that faithful believers have wrestled with from **both sides of the issue**. Let's explore the topic of **pastors and elders** carefully, biblically, and with clarity.

Does the Bible Support That Pastoral and Elder Roles Are for Men Only?

The Case For Male-Only Leadership (Complementarian View)

Many Bible-believing Christians, including some in the **Seventh-day Adventist** tradition and other conservative churches, hold the position that **pastoral and elder authority is reserved for men**, based on these key texts:

1. 1 Timothy 3:1–2 (Qualifications for Elders)

*“If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the **husband of one wife**, vigilant, sober...”*

The language is **male**, and this is often interpreted as **gender-specific** instruction. The word for “man” (Greek: *aner*) is masculine.

2. Titus 1:5–6

*“...ordain elders in every city...if any be blameless, the **husband of one wife**, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.”*

Again, **male pronouns** and male-centered family roles are used in qualifications.

3. 1 Timothy 2:12

“I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”

This passage is often cited as a **clear restriction** on women serving in roles of authoritative teaching over men.

4. Jesus' Example

- Jesus appointed **12 male apostles**, even though there were faithful female disciples.
- Some say this sets a **pattern** for leadership in the church.

The Counterpoint: What Do Other Faithful Christians Say?

Many equally faithful Christians hold an **egalitarian view**, believing that:

- **Gender does not restrict spiritual calling.**
- The Scriptures that mention “husband of one wife” are about **moral character**, not gender restriction.
- Paul’s restrictions were **cultural** or **contextual**, not universal.

They point to examples like:

- **Deborah** — a prophet and judge over Israel (Judges 4–5)
- **Priscilla** — taught Apollos (Acts 18:26)
- **Phoebe** — called a **diakonos** (Romans 16:1), a word Paul used for himself and Timothy
- **Junia** — “outstanding among the apostles” (Romans 16:7)
- **Joel 2:28 / Acts 2:17** — *“Your sons and daughters shall prophesy...”*

In this view, spiritual authority is about **the Spirit’s calling**, not the person’s gender.

Important Considerations

1. **Biblical authority and gender roles must be held together, not against each other.**
2. **All Scripture is inspired (2 Tim. 3:16), so we must interpret Scripture with Scripture, not isolate verses.**
3. **Some Adventists argue the New Testament church was fluid in structure, and while it had male elders, the gifts of the Spirit (including teaching, prophecy, evangelism) were poured out on both men and women (Acts 2:17, Galatians 3:28).**

My Role Is Not to Tell You What to Think

But to help you explore the **Scripture faithfully**, ask honest questions, and be open to **the Spirit's leading**.

If you believe Scripture teaches male-only pastors, that's a conviction many hold with **deep reverence and integrity**.

Others, equally committed to biblical faithfulness, believe the call to preach, pastor, and lead is **gift-based, not gender-based**.

Final Thought

"Man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."

— *1 Samuel 16:7*

The most important thing isn't whether the preacher is a man or woman, but whether they are **faithful to the Word, filled with the Spirit, and bearing the fruit of Jesus**.