

God's Good Gift of Sex and Gender **Lesson 2 (cont.): Gender Roles in the Church**

Women in Church Ministry

There is a difference between being a "leader" in all sorts of ways and representing Christ in office.

Scripture includes examples of women teaching and leading: Abigail, who rebuked David in 1 Samuel 25, or Priscilla who, with her husband Aquila, corrected the defective theology of Apollos in Acts 18:26. Gifted women prophesied (1 Cor. 11:5)

Paul exhorts all Christians, male and female, to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs..." (Col. 3:16). Nothing in the context suggests Paul meant only men. Women were the first evangelists of the resurrection of the Lord, even when some found it difficult to believe (Luke 24:10).

Romans 16 alone recognizes many women in ministry leadership.

- The Apostle Paul calls Priscilla a "fellow worker" (Rom.16:3),
- acknowledges Mary "who labored much" (Rom.16:6),
- Junia who because of her labors in the Lord was a "fellow prisoner" with Paul (Rom.16:7)
- Tryphena and Tryphosa who also "labored in the Lord, together with Persis (Rom.16:12).

Can women serve in the following?

- Reading Scripture in worship
- Teaching Sunday school to adults
- Participate in new member interviews
- Advise the Session on decisions

Deacon Assistants

Faith has for the first time recognized the non-ordained leadership role of deacon assistants, including female members. Why open such a role?

1. It is Biblical

Romans 16:1-2 *"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant (deacon) of the church at Cenchreae, [2] that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well."*

The term "deacon" may refer to an official title or simply as a servant. It is noteworthy that Phoebe stands at the head of a long list of recognized church leaders in Rome in Romans 16. Whatever Phoebe is, she is not less than one leading in a diaconal ministry.

2. It is Historical

1st Century testimony of women in deacon roles:

- “Pliny mentions church diaconissae or ministrae in his 112 A.D. Epistle to Trajan
- “deaconesses as early as 100 A.D.”⁸ The Apostolic Constitutions starts off the recommended prayer “concerning a Deaconess at the time of her appointment”

Early Church Fathers

- Ignatius, Hermas, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Theodore of Mopsuestia, the Apostolic Constitutions, and Chrysostom.”
- In the congregation of Chrysostom in Constantinople around 400 A.D. there were at least 40 “deaconesses” about whom Chrysostom once noted, “they all seemed to possess ... patience, immutable resolution, freedom of speech and lofty boldness” and as such he proclaimed how the deaconesses “put to shame the enemies” of God” and “deliver a deadly wound to the devil” while also bringing comfort to “those that fight for the truth.”

John Calvin

- Institutes (IV:13:19), while discussing I Tim. 5:9-15, Calvin stated that “Deaconesses were created...to discharge the public ministry of the Church towards the poor...”
- Institutes IV.3.9 in the section “on deacons” Calvin describes women appointed for the role of deaconess: “Of this sort were the widows whom Paul mentions to Timothy [1 Tim. 5:9-10]. Women could fill no other public office than to devote themselves to the care of the poor.”

Presbyterian (1867) PCUS draft, IV-4-6

- *The New Testament authorizes the employment of godly women in the diaconal function. Wherefore it is proper, where it shall appear needful, that the church-session select and appoint deaconesses, for the care of the sick, of prisoners, of poor widows and orphans, and in general for the relief of distress.*

3. It has been a part of the PCA since 1973

- Current PCA Book of Church Order 9-7. *It is often expedient that the Session of a church should select and appoint godly men and women of the congregation to assist the deacons in caring for the sick, the widows, the orphans, the prisoners, and others who may be in any distress or need. These assistants to the deacons are not officers of the church (BCO 7-2) and, as such, are not subjects for ordination (BCO 17).*

“Slippery Slope” Fallacy (T. David Gordon)

Often, a slippery slope argument is “enhanced” by citing an example of someone who “slipped.” It is then suggested that the view under consideration, while not wrong in itself, should be rejected because of what it might lead to. Of course, since we are sinners, we are capable of (and indeed it is a rather easy matter to multiply instances of an individual abusing some truth. This abuse, however, does not make the truth dangerous in itself, or wrong. It is still a truth, to be embraced by everyone who loves truth.

The reason the slippery slope fallacy is so appealing to us is that there is an element of truth to it. Beliefs are logically connected to other beliefs, and it is true that embracing

one error will, normally, produce other errors. However, truth does not inherently lead to error; God believes everything that is true, and not one of those truths leads Him into any error of any sort.

Can there be male deacon assistants?

There may be men who desire to serve and lead in diaconal ministry without being ordained. The reasons for this could vary from not being called to a perpetual office to doubts about qualifications.

Role of Deacon Assistants

a. Gifted Leaders: Deacon Assistants are those recognized as gifted leaders in the ministry of the “communion of the saints.” They are charged with leading teams and crafting policies under the authority and oversight of the deacons.

b. Wise and Involved Counsel: Deacon Assistants are heavily involved in the life of the church and are able to provide helpful, wise, and valued counsel to the deacons in every aspect of diaconal ministry.

What kind of authority do deacons exercise?

- Overseeing and making decisions regarding property
- Enacting policies for various one-anothering ministries (building use, nursery, equipment, worship administration, budget, mercy ministry)
- Entering into contracts for services on behalf of the church

What about Women Shepherding Women?

Titus 2:3–5

[3] Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, [4] and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, [5] to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Here is another example of mature, gifted women assisting in leading.

How would Faith benefit from a Titus 2 group of women discipling women? What issues would they be equipped to aid our congregation?

God's Good Gift of Sex and Gender

Lesson 3: Sexual Sin, Temptation, and the Gospel

Why does God care about my sex life?

Common Assumptions in this Question

1. It doesn't harm anyone

a) Sex outside of marriage does harm marriages (power to unite, power to destroy)

- It is designed as an expression of intimacy. The physical act is a reflection of the trust that comes with being vulnerable and accepted by your spouse. This can only happen in the context of a vow to display love beyond conditions.
- Adultery breaks that trust and can be grounds for dissolving that vow.
- Sex before marriage undermines the intimacy of the marriage: vulnerability is disrupted with potential comparisons. The partner who has had previous sexual experiences has shaped their view of sex outside of the context of marriage vows.

b) Pornography does harm others

- Viewing porn enables an industry where 60-80% of the workers experience physical or sexual abuse. The mortality rate among workers is 10-40 times the average.¹
- 62% of sex trafficking is for pornographic exploitation.
- A NY Times investigation reports how sites like Pornhub profits off of videos depicting young children, rape, and abuse.²

c) Our sex saturated culture imposes physical and psychological harm

- The sexual revolution has contributed to objectifying women's bodies and influencing dramatic alterations through harmful and costly surgeries and eating disorders. Body shame has caused widespread depression.
- By making sexual drive a primary human function it is privileging the beautiful and rich and socially adept and relegating others to new forms of loneliness and frustration.
- Society is waking up to the ways that "liberated sex" has led to confusion over consent and harassment (where does flirtation end and harassment begin?)

¹ Statistics from www.createdgainesville.org

² "The Children of Pornhub" by Nicholas Kristof, Dec. 4, 2020