



WOMEN and
MINISTRY

WHO CAN WOMEN
TEACH?

Evonne Paddison

WOMEN IN MINISTRY?
YES PLEASE!

Cathy Walters

MINISTRY OR
"MANISTRY"?

Claire Rogers

THE MOBILE
GENERATION

Sandy Clarke



Woman (Hebrew *ishah*). Woman, with man, was made in the image of God. 'Male and female he created them' (Genesis 1:27).

welcome...

I belong to that group of Christian women who lived through the 60's and 70's without so much as a scorched bra. We were considered conservative by our feminist sisters both inside and outside the church and yet we worked towards an equal partnership with men in all facets of our lives as an obvious expression of our faith.

We took on leadership roles most of our mothers would not have dreamed of, and perhaps were glad to be free from. Were we kidding ourselves that we were submitting to the word of God? Were we expressing an appropriate gospel freedom or were we just products of 60s and 70s culture? Whatever the case, we have learned that working through what the Bible teaches about our place in the church has not been as simple as we thought it was going to be.

We imagined our daughters and sons would carry on as we had begun, but we find this is not always their experience. So how do we encourage our daughters when sometimes their role in the church seems to conflict so vividly with what they learn at school and do at work?

I want my daughter to understand that gospel freedom is a gift, not a right. I want her to understand that it should be clothed in love and care, and should be especially careful to maintain unity amongst Christians. I want her to know that Christian ministry is about service not power. I don't want her to relinquish, shirk or even not recognise a God-given responsibility in the church because she is ill-equipped to engage in the debate about what the Bible says. If the crux of the matter rests on how one views the interplay between God's word and culture, both then and now, we need to hear the cultural overlays in the biblical text and listen respectfully to each other, seeking to understand why we differ. We hope that this issue of ishah serves as a helpful tool in achieving this.

Fran Boydell

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Who can

> WOMEN

teach?

BY EVONNE PADDISON

For evangelicals the issue about who women can teach is not one concerning the inspiration and the authority of Scripture. It is a hermeneutical issue: an issue of how different evangelicals who love the Bible and believe it to be God's Word interpret and apply it in the 21st century.

The exegetical issues are complex and so we find that evangelicals interpreting the same biblical texts have come to very different and sometimes opposing points of view. This article seeks to give a brief overview of three positions. In examining each position I will try to show how the key texts relating to the ministry of women can be interpreted by its supporters.

► Position1 Women can teach women but not men

This position rests on the view that the Bible teaches that men and women are equal but different: that they are not interchangeable in person or role but their differences do not mean inequality. It is asserted that the "order in creation" as found in *Genesis 1-3* lays out the sexual differences within human relationships (*Genesis 1:27*). Being made first man has a primary responsibility in the relationship between man and woman (*Genesis 2*). The sin of the man and woman involves a reversal of the created order. The judgement of God consists in the re-establishment of his created order.

God's ordered relationship is seen most clearly in the relationship between husband and wife (*Ephesians 5:22-33*). As Christ is the head of the church so the husband is the head of the wife and this is expressed in self-sacrificial love. The wife's submission to her husband is a response to the husband's responsibility in serving the welfare of the wife. This reflects the ordered relationship established in creation and as such is transcultural.

It is argued that whatever led to the teaching in 1Corinthians its principle remains clear; the "created order" is to be acknowledged in the congregation and not overthrown, since the headship of man in relation to woman is compared to Christ's headship over man and God's headship over Christ (*1 Corinthians 11:3*). This involves the woman's recognition of authority (v.10). *1 Corinthians 14:34-36* also supports the principle of "order" in the man/woman relationship in that Paul forbade women to speak in a way that would cause the God-given order of the man/woman relationship to be overthrown. In *1 Timothy 2:11-15* Paul refers to behaviour which is incompatible with this

created order (v.12), that is women teaching and exercising authority over men. A woman is to receive instruction "with full submission". The role reversal of man and woman in the garden must not be repeated in the assembly. Thus a male should be the teacher in the church. Verse 15 is generally understood as teaching that women will enter into eschatological salvation through fulfilling their role as women, epitomized in motherhood, in living a godly life and not teaching men in the church. However, older women are encouraged to teach younger women (*Titus 2:3-4*) and also to teach children (*2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15; cf. Acts 16:1*).

Accordingly, the principle of a created order still stands today because it applies in all cultures and at all times. Thus a woman is not permitted to teach a man although she is able to teach other women and children.

► Position2 Women can teach anyone but only under the authority of men

This view agrees that the Bible teaches that men and women are equal but different, also citing the "order in creation" principle as found in *Genesis 1-3*. It, however, allows for teaching and preaching ministries to be exercised in the church by both men and women providing that leadership (headship) of churches is reserved for men. It argues that the principle and practice of both Jesus and Paul was to affirm the ministry of women. Nevertheless, it is asserted that Jesus and Paul only appointed men to the office of apostles and elders. This position responds to the teaching of Paul which encourages the teaching of women, as found in *1 Corinthians 11* where women are free to prophesy to mixed congregations. It also takes into account the teaching of Paul where limitations are placed on the ministry of women.

In examining *1 Corinthians 14:34-35* and *1 Timothy 2:9-15* it is maintained that although these passages do not prohibit women from preaching and teaching they do exclude women from the exercise of authority in the congregation. Various interpretations of the 1 Timothy passage are cited as supporting this position. One maintains that in 1 Timothy Paul addresses the general role of women in the congregation. This need was occasioned by the impact of wealthy and articulate women on a number of the women in the assembly. Paul is not addressing whether women have the ability to take up the function of leader/ teacher of the congregation. His concern is

ISSUES TO
COME...

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Hope

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our aims

1. To value the Bible as God's inspired Word to us and the ultimate authority on matters of faith and practice, through thinking hard about how the Bible applies to our everyday lives.

2. To encourage women to grow in godliness and maturity in Christ.

3. To equip Christian women to be creative, confident and effective in communicating the gospel.

4. To give women in a variety of roles and situations the forum to think about contemporary issues from a framework of Biblical theology and to articulate their thinking in a manner that stimulates themselves and others to live lives that are more faithful to God's Word.

the impact of this on the church in relation to marriages and its evaluation of the role of mothering. This restriction from the authoritative teaching function (*1 Timothy 2:12, 3:2, 5:17 and Titus 1:5-7*) does not exclude women from the role of deacon: they are listed among the deacons in *1 Timothy 3:8-13* but not among the overseers (1-7). It is asserted that the implication of this teaching today is that a woman may not be the principal teacher and leader in the congregation. This restriction does not inhibit women from a whole range of pastoral, teaching and sacramental ministry under the leadership of the male senior teacher/leader in a team. The church today should not place inhibitions on women's ministry to mixed congregations that did not apply in the Pauline churches of the first century.



► **Position3** Women can teach anyone without restriction

Others maintain that there are no biblical reasons why a woman should not, if she is so gifted, exercise the same ministry in the church as do men including the leading of congregations. There is no difference in ministry roles for men and women "in Christ".

It is maintained that *1 Corinthians* acknowledges the activity of women in praying and prophesying to mixed congregations. References to women among Paul's co-workers in *Romans 16*, and the roles they played testify to the leadership roles exercised by women in the Pauline churches. Moreover, this represents the trajectory of the Bible's attitude to women through the Old Testament and on to the ministry of Jesus and into the apostolic church. In this context, although *Galatians 3:28* is addressing chiefly the salvation of all people, it can be viewed as a climax in a growing challenge to the assumptions of Paul's society.

Advocates of this view emphasize the importance of interpreting each text in its historical setting. They stress the need to be careful not to apply culturally relative matters which were meant to apply to the local situation to which they were addressed, to the church throughout its history.

In examining *1 Corinthians 14:34-35*, it is argued that it is the marriage relationship which is in focus. In addressing headship it is asserted that the metaphor 'head' only occurs twice in the New Testament (*1 Corinthians 11:3; and Eph 5:23*) and is not dealing with ministry issues. The Ephesians' usage is not in reference to women in the church but a way of expressing the relationship of marriage. In *1 Corinthians 11:2-16* the specific issue being tackled is a matter of head covering (*1 Corinthians 11:3*) not of ministry, however the passage acknowledges that women were able to prophesy in the church.

The historical context of *1 Timothy 2:8-15* is Paul's concern to combat some false teachers/elders in the assembly (*1 Timothy 1:3*). It is not a handbook for church order. These false teachers/elders have influence among the women (*1 Timothy 2:9-15, 5:11-15; 2 Timothy 3:6-7*). Various house churches were yielding to a leadership based on false teaching. In this context Paul emphasizes the importance of women's proper demeanour in dress and in the assembly (including learning in all quietness),

and getting married and bearing children in order to rescue them from false doctrine. The authority that the woman is not to usurp is specifically a reference to her husband and not the men of the church in general. This is why Paul alludes to the roles of Adam and Eve and to childbirth (vv13-15). Mention in verses 13-15 of Adam and Eve does not make the text a "creation principle". He is using this well-known story to demonstrate the threat inherent to relationships between men and women. It appears that the some of the false teaching is to do with a downgrading of marriage.

Thus context demonstrates that the key passages relating to the ministry of women apply to particular situations within particular congregations and are not universally binding. Moreover, in responding to the so-called "creation order principle" it is argued that the subordination of women to men is viewed as an aspect of the fall. "In Christ" the relationship between men and women is restored to one of partnership and is exemplified by mutual submission (*Ephesians 5:21*) and ministry functions.

► **Conclusion**

Although evangelicals disagree over the interpretation of whom women may teach there is no dispute over the central issues of our faith. It is these crucial truths that bind us. Together we affirm the inspiration of Scripture, the atoning death of Christ Jesus, his bodily resurrection from the dead and that we are saved and justified by faith alone and are called to be his witnesses until his return.

■ *Evonne loves attending St John's Anglican church Diamond Creek. When she is not lecturing in New Testament and running the University College at Ridley she dreams of sipping latte in a sidewalk café on the Champs Elysée. Evonne can be contacted at warden@ridley.unimelb.edu.au*

GLOSSARY

Eschatological: adjective from the noun *eschatology*. It means regarding the end times, the last things – eschatological salvation is our final salvation

Exegetical: adjective from the noun *exegesis*. It means understanding the meaning of a text as the original readers understood it. Exegesis is answering the question: what did the biblical author mean?

Hermeneutical: adjective from the noun *hermeneutics*. It means the methods we employ to interpret the meaning of a text for us today.



BY CATHY WALTERS

I recently spent a day training women to be preachers of God's word. I long for women to be preachers and teachers of the Bible, and it was an immense joy and privilege to be involved in shaping the future ministry of these women. I am, however, a woman who believes the Bible imposes some restrictions on women in ministry.

'Women in ministry' is a daunting topic and I approach it with some trepidation. I fear the impact of what the Bible says upon "my ministry", and I fear what other women will think of me for holding the position I do. It is certainly not an issue I feel I have finally "worked out". I envisage that I will return to it throughout my life, and am open to changing my view as God

I THINK THERE IS A GREAT NEED FOR MORE WOMEN TO BE THEOLOGICALLY TRAINED AND ABLE TO TEACH

grants me wisdom. I do not think it is an issue of central importance to the gospel and therefore am happy to fellowship with people who hold a position different from my own. Indeed, many such women I respect deeply, and pray that this article does not offend them.

I believe men and women are together made in the image of God and have equal access to salvation in Christ (*Genesis 1:27, Galatians 3:28*). I believe all Christians are to live lives of service to God (*Romans 12:1*). I also believe that the way men and women are to exercise that service is different. The primary difference is that women are not to teach or have authority over men (*1 Timothy*

2:12). I believe this prohibition continues today, since Paul bases his instruction on the unchanging order of creation. So, for example, I do not think a woman should be the senior pastor of a church, or preach to a mixed congregation. However, I am sure the Bible upholds women in ministry (*Romans 16*), and encourages them to teach women and children (*Titus 2*). I do not think teaching women is a lesser task, nor is the prohibition due to a lack of ability. It's just that God created us and intends us to serve Him in different ways.

Personally, I love teaching the Bible. For many years I was involved in the work of the Melbourne University Christian Union, a student group committed to proclaiming the gospel on the university campus. During my ministry there I taught the Bible in numerous Bible study groups, training courses, and mentoring relationships. I led both mixed gender and women-only groups, with male and female co-leaders. As a senior leader,

however, I felt increasingly uncomfortable teaching men without a more senior male co-leader. Since these were hard to find, I led some women-only groups and although we didn't do anything particularly girly, the women matured as they were taught from the Bible and I felt free to teach them with authority.

Unfortunately, I think there is a false perception that women's ministry is inferior if it does not include teaching a mixed audience from a pulpit. We need to be careful not to downplay or overlook the ministries women can do simply because there may be some they can't. Preaching to women is just as vital as preaching to men, and leading small

groups and mentoring are not less important because they are not done on a mass scale, or 'up the front'. I have found teaching small groups and mentoring women to be just as significant as any other form of teaching, with the added joy of witnessing the personal growth in an individual's faith. We ought not to see teaching women as an inferior task to that of teaching men, since God has made us all in His image and the privilege of explaining His word to anyone is an undeserved honour.

I long to see more women teachers of the Bible who are committed to expository preaching and teaching. I think there is a great need for more women to be theologically trained and able to teach. I am often frustrated with much of the women's ministry carried out in our churches: it is frequently sloppy and of a poor standard. I fail to see why, on a women's weekend, it is acceptable to leave your Bible (and your brain!) behind. Christian women are women, so some gender appropriate activity is acceptable, but we are primarily Christian, and as such need to be fed and nurtured from God's word. I think we need to use the opportunities for women's ministry that already exist in our churches in a more productive way, as well as creating new avenues for women to teach women the Bible.

Praise God for the gifted Bible teaching women He has raised up amongst us! I pray He will raise up many more.

■ *Cathy Walter is currently enjoying a sabbatical year, having completed a bachelor of theology from Ridley College last year. She is married to David (who works for the Melbourne Uni Christian Union) and they are members of Lygon Street Christian Chapel.*

> Ministry or "Manistry": What was God thinking?

BY CLAIRE ROGERS

My journey to become a female executive has not been easy. A manager once described me as having 'a good set' in front of the entire office. I was told not to aspire to a senior position because my biological clock would start ticking soon. And, at an exclusive function where I was the sole female in a group of bankers, the guest speaker (a BBC newsreader) argued that the key difference between bankers and broadcasters was the fact that he had to wear make-up! Despite these hurdles, I now work in an environment where such attitudes to women in leadership are no longer acceptable.

Having been taught to expect equality at work (even if I am unable to find it), I often enter the doors of the Church feeling I must leave these expectations outside.

This disconnection between my secular experience and my Christian environment began to affect my relationship with God. I struggled to share the gospel. How could I stand up for equality of women in the secular space and submit to conservative roles for women in the Church? At the same time, I felt guilty that to support women in Christian leadership positions I seemed to need to ignore passages in the Bible. I thirsted to hear women speak and was enormously discouraged to see people walking out on those rare occasions when they did. I sometimes stubbornly chose not to listen to male preachers when I could have.

God is a gracious father, loving our questions. On maternity leave recently, I was privileged to have the opportunity to read more broadly on women's ministry. The evidence points to a God who sees women as an integral part of his plans for ministry.

Three areas that led to a significant shift in my understanding were:

► 1. Jesus' Approach to Women

Even though Jesus did not give direct teaching on women's role in the church, he engaged with women constantly even when his disciples recommended against it (Matthew 15:23). In his book *Women in*

the Church, Grenz points out that "in contrast to many rabbis who thought it inappropriate to instruct women, Jesus readily taught them", explicitly encouraging Mary to study with him rather than undertake household activities with Martha (Luke 10:39). Mary, with her newfound knowledge, would have been expected to teach others (Fee: *Women in Ministry*, Regent Audio CD).

► 2. Allocation of Gifts

From the passages relating to distribution of gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Romans 12: 5-8), we can only conclude God does not discriminate according to gender.

► 3. Paul's teaching

There are a number of texts that should contribute to our understanding of Paul's position on this issue:

1. We can take a roll call of women who held leadership positions in Paul's time. Junia, "outstanding among the apostles" (Romans 16:7), is a prime example. If Paul did not permit women to teach why did he support the ministries of so many women?

2. Some argue that Galatians 3:28 ("There is no longer...male or female") relates only to our equality in salvation. But the fact that Paul publicly valued women's contribution to the work of the gospel suggests that it also applies to community and ministry.

3. The verses relating to women's submission in marriage to men (Ephesians 5:22-23 etc.) cannot easily be connected to universal principles of church leadership though many attempt to make the connection (France: *Women in the Church's Ministry*, 47).

4. But what of 1 Timothy 2: 11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 which appear to constrain women's leadership? See Evonne Paddison's article in this issue for a clear articulation of the position that women can teach anyone (Position 3). My desire is to submit to the authority of the scriptures. After centuries of overtly patriarchal society it is unlikely that any of

us, including women, can read the Bible without sexism, whether consciously or subconsciously. Women probably overreact to perceived 'sexism' or restrictions. Men don't necessarily hear the 'sexism' in the verses or the freedom that the passages actually give to women. That Paul (and Jesus) gave women roles beyond that of wife and mother (including apostle) was radical, liberating and counter to mainstream Jewish culture. That Paul constrained women in some situations is where much of the debate arises. However, it is the combination of all the above points that leads me to conclude that Paul was not prohibiting women from teaching or leading in the Church.

► Summary

I am now comfortable that I don't have to leave my expectations at the door of the Church, although the challenges for women in church leadership remain. I have met women who have chosen or been advised not to fully express their ministry, and some who have had to choose the mission field to find the space to use their gifts (for some reason it is acceptable for women to teach those in far away places!). Others have been discouraged from studying the theological courses that qualify for church leadership. I was taken aback when a male non-Christian friend once scornfully attacked the church for its conservative position on women's leadership. What part of God's kingdom isn't being developed when we hold the conservative position? But because God is gracious with me, I must be gracious with God's community, accepting that it will struggle in many areas, not only in leadership diversity. In the meantime, I am encouraged that God's plan is not 'manistry' but ministry.

■ *Claire Rogers is Chief Operating Officer at Esanda. She is married with two children and worships at St Jude's where she seeks to encourage capable women into church leadership and gently assist the leadership of the church to embrace women's contributions. (email: claire@rogersbrown.com).*



> Living with the differences

BY CLAIRE LIVINGSTONE

Tension. Humility. Love. Charity. Grace. Conscience. These words sprang to the minds of people when asked how they seek to fellowship with those who hold differing views about women and ministry.

In practical terms, the main concern as we seek to live with difference is not so much a person's theological stance, but how important the issue is considered, how scripture is regarded and how we treat one another.

When 'women and ministry' is regarded as a primary gospel issue, people can genuinely find it difficult to accept different views. A person's position can be regarded as a barometer of their orthodoxy, or as an indication of how they handle the bible.

However, most Christians regard this issue as secondary to essential doctrines - such as the person & work of Christ, and the authority of Scripture. Whilst important to many on a personal level, it is not a core gospel issue - it does not determine salvation. Acknowledging this, it is then vital we decide how to live with the differences.

In matters of essential doctrine we must maintain unity as God's people. In non-essential beliefs, however, there is room for differences. Baptism is an example of being able to maintain unity in fellowship whilst holding different understandings on what Scripture says.

We mustn't let debates on non-essential issues be the basis of our fellowship; instead we're to love one another in Christ. Let's keep talking and listening as we continue to seek clarity on the mind of God from the bible. Differences of opinion need not stop people working for the glory of God, and working to that end together.

■ *Claire Livingstone is a member of the ishah editorial team. As well as being a partner in ministry with her husband and caring for her teenage sons, Claire mentors women - encouraging them to grow to their fullness in Christ. (email: thelivos@bigpond.com)*

Some principles to keep in mind as we seek to live with our differences include:	Some practical suggestions towards this include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● glorifying God in the way we live, treat others and use gifts ● treating the scriptures with respect and care ● being careful of causing others to stumble ● not thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought ● remaining united in the gospel and not allowing ourselves to be divided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● examining the scriptures and coming to a conclusion you can live with, in conscience, before God ● encouraging respectful, godly dialogue and honest acknowledgement of differences about non-essential issues ● providing and valuing different avenues for ministry ● providing both mixed and single gender bible study groups in our communities ● avoiding situations where you'll disagree with what is practiced, but modeling grace and charity if in such a situation

SOME USEFUL BOOKS...

Two Views on Women Ministry,
Zondervan: Grand Rapids. Beck, J. R. and C. L. Blomberg (eds). (2001)

Pauline Theology, Ministry and Society,
Eerdmans: Grand Rapids., Ellis, E. (1989)

Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics
Hendricksen: Massachusetts. Fee, G. D. (1991)

Women in Ministry,
Fee Gordon. Regent College Audio CD.

Women in the Church's Ministry, A Test-Case for Biblical Hermeneutics,
Paternoster: Carlisle., France, R. T. (1995)

Women in the Church, A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry
Grenz, Rintervarsity Press. S. J & D. M. Kjesbo.(1995)

The Bible and Women's Ministry, An Australian Dialogue,
Acorn: Melbourne., Nichols A. (ed). (1990)

The Ordination of Women, Why Not?
E.F.A.C. Address., Woodhouse, J. M. (1985)

Wives and Women's Ministry
(1.Tim. 2:11-15) in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 15:4 July., Barnett, P.W. (1989)



write of reply

ishah welcomes reader responses to topics dealt with in previous issues. These should be no more than 200 words long and can be emailed (to ishahmag@hotmail.com) or posted (to ishah, c/- 56 Collier Cres, Brunswick West, VIC 3056).

Starting Point is a regular column that aims to encourage readers to engage with a contemporary issue in the media.

STARTING POINT

The Mobile Generation

A broken printer recently gave me the opportunity to have an extended discussion with the blood-bank nurse as we waited in the cubicle. We began with the usual stuff: name, date of birth, haemoglobin levels. It was when she requested my mobile number that the conversation moved beyond the mundane. I don't have a mobile, and some people find this intriguing.

My nurse, like several others, congratulated me for this and encouraged my perseverance. It seems that many mobile users quickly regret this technology...when the bill comes. Aloud, I wondered how anyone could become so reliant. But in a world where everything is so accessible, even waiting for a landline (or worse still, waiting to actually see someone) is impossible. And the nurse gave me her own insight.

In her mind, this need for everything immediately was actually a distraction technique. If we keep moving, then we don't have to stop and think about anything beyond our current situation. That's why our first action when we get home is to turn on the television!

Sitting in a recliner with a needle in my arm provided an excellent chance to think about this.

As a Christian, I want to let my life be dramatically shaped by thoughts beyond this life – setting my mind on things above, and looking forward to living with Christ forever. I suspect that some don't recognise their need for this hope because they constantly fill their minds with other things. And with important things like family to consider, there is plenty of "filler", particularly I think for women. If you have thought about this before, you are probably not part of this mobile generation! I think we all need to anticipate this attitude and be prepared to encourage those around us to consider "things above".

■ *Sandy Clarke attends St Paul's Anglican Church, Boronia. She is Studying Statistics at Melbourne Uni, and has donated 29 times (including plasma, which they can take out every two weeks, which is kind of cheating!).*