

Overview of Women's Roles in the Church

March 8, 2008

In the summer of 2006, the Elders of Grace Covenant Church began to seek the Lord's counsel regarding a biblical view of women's roles in the church. The following is a summary of what the Elders believe Scripture teaches and how these teachings apply to our church.

All men and women are made in the image of God and are equal before Him, yet there are differences in their divinely appointed responsibilities. Role differentiation among those who are equal is not limited to males and females; it is also present in the Trinity where Father, Son and Spirit function in equal but distinct ways. On the issue of women's roles in the local church, we hold to the biblical prohibition of 1 Timothy 2:12 while still affirming the ministry gifts of women and the church's need for their active involvement in the body of Christ. As such, we encourage women to use their gifts in any and all church positions, except the roles of teaching pastors and elders.

1. We believe that men and women are made in the image of God and are equal before God in need, in grace and in gifting. (Genesis 1:26-27; Proverbs 31; Galatians 3:28-29; 1 Peter 4:10)
2. According to His will, purpose, pleasure and design for order, God has given specific, unique roles to men and women on the issue of spiritual authority.
 - A. In marriage, men are called to love their wives as Christ loved the church, and women are called to respect their husband's leadership as they would Christ's. Marriage is a partnership in which both spouses encourage one another. However, men are charged with the responsibility of spiritual leadership. (Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19, 1 Peter 3:1-7)
 - B. In families, parents are called to raise their children and children are called to honor their parents. Both parents are called to train their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Proverbs 2; Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20-21)
 - C. In the local church, certain qualified male leaders recognized as Elders are charged with the responsibility of exercising ultimate spiritual authority, and all Christians—both male and female—are called to submit to those who have been identified as Elders (Hebrews 13:17). These leaders are chosen based on certain observable qualifications revealed in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). Specifically, an Elder must be a man who: 1) is above reproach, 2) is the husband of one wife, 3) manages his own household well, 4) is not a recent convert to Christ, 5) is able to teach and 6) has a good reputation with outsiders. God's design for Eldership in a local church is reserved for qualified, godly men.
 - D. In society, people in authority—whether male or female—are to be obeyed by every Christian. (Romans 13:1-7)
3. Regarding the exercise of spiritual authority in the church, we believe the Bible makes a distinction between the intrinsic authority accompanying Bible teaching and the unique authority given by God to Elders for shepherding the flock of God. Therefore, the Elders are ultimately responsible to the Lord for guarding the quality of all Bible teaching that takes place in our local assembly regardless of whom the teacher is.
4. Spiritually qualified women are encouraged to teach children and youth. Spiritually qualified married women may come alongside their husbands to help teach and illustrate biblical principles. Spiritually qualified women, acting under the authority of the Elders and with the affirmation of church leadership, may be asked to teach in mixed groups of men and women.
5. There may be certain times, places or situations in which the Elders will choose to limit who teaches—whether male or female—for the sake of unity.