

On the Question of Women's Leadership

Women's leadership in the church has become something of a hot button topic recently; so much so that I have felt the need to join the conversation, especially since I'm in the age range of young women who are seeking to become pulpit ministers or preaching interns.

Honestly, I hadn't given much thought to the idea of women's leadership in the church, other than the discussions I had during my Christian Women class in college. I just knew that I had different views than my male counterparts. But recently, with women's leadership coming into question—especially within the parameters of the worship service—I felt like I needed to get my words out there. Even while I attended a conservative Christian university—and even before the rise of women's leadership in the church flared up in the past few months—I discovered that everyone has different opinions on this subject, and I have had to defend my position that no, I do not believe that women should have leadership roles in worship.

Does that mean that women can't participate in the kingdom of God? Of course not! I have helped teach Bible classes for young children, read Scripture, led prayers, led singing, and spoken some for and to women for ladies' days, high school girls' chapels, and devotionals in all-girls' dorms at university. Simply put, I believe that my role is different in my service in His kingdom than those that men have, for several reasons.

1. I have held the opinion that if I were to take on a leadership role meant for a man in the church, it would leave that man feeling inadequate for not being able to fill the role that God tailored for him. Simply put, how would you feel if you had a position custom-made just for you by your employer, only to find that someone else with completely different talents—great talents, but just different—has taken that job away from you? Would you not feel good enough for that job? Qualifications for elders and deacons are specifically tailored for men (1 Timothy 3:1-9), and I believe they are this way for a good reason. God created man to be the head of the household (as evidenced by the creation of Adam in Genesis 1:26-27, and Eve in Genesis 2:18-25) and also to be a spiritual leader in both the home and the church. It's not that women don't have the ability to lead spiritually, but their leadership is misplaced if that position is designed by God to be filled by men. Women can use their tendency to nurture at a greater capacity by teaching children who have not reached the age of accountability or by mentoring to other women, while men can use their God-given leadership and discernment to support both men and women in the congregation.

2. Just because I have a talent that could be used in a worship leadership position, it doesn't mean I'm able to use it for that purpose. I like to think that I'm good at speaking in front of people. But just because I excelled in giving presentations in school doesn't mean I'm qualified to speak in front of an entire congregation. Preaching God's word is not something to take lightly, and it requires a man with not only a talent to speak, but also a knowledge of God's Word that he can share with others, and the ability to counsel members of a congregation in their

time of need. Leading singing and prayer, are still roles that should be filled by men when practiced before a congregation of believers (see my first point above). So, while the talents I have are God-given, the talents I have also have parameters on where and how they are used. If you have no idea of how to use your specific talents, my advice is to pray and to be patient. You may not be comfortable with where God leads you, but lean on His promises, and all will work for good for those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). This leads to my final point.

3. My calling as a young woman of God is designed by God, and I should pursue it with all of my being. Here's a simple question: why are women mentioned in the Bible? Why are their accomplishments mentioned in Scripture if their roles are not church or worship-related? Simple: because God designed specific purposes for mankind, both men and women alike. I think of Mary and Martha, whose friendship with Jesus supported His ministry; of Ruth, whose life was turned upside-down, but because she was faithful to her God and her mother-in-law, she was provided a husband who would love and cherish her all of their days, and of Mary, whose calling, while unconventional in the eyes of society at the time, would be the greatest calling that anyone could ever have: carrying and rearing the Son of God.

So, even though I may not be able to lead worship in singing or preach my thoughts from a pulpit, God has a specific calling for me—and for all of us. All we have to do is seek it out through prayer and discern what He has to say in His Word, men and women alike. ▲