

Women's Roles in the Church

WEEKEND #3: September 20-21

I. Friday, September 20 (7:00-8:30 PM)

Thinking Theologically: What is gender, theologically speaking?

- How Do We Think Through This Issue? (Talking Points)
 1. Some things are more important than others.
 2. *Identity* and *purpose* (vs. content and method) are the primary considerations.
 3. The process matters; it sets a precedent for future decisions.

- Interpreting Galatians 3:28
 1. The Context and Argument
 2. New Creation in Christ: Three Backgrounds for Galatians 3:28
 3. Excursus: Does Paul think inclusively about gender?
 - Suggestive: 1 Corinthians 7:17-24
 - Convincing: 2 Corinthians 6:18 (2 Samuel 7:14)
 - Surprising: Galatians 2:5, 14 (“truth of the gospel”)
 4. Galatians 3:28, Joel 2:28-32 and Beyond
 5. Seven Claims about Gender

II. Saturday, September 21 (8:30 AM-2:30 PM)

Thinking Theologically Continued

- Three Questions 8:30-10:00 AM
 1. What about Creation?
 - Male and Female in Genesis 1-3
 - The Pronouncements in Genesis 3:14-19
 - Three Issues: “Helper,” Order, and Naming
 - “The Return of the *Ezer*” at <http://www.whitbyforum.com/2005/12/return-of-ezer.html>
 2. What about God?
 - Nature of Metaphor (Talking Point)
 - Scriptures with Female Imagery for God
 3. What about Jesus?
 - Women Unique to the Gospel of Luke
 - Male and Female Pairings in Luke
 - Inclusive and Counter-Cultural (Luke 8:1-3; 10:38-42; 11:27-28) (Talking Point)
 - What is the Significance of Twelve Male Apostles? (Talking Point)

- What is the Role of Women's Experience? (Panel Discussion) 10:30-12:00 noon

Other Resources

1. "She is Called" at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/half-the-church/id401916361>
2. Sara Gaston Barton, *A Woman Called: Piecing Together the Ministry Puzzle* (Leafwood, 2012)

Thinking Pastorally

1:00-2:30 PM

- Reflections on Application
- Two Models for Action
- Ten Reflections on Change
- Possible Areas of Activity
- A Fly on the Wall: How Inclusive Churches Think (Talking Point)
 1. Deacons
 2. Passing communion
 3. Reading Scripture (Nehemiah 8)
 4. Singing
 5. Praying
 6. Preaching
- "Scaffolding" That I've Seen
- Miscellaneous: "Behold, I Show You a Parable"

Interpreting Galatians 3:28

The Context of Galatians

4:13-15	Paul initially preached the gospel to the Galatians. Paul had an illness, but the Galatians received him well.
4:8-9	The Galatians were converted from paganism.
5:7a	At the beginning the Galatians did well.
1:6-9	Some Galatians are turning to "another gospel."
1:7; 5:10	Some people are "troubling/disturbing" the Galatians.
5:12	Some people are "unsettling/upsetting" the Galatians.
4:17	Some people want to "shut out/exclude" the Galatians.
6:12-13	Some people want to "compel/force" the Galatians to be circumcised (cf. 2:3, 14).
4:10	The observance of "days and months and seasons and years" has become an issue.
2:11-14	Diet and fellowship are also probable issues.

Summary: Given the exclusion (4:17), emotional pain (1:7; 5:10, 12), and likely separation (2:12) prompted by some people who had come into Galatia after Paul, the context is not merely neutral, but rather one of conflict.

The Flow of Paul's Argument: Who are the true sons of Abraham (Galatians 3:6-4:7)?

Thesis: Those of faith are the true sons of Abraham.

3:6	Question:	So, on what basis are you claiming that the true sons of Abraham are those of faith? After all, Abraham was circumcised according to God's command (Genesis 17).
3:6	Answer:	Genesis 15:6 says, "Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."
3:7	Answer:	So, "It is those of faith who are the sons of God."

3:19-22 "Why then the law?"

3:19	Question:	The question then naturally arises, "Why then the law?" That is, if Abraham is righteous based on faith, then what function does the law serve?
3:19	Answer:	It was "added because of transgressions."
3:21	Question:	Are you saying that the law is "opposed to the promises of God"?
3:21	Answer:	"Absolutely not!"

3:23-25 What is the relationship between law and faith?

3:23	Question:	How are law and faith connected?
	Answer:	We were confined under law until faith came.
3:24	Question:	How did the law function?
	Answer:	"The law was our childhood guardian."
	Question:	What was the purpose behind the law as our guardian?
	Answer:	"In order that we might be justified by faith."
3:25	Question:	Are we still under a guardian?
	Answer:	No, we are not anymore now that "faith has come".

3:26-29 What does it mean that we are "in Christ Jesus"?

3:26	Question:	What is the situation of Christians now?
	Answer:	"In Christ you are all sons of God through faith."
3:27	Question:	How does faith make us a child of God?
	Answer:	Through baptism.
3:28	Question:	What are the implications of being baptized into Christ?
	Answer:	You are no longer defined by categories of this world.
	Question:	What does it mean to be defined no longer by those categories?
	Answer:	"For you are all one in Christ Jesus."

3:29 Question: What does it mean to belong to Christ?
 Answer: "If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring," which was my point from the beginning (3:6).

4:1-7 We are an "heir" (3:29; 4:1, 7), no longer a slave but a son.

 Question: How did we move from slave to son?
4:4 Answer: "God sent his Son ... to redeem those under the law".

Summary: Thus, Galatians 3:28 primarily emphasizes unity and identity—being "one in Christ Jesus"—not salvation, not equality. However, the implications of being "one in Christ" include salvation and equality.

New Creation in Christ: Three Backgrounds for Galatians 3:28

A. Worship Context

It is likely that the language of Galatians 3:26-28 reflects the words said at a baptism. Notice that baptism is explicitly mentioned in Galatians 3:27 (“as many of you as were baptized into Christ”). In addition, the two parallel passages to Gal 3:28 either mention baptism explicitly (1 Cor 12:13) or imply it (“put on the new self” in Col 3:9-11). If this claim about Gal 3:28 is true, then this statement would shape the identity of early Christians in a powerful way; at the formative moment of baptism, these are the words they would have heard about their identity.

- So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:26-28).
- For just as there is one body and it has many members—now all the parts of the body, though many, are one body—so also it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink (1 Cor 12:13).
- Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all (Col 2:9-11).

B. Old Testament Context

It is unfortunate that no translation that I know of makes clear the Old Testament quotation in Gal 3:28. The text reads, “there is not Jew nor Greek, there is not slave nor free, there is not male and female.” It’s easy to see the break in the parallelism. It’s also clear that the words “male and female” are a quotation from Genesis 1:27. In fact, the phrase “male and female” occurs only three times in the New Testament, and all three times it occurs as a quotation from the creation account (Matt 19:4; Mark 10:6; Gal 3:28). Paul’s quotation from the creation account makes Gal 3:28 a foundational statement of sweeping proportions. Paul is saying that the divisions of gender from creation are set aside “in Christ Jesus;” that the “male and female” of the creation account is no more “in Christ Jesus.”

- ### C. Theological Context: Theologically, the church finds its identity “in Christ Jesus.” Ethnicity (Jew or Greek), class (slave or free), and gender (male and female) do not matter. How should we understand our new identity “in Christ”? Elsewhere, both in Galatians itself (6:15) and in 2 Corinthians (5:17), Paul describes this new reality as a “new creation,” which makes a whole lot of sense now that we’re aware of his allusion to the creation account in Gal 3:28. This theological context connects gender, our identity as the church, and Christ’s work of salvation, which makes Gal 3:28 an ideal place to stand as we consider what male and female mean in the life of the church.

- ### D. Summary: In this passage, Paul says that God does not see Christians as the world sees them. God does not think of Christians as “Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female” because “we are all one in Christ Jesus.” Notice that Paul’s stress in this last phrase is on unity (“one in Christ”)—not salvation (“saved in Christ”), not equality (“equal in Christ”). Nevertheless, I recognize that the implications of being “one in Christ” do include salvation and equality. Ethnicity, class, and

gender do not matter in relationship to identity within the church. As a test case, notice how Paul describes circumcision as a matter of indifference elsewhere in Galatians:

- For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but faith working through love (5:6).
- For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation (6:15).

Excursus: Does Paul think inclusively about gender?

1. It is probably noteworthy that Paul is comfortable describing his own ministry with female images; he does so in three passages. Paul tells how he was “gentle” among the Thessalonian Christians “like a nurse taking care of her own children” (1 Thessalonians 2:7); he describes how he, like a nursing mother, nourished the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 3:1-2); to the Galatians, he uses the image of a mother giving birth (Galatians 4:19). Paul clearly thinks that ministry can be described with female imagery.
2. See 1 Cor 7:12-24 where a statement like Gal 3:28 seems to provide the structure for Paul's discussion. In 1 Cor 7, Paul treats some male/female issues (e.g., marriage, divorce) and uses circumcision/uncircumcision (Jew/Greek) and slavery/freedom as examples in his argument. So, the way in which Paul structures his argument in 1 Cor 7:12-24 seems shaped by his theological commitments found explicitly in Galatians 3:28.
3. Is there any other place in Paul's writings where Paul *clearly* thinks inclusively about gender? Notice Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 6:18a (below). Paul is quoting from 2 Samuel 7:14. What is different? He adds “and daughters” to his quotation from the Old Testament! He translates the words of Scripture in light of his inclusive vision of God’s people.

2 Samuel 7:14 "I will be his father, and he shall be my son."	2 Corinthians 6:18a "And I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons <u>and daughters</u> ,' says the Lord Almighty."
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Implications

Notice how Paul describes ethnicity in light of the gospel in Galatians 2:5, 14 (“truth of the gospel”).

Galatians 3:28, Joel 2:28-32 and Beyond

The statement in Gal 3:28 likely has its antecedent in the Old Testament. The prophet Joel looks forward to a time when God will pour out both physical (2:18-27) and spiritual blessings (28-32). Joel 2:28-32 reads as follows:

And afterward I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
Your old men will dream dreams,
Your young men will see visions.
Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.
I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth,
Blood and fire and billows of smoke.
The sun will be turned to darkness
And the moon to blood
Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.
And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved;
For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
There will be deliverance, as the Lord has said,
Among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

The spiritual blessings include the pouring out of God's Spirit (vv. 28-29) on all people, whether they are male or female, young or old, slave or free. The apocalyptic language in the following verses (vv. 30-31) points to a cosmic event. Because of the magnitude of this event, deliverance is available to everyone who "calls on the name of the Lord" (v. 32).

Does Paul know this passage in Joel?

In fact, Paul quotes Joel 2:32 in Romans 10:12-13 to show that "there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him." So, not only does Romans 10:12-13 show that Paul is aware of this passage in Joel, it also shows Paul extending the application of Joel beyond gender, age, and class to ethnicity. Furthermore, the influence of the language from Joel 2:32 (i.e., "call on the name of the Lord") extends far beyond Paul's text in Romans (Acts 2:21; 9:14, 21; 22:16; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Tim 2:22). Given Paul's quotation of Joel 2:32, his explicit application of this passage to ethnicity, and the gender and slave language in Joel, it seems likely that this passage in Joel shaped Paul's formulation in Galatians 3:28.¹ In summary, Paul sees the prophecy in Joel fulfilled in Christ and points to the implications of it for the identity of God's people. Paul, however, is not the only one to make this connection; Luke does so even more explicitly.

Does Luke know this passage in Joel?

In Acts 2, the Spirit is poured out, the apostles speak, and the crowd wonders, "What does this mean?" (2:12). Peter answers, "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" (2:16) and proceeds to quote all of Joel 2:28-32. Since Joel depicts both "sons and daughters" prophesying, it is not surprising to find female prophets later in the book of Acts (21:9). For Luke it is the "last days" when

¹ Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), 99 n. 18.

God's Spirit is poured out on all, and it is time for men and women to prophesy. Paul's reflection on the Spirit goes even further than Luke's.

What does Paul say about the Spirit and gifts?

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul affirms, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (12:7). Even though there is the same Spirit (12:4, 11), the gifts vary widely (12:8-10).

To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. (TNIV)

Throughout this passage, there is no indication that the gifts of the Spirit are distributed based on gender.

What's the big picture?

All these passages, from Joel to 1 Corinthians, paint a picture of the church, which embodies God's new creation. This picture is the fulfillment of God's promises; it is a place where God's Spirit fills everyone—regardless of ethnicity, age, gender, or class; it is a place where that same Spirit gifts everyone for the common good of all. In these passages, we have a remarkable constellation of texts that connect identity, eschatology, the Spirit, Christ's work of salvation, and the church all in relationship to gender—and all under the broader concepts of creation and new creation.

Seven Claims about Gender

Even though Scripture records cultural expectations about gender, I'm arguing that creation and new creation offer vantage points, from which we can construct a theology of gender.

1. Creation argues for the inherent value of both male and female, since both are created in God's image (see Gen 9:6; James 3:9).
2. Creation argues for the interdependence and mutuality of male and female; both are *under* God, *over* creation, and called to the same functions. Paul's affirmation about interdependence (1 Cor 11:11) functions to negate claims of precedence based on gender and to argue for mutuality.
3. Creation affirms a procreative aspect for male and female, one that is shared by flora and fauna.
4. New creation makes gender an matter of indifference in terms of our identity in Christ and in the church; in fact, identity claims based on gender, ethnicity, class, and age reveal more about the specific culture than the essence of the person, and identity claims on those bases are empty in a spiritual context.
5. The Spirit gives gifts irrespective of gender.
6. Any ideals of male and female are based upon our identity in Christ; that is, the ideal man or woman is the ideal Christian.
7. Identity in Christ does not eliminate biology—humans remain male and female; neither does identity in Christ place one outside cultural expectations of gender (see 1 Corinthians 11:2-16); Christians are called to create a community composed of males and females, sensitive to but not defined by the social constructs of their context.

Male and Female in Genesis 1-3

Notice how mutual the creation account is.

1. Both are created in God's image (1:27): identity.
2. Both are called *adam* (1:26, 27; 5:2): identity.
3. Both are charged with ruling over creation (1:26, 28): function.
4. Both are charged with being fruitful (1:28): function.
5. Both receive a blessing from God (1:28).
6. Both are given food to eat (1:29).
7. Both eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:17; 3:6).
8. Both have their eyes opened (3:7).
9. Both know they are naked (3:7).
10. Both make clothes (3:7).
11. Both are questioned by God (3:9-12, 13).
12. Both receive consequences for their sin (3:16, 17-19).

Consequently, humans find themselves *under* God, who is their creator; *over* creation, as God has delegated; and *equal* to one another, since both male and female are created in God's image and since both exercise rule over creation. Based on this reflection, we can well ask, "If males and females are equal in so many ways at creation, on what basis can one argue for differences beyond biology (e.g., anatomy, DNA, hormones)?"

The Pronouncements in Genesis 3:14-19

How should the pronouncements in Genesis 3:14-19 be understood? Are they *descriptions*, telling what will happen? Or, are they better understood as *commands*, telling what must happen? Decide which of these two options makes better sense of the passage.

- _____ 1. "I will put enmity between you and the woman."
 - Must a woman never own a snake, be a pet store owner, or be a herpetologist?
- _____ 2. "He (the man) shall bruise your head."
 - Must a man never pass by an opportunity to kill a snake?
- _____ 3. "Pain in childbearing"
 - Must a woman never take drugs to ease the pain of childbirth?
- _____ 4. "He shall rule over you."
 - Must a woman never rule over a man (no female mayors, senators, doctors, principals, managers, voters, etc.)?
- _____ 5. "Cursed is the ground."
 - Must a man never attempt to improve the soil (e.g., add fertilizer)?
- _____ 6. "In toil you shall eat of it." "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread."
 - Must a man never lessen the toil of tilling the ground (e.g., by using a tractor)?
- _____ 7. "Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth."
 - Must a man never use herbicides?

What about Creation? Three Issues

The Word “Helper”

- Genesis 2:18 states, “It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Is the focus of this text about creating an underling for Adam?
- The “underling” view seems unlikely since the introductory sentence speaks about creating a companion for Adam.
- The language of “helper” in second sentence connects Eve to Adam’s task (viz., “to work and take care of” the Garden in 2:15).
- So, Adam will have a “partner” to help tend the Garden who is “suitable for him” because she is human like him, providing companionship like nothing else in creation is able to do.
- It is often assumed that word “helper” necessarily implies a subservient relationship. In fact, a helper can be stronger or weaker, depending on the context; God is described as a “helper” in a number of OT texts, to give an example of a helper who is stronger.¹

The Order of Creation

- The second argument is that Adam’s creation before Eve (2:21) gives him superiority. Two items weigh against this point.
 1. That line of reasoning does not hold for Adam and the animals; that is, do we presume that the animals are superior to Adam because they were created before Adam? In fact, we do not presume that the animals are superior, since Scripture explicitly gives humans rule over the animals (1:26, 28).
 2. Paul explicitly mentions women coming from man in 1 Corinthians 11:11-12. In this passage, Paul argues for the interdependence of male and female (v. 11) and shows how God balances woman coming from man at creation by having all subsequent men come from women through birth (v. 12). About this interdependence, Paul concludes “All these things are from God” (v. 12b).

The Naming of Woman

- Does Adam’s naming of Eve demonstrate Adam’s superiority over Eve? After all, Adam names the animals, and he has rule over them (2:19).
- More likely, the naming shows that woman is indeed *equal* to Adam; his exclamation focuses on their *common* nature: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (2:23a).
- Further, the name itself connects the woman to the man: “She shall be called ‘woman’ (*ishshah*) for she was taken out of man (*ish*)” (2:23b).
- The name “Eve” actually comes later in the narrative (3:20).
- On the matter of naming the woman, Genesis focuses on their *similarities* not differences.

¹ Marrs, *Embracing the Call of God*, 46-47.

Scriptures with Female Imagery for God¹

Old Testament

<u>Text</u>	<u>Image</u>
1. Numbers 11:11-12	Pregnant, childbearing, nursing mother
2. Deuteronomy 32:11	Eagle
3. Deuteronomy 32:13b, 18b	Nursing and childbearing mother
4. Job 38:29-30	Woman who gives birth
5. Psalm 22:9-10	Midwife
6. Psalm 71:6	Midwife
7. Psalm 123:2	Woman of the house
8. Isaiah 42:14	Mother in childbirth
9. Isaiah 45:9-10	Mother who gives birth
10. Isaiah 49:14-15	Nursing mother
11. Isaiah 66:13	Mother who comforts
12. Hosea 13:8	Mother bear

New Testament

<u>Text</u>	<u>Image</u>
13. Matthew 23:37/Luke 13:34	Mother hen
14. Luke 15:8-10	Woman searching for a lost coin
15. John 3:3-6	Mother who gives birth

¹ Some also include Hosea 11:1-3, which describes God as a parent and Israel as a child.

Women Unique to the Gospel of Luke

More than any of the other Gospels, Luke stresses the contributions of women in the life and ministry of Jesus. First of all, Luke mentions more women than the other Gospel writers. Second, when describing women mentioned in the other Gospels, Luke often expands their importance in his own narrative (e.g., Mary in 1:26-56; 2:1-52). Third, compared to Matthew and Mark, Luke is the only Gospel that mentions the following women:

1. Elizabeth (1:5-25, 36, 39-60)
2. The daughters of Aaron (1:5)
3. All women (1:42)
4. Anna (2:36-38)
5. Many widows in Israel (4:25)
6. The widow of Zarephath (4:25-26)
7. The widow of Nain (7:11-17)
8. Wisdom (7:35)
9. The forgiven woman (7:36-50)
10. The women with Jesus: Joanna, Susanna, and many others (8:1-3)
11. Mary and Martha (10:38-42)
12. The woman who praises Jesus' mother (11:27-28)
13. Maidservants (12:45)
14. The crippled woman (13:10-17)
15. A newlywed wife (14:20)
16. Wife and sisters (14:26)
17. The woman who lost a coin (15:8-10)
18. Prostitutes (15:30)
19. Lot's wife (17:32)
20. The importunate widow (18:1-8)
21. A wife left for the sake of the kingdom (18:29)
22. Parents who deliver their children (21:16)
23. The women ("daughters of Jerusalem") who wail at the crucifixion (23:27-31)
24. Barren women (23:29-30)

Male and Female Pairings in Luke¹

Luke emphasizes the inclusive nature of the gospel by pairing accounts of men and women. In other words, Luke often joins a story about a man with a corresponding story about a woman, and vice versa. It is significant that sixteen of these pairs are only in Luke: for eight of these pairs, both parts are unique to Luke; in the other eight pairs, when Luke creates another pairing from an existing character, he more often adds a woman. This feature pervades Luke, as the following list shows:

1. Zechariah and Mary (1:5-25, 26-38)
2. Simeon and Anna (2:25-35, 36-38)
3. Herod and Herodias (3:19)
4. The widow of Zarephath and Naaman (4:25-26, 27)
5. The demoniac and Simon's mother-in-law (4:33-37, 38-39)
6. The centurion's slave and the widow of Nain (7:1-10, 11-17)
7. Simon the Pharisee and the forgiven woman (7:36-50)
8. The Twelve and the women disciples (8:1, 2-3)
9. Jairus and the sick woman (8:40-56)
10. The good Samaritan, and Mary and Martha (10:29-37, 38-42)
11. The man with an unclean spirit and the woman in the crowd (11:24-26, 27-28)
12. The Queen of the South and the men of Nineveh (11:31, 32)
13. Male servants and female servants (12:45)
14. The father/son and mother/daughter pairs (12:53a, 53b)
15. The Sabbath healing of a woman and a man (13:10-17; 14:1-6)
16. The man with the mustard seed and the woman with leaven (13:18-19, 20-21)
17. The man who lost a sheep and the woman who lost a coin (15:3-7, 8-10)
18. The man in a field and Lot's wife (17:31, 32)
19. The two men in bed and the two women at the mill (17:34, 35)
20. The importunate widow and the Pharisee/tax collector parables (18:1-8, 9-18)
21. Scribes and a widow (20:45-47; 21:1-4)
22. Simon of Cyrene and the women who lament (23:26, 27-31)
23. Jesus' acquaintances and the women who followed Jesus (23:49a, 49b)
24. The women witnesses and the two men on the road to Emmaus (24:1-11, 12-24)

¹Adapted from R. C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 1.132-139; B. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 128-130; A. Black, *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, 1.446-450. Compare Luke 8:19-21, in which he removes "sisters" (Matt 12:50; Mark 3:35). Perhaps one can also add the ones who accuse Peter (Luke 22:56-58).

Reflections on Application

"When the general gets too far ahead of the army, they confuse him with the enemy and start shooting at him."

-Anonymous

"When stretched too far, mercy becomes injustice."

-Cukrowski

Two Models for Action

- Wait
 1. Proverb: A general and his army
 2. This view respects individual differences (theological and emotional) and values *expediency*.
 3. Analogy: Surgery
 4. Text: There were no Gentiles or women among the twelve apostles.

- Act Now
 1. Proverb: Mercy and injustice
 2. This view respects the ideals of *justice* and/or *faithfulness*.
 3. Analogies: Slavery, racial integration, and compromise in the past
 4. Text: Luke 6:6-11

Ten Reflections on Change

1. Change happens slowly. In the United States, consider the issues of slavery, women's suffrage and the civil rights movement; each of these changes to the fabric of our nation took significant time. If change happens this way in the political and social realms, it's not surprising that it happens similarly in our churches.
2. Change often does not occur in regular, incremental ways; rather, it begins slowly, a critical mass is reached, and then it moves quickly.
3. Change is more difficult in homogenous contexts.
4. Change requires some prompt. A prompt can be intellectual (e.g., new information; cognitive dissonance), emotional (e.g., harsh words; injustice), social (e.g., ACU's apology to African Americans), or personal (e.g., being led or inspired by a charismatic or respected leader, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. or an elder).
5. Change requires taking a risk and making a decision. The risk may be personal or financial; the decision may result in criticism, pain, and loss. Nevertheless, faith implies some level of risk; there will not be a time in our congregations if we wait for risk to be eliminated. Our churches need leaders who will make brave and faithful decisions.
6. Change has a generational aspect; in other words, new default modes are continually being created, often within one generation. For instance, integration on buses, in bathrooms and at lunch counters—all significant issues less than fifty years ago—is a non-issue for people today.
7. Stories motivate change. It is important for the voices of women, previously muted, to be heard. On this topic, I recommend the website Half the Church, which collects the stories of women who have experienced a call to ministry (<http://halfthechurch.wordpress.com>).
8. Change in churches on this issue has been based on the study of Scripture; that is, churches have become gender-inclusive *because of* and not *despite* Scripture. For virtually every member who returns to the Bible, there is new evidence on the table, as people discover what women are doing in the Bible.
9. People need time to make the transition from head to heart. A person may very well be convinced that women can, for instance, serve communion; actually seeing a woman do so for the first time, or actually participating herself, will elicit strong emotions. Individuals should expect to feel strong emotions when gender is addressed. Setting this expectation goes a long way toward mitigating the surprise or the negative effects of these powerful emotions.
10. Change is aided by positive (vs. negative) rationales. For example, it is not likely that a call for change based on "my rights" will (or should) motivate change in churches; instead, leaders should issue calls for the church to live out the creation narrative, where both men and women are created in God's image, to use the Spirit-given gifts of all the members, and to serve as one body, where there is no male and female in Christ.

Possible Areas of Activity

Directions: Based on your study, decide whether a woman could serve in the following capacities. What Scriptures apply? What are the reasons for your decisions?

Activity	Yes	No	Comments
Usher			
Be a greeter			
Pick up the attendance cards			
Pass the communion trays			
Plan the worship service			
Direct a children's musical			
Direct a summer camp			
Coordinate VBS			
Direct a ministry to battered women			
Direct a ministry to the homeless			
Direct a food pantry			
Direct an AIDS ministry			
Direct a prison ministry			
Direct a children's home			
Compose hymns			
Write devotional literature			
Be a Bible professor			
Deliver the welcome			
Read the announcements			
Read scripture			
Be a youth minister for high school girls			
Give a committee report			
Chair a committee			
Be on a worship team			
Lead songs			
Sing a solo			
Offer a prayer			
Team teach a class			
Teach a class of adults			
Offer counseling for the church			
Be a children's minister			
Be a benevolence minister			
Be an education minister			
Be a youth minister			
Be a campus minister			
Be a missionary			
Baptize any person			
Preach at a women's retreat			
Preach			
Be a deacon			
Be an elder			

“Scaffolding” That I’ve Seen

Time

- A woman speaks before the opening prayer or after the closing prayer.
- Women participate on Wednesday nights and in Bible classes before Sunday morning.
- The readings/prayers are part of a “special” (Christmas, Easter, youth, etc.) service.
- More roles are added over a period of time.

People

- Husbands and wives read/pray together in public.
- Dads read/pray with their daughters in public.
- Older/married women read/pray before the younger/single women do.
- Women read the words of female characters in Scripture.
- Young girls read or pray.
- The female education/children’s/youth minister or missionary makes an announcements or a presentation related to her ministry.

Order

- The husband speaks first when reading/praying/teaching with his wife.

Place

- Readings/prayers take place sitting on the front row or in the audience with a microphone.
- Readings/prayers take place standing at the front (vs. behind the pulpit).
- The praise team sits in front/stands in back and sings.
- The husband stands and the woman sits while teaching.
- Women begin serving the communion from the back.
- Women speak behind the puppet stage not in front of it.

Titles

- Women perform the same function as men (minister, deacon), but they are called something else (director, congregational servant).

Behold, I Show You a Parable¹

The following is excerpted and adapted from Floyd E. Rose,
An Idea Whose Time Has Come (Columbus, GA: Brentwood Christian Press, 2002)

Once there was a church whose membership was composed of both whites and blacks. 80% of the members were black and 20% of them were white. The white members held all of the positions of authority. The minister, elders, and the deacons were all white. Those in positions of perceived power—the decision makers—were all white. The song leaders, the announcers and the ushers were white. Black members gave most of the money; they gave it, but they had no input as to what happened to their donations.

The black members could pass the collection basket and communion trays to their right and left, and when necessary, over the back of the seat, and might be permitted to pass it across the aisle, but they were not allowed to give it to the first person in the aisle. The black members could receive the Lord's Supper, but could never administer it. Only whites could do that.

Only the white members were allowed to read scripture in front of the congregation. Even though the black members were equally educated and sometimes better readers, they sat embarrassed while the white members sometimes stumbled through the Bible to read the scriptures.

The black members placed announcements in the bulletin, and in fact, a black member wrote and printed the bulletin, but blacks could not publicly read announcements from the bulletin that they printed; only the white members could do that.

However fervently they prayed at home, the black members could not offer the public prayer unless there were no white members present. The presence of even one white member would disqualify all of the black members from praying in the public worship and in Bible study.

The black members were allowed to teach, but only teach other blacks. And if a white member entered the room, the black member had to stop teaching, surrender his right to do so to the white member; however unqualified or unprepared the white member was.

In that church where 80% of the members were black and 20% were white, the black members bought the bread and grape juice, the symbols of the Lord's broken body and shed blood. They prepared the communion table, but they could not serve it to the members who assembled later for worship—only the white members could administer the Lord's Supper. The black members cleaned up the table and prepared it for the next time, of course.

¹ From <http://www.gal328.org/articles/Rose-Idea.html>: *Calling the question of gender justice "the defining issue facing the church in the 21st century," Floyd E. Rose compares the restrictions placed on women in the Churches of Christ to similar restrictions placed on African-Americans in the past. Rose, who was denied admission at Abilene Christian College in the early 1960s on the basis of his race, knows what he is talking about. He is the minister of the Church of Christ at Pine Hill, which he calls "a church without walls—without denominational, cultural, class, race or gender walls; a congregation of Christians where women participate in all of the ministries of the church, without restrictions or reservations."*