

Synopsis

We all possess valuable talents that should be put to work in the best possible way to serve our God and each other. What are the requirements for various roles? Whose glory is manifested in our competencies?

Introduction

Each generation has had to deal with the subject of the purpose of gender and our roles. Biblical examples have provided us with God's template for life and worship that we must follow. If we come to a different conclusion to that provided by examples in scripture, or to our historical practice, it indicates one of the following:

1. **Argument:** God's instructions for the roles of men and women were based on the culture in Biblical times, and not intended to be followed today.

Implications: God, and those he appointed, were powerless to work against the culture of the day and had to compromise.

2. **Argument:** God's instructions for the roles of men and women have been misunderstood and misapplied; there is a better interpretation that needs to be implemented.

Implications: God was unable to clearly reveal his instructions to the faithful throughout the generations. Or we are simply better at understanding God now.

3. **Argument:** God's instructions for the roles of men and women have been purposely corrupted by many throughout history for their own personal gain.

Implications: This indicates that all those who have done so will be condemned.

This is the third of the three arguments made to introduce change in formal worship, in respect to the role of gender.

1. Equality between women and men is to be achieved through these changes. Equality represents an unbiased approach to roles regardless of gender. Men are not better than women, thus limiting what women can do is chauvinistic and unequal.
2. The structure of worship has changed throughout history and should change again. Part of this argument is an observation of certain inconsistent historical and current examples. Our religious worship should not reflect the cultural chauvinistic practices of the past.
3. **Competency based worship is a better use of our membership. We should have the 'best' person to do each role regardless of gender. God has given us talents; we should use them to their fullest.**

We covered the 2nd last week. Tonight, we will cover the third. Next week, we will apply the principles we have discovered and reviewed to several relevant topics.

What does the Bible teach concerning the requirements surrounding competency?

Summary of Fundamental Principles

Class One – Biblical Fundamentals

We covered three fundamental principles that guide our study of gender roles.

Gender Roles – Competency Requirements

1. The whole scripture is inspired
2. In the Beginning – Intelligent Design
3. What it means to be “In Christ”

Class Two – Biblical Equality

In our second class we covered the topic of equality.

1. Biblical Equality vs Worldly Equality
2. Life is not fair, neither do we want it to be
3. Is equality something to be grasped for?

Class Three – Inspired Formal Worship

In our third class we covered the topic of inspiration specific to formal worship.

1. Formal worship is inspired by God
2. Consequences to incorrect service
3. Worship is a manifestation of our relationship and understanding

Class Four – Competency Requirements

Tonight, we will cover the following three points.

1. God appoints whomsoever he will
2. Glory not in the flesh
3. Be ye holy for I am holy

God Appoints Whomsoever He Will

To whom does credit belong? What is the principle that guides our fundamental relationship with God?

God has chosen us before we were born (Eph 1:4; 2Tim 2:13). The principles of predestination are misunderstood and confusing to those in the world. Questions of autonomy and freewill become relevant and an understanding required to appreciate our divine roles (Rom 9:11-24).

Jesus chose the 12 disciples, all male (Luk 6:13; 9:1-2). The 12 have a future role of sitting on thrones and ruling over Israel (Mat 19:28). Why did God and his beloved perfect son select 100% male leadership? Why did they not choose a better representation of the human race, 50% male and female? Even by the scriptural account we learn that all his disciples fled and forsook him. It was the women who were at the grave first to whom he appeared. Surely the women were more competent, more faithful, more sincere, and more committed. Was this selection by divine principle, or was it influenced by chauvinistic societal norms?

Matthias chosen through requirements, prayer, and lot (Act 1:21-26). Natural and spiritual requirements were critical, but the choice was always God's. Once again, they had opportunity to select a woman. Here at a critical point in history and the establishment of the 1st century ecclesia. What principles would they teach through their actions? Were they directed by divinely inspired principles? Was the risen Lord Jesus Christ actively guiding their decisions? Would there be a new revealed way by which God would be formally worshipped and his glory declared?

Paul a chosen vessel (Act 9:15 cp 2Tim 1:11). We would have never selected Saul to lead the initiative to spread the gospel to the Gentiles. He was by all accounts, self-righteous, violent, hateful, a murderer, and a robber of the ecclesia.

The appointment of people is on the same principle of God appointing all things for His great purpose. It is of God, not of man (Act 17:26-31)

Moses did not consider himself competent. His leadership traits were contrary to worldly wisdom.

Moses was flawed, and perhaps due to his marriage was not considered a suitable leader. Yet when Miriam attempted to promote herself and Aaron, she was struck with leprosy. Despite the fact God had spoke through both her and Aaron (Num 12:1-15).

Each of us are appointed our talents from God, we do not choose them (Mat 25:14-15).

Whatever role we have been assigned, servant, master, male, female, single, married, old, or young, we are called to fulfil our role with contentment (1Tim 6:2-10). Our gender is a physical manifestation of God's appointment. Our only freewill choice is to keep his commandments, or to reject his wisdom.

Additional points to highlight the principle.

- God chose Israel, a small insignificant people
- God chose the Levites to serve him and the people. No one else could perform these responsibilities.
- The body is many parts, all required, all valuable

5 minutes for discussion

Clarification questions? Do we believe that God has been and is actively involved in the appointment of individuals in the ecclesia, especially in leadership roles? If he is, what are the implications for those serving, and how they are selected? If we are all predestinated by the foreknowledge of God, is there any difference between us?

Glory Not in the Flesh

An argument has been made that we are all made equal, and we are all made in the image of God. However, under closer inspection we find this isn't the absolute truth. We need to be careful with context. We reviewed Biblical equality and how it is very different than what the world declares as equality.

Jesus is clearly expressed as being made in the image of God, just as Adam was (Phi 2:5-11). Yet he did not grasp or attempt to take by force this equality. He did the opposite, he took on the form of a servant, despite the fact he was born the son of God, the king of the world. He willingly accepted the worst kind of fate, torture, death upon a cross, condemned as a criminal. Yet he was perfect, without sin. He did not take advantage of his privilege, power, authority, birthright, nor did he attempt to do more than what God willed. Nor did he attempt to come up with a different solution.

God has called us, not according to our own works (2Tim 1:9). This principle must be expressed in our worship of God. Our worship must give God glory, it will not be achieved through our own personal expression or desires. In fact, naturally we would never choose or come up with the process that God has revealed to us.

No flesh will be justified in his sight (Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16). The flesh naturally wants to promote itself, to gain praise, power, influence, wealth, and glory. Our worship must follow divine instruction, revealing Godly wisdom, and condemn our own flesh. This will be obvious to the willing observer, but to the wise of this world, it will be utterly foolish and weak.

Nothing good dwells in the flesh (Rom 7:18). The recognition of this principle and the understanding that our heart is only continually evil is necessary if we want to keep God's commandments (Jer 17:9-10). We will not overcome the inherent weakness within our own flesh by promoting the flesh, it is only through the wisdom, power, and mercy of God.

God has chosen the weak and foolish things so that the flesh will have nothing to glory (1Cor 1:25-31). Humility vs pride. The wisdom of the world is foolishness. The cross is foolishness to the world. The strong should rule according to human wisdom. The weak should be weeded out. You are only as strong as your weakest link according to human wisdom.

We put no confidence in the flesh (Phi 3:3). It is not in our strengths that God is glorified

Just as salvation is by the grace of God, not by our own works, so too are the abilities and roles we play within the body of Christ (Eph 2:8-9).

We are born for a role God has selected. So too are we born a gender (Rom 9:11-14 cp 17-23).

Paul had many reasons to glory in his abilities, but he counted them but dung (Phi 3:3-11).

5 minutes for discussion

Clarification questions? Which or what abilities that we possess can and should be used? Are all our abilities useful and valuable in daily life, and/or in our worship? If the flesh is absolutely condemned, and even our best works are but rags, can we do anything of value? If so, what value are our works, and to whom do we give credit?

Be Ye Holy for I Am Holy

Holiness literally means separate (Lev 11:45; 1Pet 1:15-16). This separation is exemplified in the very first thing God does. He separates light from darkness. The act of separation is the complete dispersion of darkness; light casts off darkness, there is no mixing, nor is it possible to mix.

God demands we separate ourselves from the world. If worldly wisdom demands certain forms of societal structures and behaviour, would it be wise to follow in their footprints? We must be able to discern the difference between earthy wisdom and spiritual wisdom (2Cor 6:14-18 cp Amo 3:3). The primary way we can do this is by understanding principles and their application. However, sometimes we must wait to see what the outcome, or the fruit they bear (Mat 13:24-30)

Knowing that the structure of this world will cease, what type of citizenship should we have (2Pet 3:11). Our citizenship determines our role within the society we live. A citizen of another country has little to no 'rights' within a different country. An important aspect of this is political activism. However, it is not limited to politics, it is manifested in our daily behaviour. Do we set an example of suffering patiently when we've done wrong, or when we've been wronged? Or do we seek justice through the courts, or 'rights' we have as Canadians?

Cain brought what he was good at. He was a gardener. Yet his offering was rejected, which angered him enough to murder his brother (Gen 4:2-5). He did not see value in God's holiness, he wanted to be religious in his own way.

A comment that we all want to use the talents we have to their fullest capacity is misleading. Quite possibly arrogant. Some of our talents are not directly usable in worship or service of God. They often however can be used as a form of exchange so that we may 'purchase' the divine requirements. It probably should be understood that most of our talents cannot be used for worship. There is little that we can truly give to God. He has asked for faith, and keeping His commandments.

The Children of Israel were called out of Egypt by might works so that they could worship God. Pharaoh appealed to them to compromise in various ways, he did not want them to leave.

The Children of Israel were to wear a blue ribbon on the border of their garments so that they were visibly different to the nations around them (Num 15:38-41).

The call to holiness, is a call to become like God. But this calling and conversion is not achieved by our own abilities, intellect, or strength. It is God who calls, it is God who gives the talents, it is God who justifies us. This calling, however, requires certain competencies. More specifically it requires we appropriately render to God the things that are God's (Mat 22:21). We return unto him again that which he has blessed us with.

God expects us to use our talents appropriately and to their potential (Act 4:19; 5:29).

How then do we know which 'skills' or 'competencies' we have should be used and when?

To be given a role, there are competency requirements in addition to natural requirements. Paul in his letter to Timothy expresses several practical roles and requirements for each. Old, young, male, female, widows, leaders, teachers, masters, and servants (1Tim 2, 3, 5; Tit 1:5-9; 2:1-10). Most of these there is no choice, you are what God has made you, or by age, or by situation in life.

Can we manifest Christ in our lives individually? The answer is perhaps surprisingly no. Our walk towards the Kingdom of God is an ecclesial effort. We are a single body of Christ, made up of many members. Holiness then can only truly be expressed through separation from the world and union with the body of Christ (Heb 10:24-25; Eph 2:21; 4:16).

We need to be competent, but this is of God, not ourselves. God through the holy spirit would give them the words to speak (Luk 21:10-19; Act 2:4). He would grant them divine gifts (1Cor 12:1-11). The only conclusion is that whatever our talents, or gender are, they are of God. As such we must be both diligent and careful to express God's holy character, wisdom and plan appropriately.

5 minutes for discussion

Clarification questions? What does it mean to be holy? Is there a divine prescription for holiness, or is it something ambiguous? Why is important to be holy? Does holiness have both an internal and outward expression? Can we be holy if we are incompetent? What is the relationship between talent and competency?

Conclusion

Tonight's class focused our attention on the requirement of competency. Our competencies come from God, they are the talents and opportunities that God has appointed us. God expects us to use these competencies according to His divine wisdom, which will condemn the world and its wisdom.

Our three main points which help us understand the role of gender in the ecclesia were.

- God appoints whomsoever he will
- Glory not in the flesh
- Be ye holy for I am holy

Our worship of God can never be an expression of our own competency. Our worship cannot give glory to ourselves. Our roles within the ecclesia are not an expression of what we naturally want. While there is a need for appropriately competent/talented brethren and sisters appropriately fulfilling their appointed roles and responsibilities. It is God who rules/appoints in the kingdoms of men, and perhaps even more so in the body of his beloved son. We have been called to manifest God's character, yet none of us can completely perform this. Only Jesus Christ could and has. Our perfection or manifestation is only successful if performed as a body made up of many parts, subject to our head, which is Jesus Christ.

Our faith is not a competency-based faith. We are not chosen for our competency. In fact, we know God chooses the weak things of the world, the despised (1Cor 1:27-29). God's strength is declared in our weaknesses. It will not be by the work of our own hands, wisdom, or intellect that we will overcome. Our ecclesial life is an outward representation, manifestation of the principles of God. We would have never chosen each other. We would pick the outward man.

- God has called the low (1Cor 1:27-31)
- Not according to competency (1Cor 2:1-5)
- Weakness (2Cor 12:5-6)

Recall the argument being made for change is as follows.

Competency based worship is a better use of our membership. It generally boils down to having the 'best' person to do each role regardless of gender. God has given us talents; thus we should use them to their fullest.

I ask then if the argument being made for change in the roles of gender in respect to competency is according to Godly wisdom?