

Different Roles Do Not Imply Different Value

Some take terrible offence at the difference the Bible makes between the roles of women and men. However, we should remember that God values us all the same, though He may ask us to fill different roles.

“For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” (I Corinthians 12:14-18)

We should all look at our individual roles and be willing to humbly fulfill whatever God asks of us. There are many different jobs to be done. Will we let them go unfinished while we fight over who should have the best job? God forbid!

The perfect example of this attitude is found in Jesus Christ. Though he was Lord of lords and King of kings, he submitted himself to the task God gave him. As a child, he submitted himself to his parents. As an adult, he submitted himself to the wicked hands of those that would nail him to the cross. Christ knew what he often said, “So the last shall be first, and the first last” (Matthew 20:16)

Women Still Pray!

Some will read this tract and curiously ask, “May women pray at all?!” The answer is unequivocally, YES!

- Women are commanded to pray without ceasing, just like men (I Th. 5:17). The expression “without ceasing” describes a lifestyle of perpetual prayer that ought to be found in every person.
- When a prayer is being led, only one person is speaking, but every person should be praying along with the prayer leader. Thus, when a man leads prayer, women pray too!
- Women may pray at anytime, in any situation, in any place. They can follow the example of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, who prayed in her heart without uttering a sound (I Samuel 1:12-13). Hannah’s silent prayer was so passionate that the high priest saw her and thought she was drunk!
- Women may lead prayers with other women. They may also lead children in prayer. My father is a preacher, but it was my mother who taught me to pray when I was still a child.

Without a doubt, women may pray!

May Women Lead Prayer?

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“I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”

I Timothy 2:8

All people should be praying people. Both men and women need to go to their Father in prayer. However, what does the Bible say about leading prayer?

Spiritual Leadership

The Bible teaches that God intended males to be the spiritual leaders of humanity. By making Adam first, he placed on males a tremendous burden (I Timothy 2:13). To keep man from failing in this responsibility, God prohibited women from becoming leaders in spiritual matters (I Timothy 2:12).

Was this done because women are of lesser value than men? No! All people are equally valuable before God (Galatians 3:28). Does this restriction keep women from doing meaningful work for God? No! God has given women many tasks that they are uniquely qualified to do (Titus 2:3-5). Furthermore, women may participate in all sorts of religious work so long as they do not take for themselves the role God has placed upon men.

What About Prayer?

“I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” (I Timothy 2:8)

God has included leading prayer as part of the leadership role he has given to males. Let us look carefully at this passage.

First, notice that God made this passage universal in its application. By saying “in every place,” it is made clear that this command is not limited to a specific location or event. Wherever prayers were made in any

circumstance, males were expected to lead. No exemption is offered of any kind. This passage does not qualify itself based on how many people are present. Whether two people pray or two thousand, whether saints or sinners, males are expected to lead if any males are present. Obviously, this passage is considering the interaction of men and women together (see the context of I Timothy 2), and therefore does not seek to prohibit women from praying together or with children in the absence of men.

Second, notice that this obligation is not to be taken lightly by the men who are expected to lift up holy hands. The hand is used in the Bible as a figure to represent the works that we do with our hands. Thus, “lifting holy hands” means that we pray while living a holy life devoted to doing righteousness. A man who has stained his hands with sin has disqualified himself as a spiritual leader, regardless of his gender. A man who is guilty of sin has not excluded himself from this responsibility of spiritual leadership. Instead, he has brought upon himself the double shame of both abandoning his obligation and of making himself unqualified to meet it. He must wash his hands with the blood of Christ to make his hands holy again. Thus, we see that this command is two-fold: (1) it commands the men to lead and (2) it commands men to make themselves qualified leaders through holiness and obedience to God.

In conclusion, we can affirm from this text that God intended men to live righteously to qualify themselves as spiritual leaders. Once qualified, men are expected to take up the role of spiritual leader, including the leading of prayers.

Are Women Valuable?

The Bible clearly teaches that the distinction that God made between men and women does not demean women in any way.

After God made Adam first, giving him the obligation of spiritual leadership, God declared, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen. 2:18). Man on his own was not suited for the entirety of the work God intended to give humanity. The expression “help meet for him” means that God designed woman to fill man’s shortcomings so that God’s plan could be completed. Men and women are different because they were intended to be. Once we consider that God made women to fill the void that would have resulted from man being alone, it is easy to conclude that women are absolutely priceless!

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

Proverbs 31:10

Women have a tremendous work to do, including changing the lives of everyone around them through the noble character they show in every act (I Peter 3:1-2). The Bible teaches that the godly character of women “is in the sight of God of great price” (I Peter 3:4).

Let no man dare to slander the powerful work done by godly women! And let no woman every doubt her value in the eyes of her God!
