

Introduction

The topic of role of gender is important within scripture. It is important for us to study it, come to an understanding based upon the Word of God, and then to live accordingly. Our lives and our worship of God needs to be based upon the principles and the instruction He has provided in his inspired word.

We must acknowledge first that God has created male and female. He does not do things without reason. We do not exist, nor does gender exist simple because of random evolutionary processes. God has done this for a purpose. Thus, just as we go to God's word to find answers to who He is, and what He is doing, and will do. We also must go to God's word to understand our role therein. Is everyone the same? Does everyone receive the same talents? Does everyone receive the same opportunities? Does God have the same expectations for each of us?

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.

We have reviewed the principles in detail over the past four classes. The conclusion we must come to is obvious and without controversy.

1. We have no interest in grasping for equality. Equality will be provided by God according to his wisdom and purpose. Life is not fair, neither do we want it to be. It is by God's grace we are called and have an appointed role.
2. Worship is divinely prescribed, and our formal worship has been fully revealed by Christ in the 1st century ecclesia. There is no other way to worship God, any deviation will lead to destruction.
3. Our worship of God is not based upon our competency in any shape or form. God must be glorified, the flesh put to death. God rules in the kingdoms of men and appoints the basest of them. How much more careful and precise will He be in preparing the bride for his beloved son? Whose competency are we openly declaring in our worship?

Summary of Fundamental Principles

Class One – Biblical Fundamentals

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

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

In our fourth class we covered the topic of competency requirements.

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

Class Five – Head Covering, Speaking, Prayers, Serving

The purpose of this class is to use all that we have learnt and apply the principles in the practical application.

The three points we want to cover tonight are as follows.

1. The role of men and women in the ecclesia
2. Eldership, Speaking, Prayers, Serving
3. Head coverings

The structure of this class contains three main points, however the material to be covered is heavily weighted in a way that the first point provides us all the foundations to review the second. By the time we get to the third, the answer is so abundantly clear it can't be mistaken or misunderstood.

The Role of Men and Women in the Ecclesia

We've spent the last four weeks carefully establishing the fundamental principles that guide our roles and worship within the ecclesia. What then have we learnt regarding male and female roles already?

- Male and Female roles are by design
- Male and Female roles are divinely appointed
- Male and Female roles are used to teach us spiritual lessons
- Male and Female roles provide a natural structure that is necessary
- Male and Female roles are not equal
- Male and Female roles are both required to be 'in Christ'
- Male and Female roles are explained in the 1st century ecclesia

Individually we have no hope. In creation God told us, it was not good that man exist alone. There was a necessity in the provision of a suitable helper who was designed to complete the purpose and calling of God. While individually different, and not equal, they were to be bound together in marriage to become one new flesh. Thus, together they could give glory to God in their divinely inspired appointment.

The inheritance was always passed down through to the sons, specifically the firstborn. The exception is when there are no sons, then it was passed to the daughters (but not in an identical way). The purpose was that the men maintained their father's name. Therefore, it represented an eternal inheritance. Whereas, the women lost their names, and were given new names by their husband. This represented the blessing of adoption into an eternal household. A woman had no eternal inheritance. God was teaching spiritual principles through the physical reality.

The formal worship under the Law was explicitly laid out. One male high priest of the household of Levi. Only male Levite priests all had roles based upon their individual family trees. Other tribes had no access to these roles. Women had no direct access to the tabernacle. The temple would eventually provide a court for the women. This all provided the spiritual principle of access to God required a 'male' seed.

The ecclesia is the body of Jesus Christ. There is a physical manifestation being used to express spiritual lessons. It isn't random chance that Jesus is male, and the ecclesia is female (Eph 5:22-33). This is both consistent in principle and practice. God does not change. His Word is life. He spoke and the earth and all things in it were created.

Men are not in higher positions within the ecclesia, rather they are physically by God's appointment being born male, required to manifest the principle of the 'male' seed. Which is to say, they are physical representations of Jesus Christ. They teach the same principle taught throughout generations, that access to God required a 'male' seed. We can see that despite Christ being the true 'master', he sets the example of a servant (Joh 13:13-17).

The principles being taught were always meant for the ecclesia, the body of Christ, to be understood that all of us, men, and women, within the body are female. We have no inheritance, we have no hope, we have no access to God, except through the 'male' seed, Jesus Christ (Act 4:10-12).

Can we then conclude that physical manifestations of male and female are no longer required? Are these processes and practices from a bygone neanderthal age, a time when the Children of Israel were under the Law of Moses? To be blunt and clear so that there is no confusion, of course not! We are no more intelligent than Adam and Eve, no wiser than Abraham and Sarah, no more capable than Moses and Miriam. No more discerning or wise than the 1st century ecclesia. Perhaps, in many ways far less so.

How do we think we are expected to manifest God's character and principles in our lives? How do we think we are expected to manifest our relationship with Jesus Christ? Is a necessary part of our outward actions related to the choice God made to make us male and female? What role does God's divine inspiration play in our daily lives and worship? How do we as male and female represent our understanding of not only physical reality, but scriptural principles? How do we acknowledge all aspects of God's wisdom? Consider the apparent contradiction of equality in Christ, yet unequal physical reality of our lives? Are there important lessons that must be taught in word and in deed related to both equality and inequality?

Do we perceive our gender that we have been divinely prescribed through the foreknowledge, wisdom, and love of God as unfair, a burden? Do we perceive it as restrictive, short-sighted, or impractical? Do we see any differences between the divine message regarding male and female at all? We are told we have been predestinated by God to be redeemed in Christ (Eph 1:3-11). In this relationship is the only hope, and it is a reward that marries us to the king of the whole world. It by necessity that bride must prepare herself according to the divine prescription. Just as Jesus put to death his own body upon the tree, despite never committing sin (1Pet 2:24), so too must we act out the role we have been divinely appointed. Not only for our own salvation, but for others. Jesus, asked, is there another way (Mat 26:39 cp Joh 12:27 cp Heb 5:7-10).

What example are we given in the 1st century ecclesia?

First, we need to emphasise this critical principle. Jesus Christ is the fully revealed Word of God. He is a perfect representation of his heavenly Father. If you have seen Jesus, you have seen the Father (Joh 1:18; 8:19; 14:6-7). Jesus is the only begotten son of God. He is the fulfillment of all God's plans and purpose. He is the firstfruit of the new creation through the resurrection. Jesus didn't understand things partly. Jesus had a full grasp and understanding of all things. God is not going to provide a new revelation, or a better way, or more insight into the requirements and process involved in redemption. In fact, if we think he will, we are literally rejecting Jesus and replacing him with something of our own making. This can't be understated.

What then is the example provided in the 1st century ecclesia?

Jesus chose 12 men to be his direct disciples. He chose Judas, knowing he would betray him. They replaced Judas with Matthias (Act 1:12-26), yet surely some of the women who had followed Christ were just as competent and faithful. There can be no misunderstanding of this selection. Jesus did not choose men because he misunderstood what God truly wanted. Jesus did not choose men because the societal pressure of the day demanded it. Jesus did not choose men because they were more competent or capable. Jesus chose men because it was according to divine inspired principles.

All formal assignment of going out and preaching is with men. There is not one single mention of formal commandment for women to go out and preach similarly to the apostles. Does this then mean women cannot preach? Of course not, there several examples of women involved in the preaching efforts.

- Both men and women followed Jesus and were at his side in both ministry, death, and resurrection (Joh 19:27; Matt 27:55-56; Mar 15:40-41; Luk 23:49; Mar 16:9; Luk 8:2; Joh 20:1). Part of the crowd (Mat 14:21; 15:38).
- Both men and women ministered after the needs of Jesus (Mat 27:55).
- Both men and women gathered together (Act 1:14)
- Both men and women were blessed with an understanding, talents, and abilities (Act 2:17-18)
- Wives and Husbands (1Pet 3:1-7).
- Dorcas provided for the needs of individuals (Act 9:36, 39).
- Widow donated all that she had (Mar 12:41-44).
- Phebe ran errands (Rom 16:1-2)

The one example of a women vocal speaker is an interesting example of which perhaps we learn much from. The woman who was possessed by a spirit who after being cured no longer spoke out loud as in time past (Act 16:16-19).

Women are almost exclusively always mentioned in relationship to a house.

- Sarah (Gen 18:6,9-10; 24:67)
- Jael (Jdg 5:24)
- Wisdom (Pro 9:1)
- Mary anoints Jesus' feet (Mat 26:6-13)
- Mary and Martha (Luk 10:38-42)
- Philip's four daughters (Act 21:8-9)
- Lydia was active with the women in their place of work, and in her own household (Act 16:13-15, 40)
- Aquila and Priscilla (Act 18:2-3, 18-20; Rom 16:3-5; 1Cor 16:19)

The roles of men and women in the ecclesia can be simplified into two categories: authority and submissiveness. This however shouldn't be confused with authoritarian oppressive chauvinistic toxicity. The disciples were tempted by this very thing and Christ both by word and example made it clear there was no room for misinterpretation (Mat 23:10-13; Mar 9:33-37; Luk 9:46-48; 22:24-30; Joh 13:4-17). Thus, we understand the authority is not given to lord over, nor it is given because of competency, nor is it given by privilege. Authority is given for two reasons; first Adam highlighted a predisposed weakness in men. Adam was unwilling to lead by correct teaching and by example (Gen 3:3, 6). Secondly authority is given because it is a physical manifestation of spiritual principles; Jesus is our Lord, our groom, our redeemer, our king, he is the head which governs and directs the body which the man represents. Submissiveness is given for two reasons; first Eve highlighted a predisposed weakness in women. Eve was deceived unwilling to reason through the lies of the serpent with her husband (Gen 3:1-3 cp 1Tim 2:14). Secondly submissiveness is given because it is a physical manifestation of spiritual principles; Jesus is our Lord, our groom, our redeemer, our king, he is the head which governs and directs the body which the woman represents.

The example throughout scripture, including the New Testament is consistently that women's primary role within the ecclesia is tending the house and children (1Tim 2:15). Whereas men's primary role within the ecclesia is to teach and to provide for the house (1Tim 3:2, 5). While this will frustrate modern active feminist ideals, and even lazy male desires, this is the consistent divinely prescribed pattern shown to us in both word and example.

Are there exemptions to this physical manifestation of spiritual lessons? Yes, of course there is! As there should be. Men are not given their role because they are more competent, nor are women given their role because they are less competent. Or perhaps depending on which way you perceive things, Men are not given their role because they are less competent, nor are women given their role because they are more competent. Personal competency is not the basis of God's appointment, he is the one who gives to us our talents. Just as David and the men with him were able to partake in the shewbread that was dedicated to God for the purpose of the Levites, so too will there by necessity be exemptions in the roles of men and women when circumstance demands such things (Mar 2:25-28). The challenge for us is our deceitful hearts will find all kinds of excuses to apply exemptions (Jer 17:9). Men will slack in their responsibilities; women will grasp for different responsibilities. Or perhaps depending on which way you perceive things; men will grasp for different responsibilities; women will slack in their responsibilities.

- In Christ requires certain behaviour individually and collectively.
- The female who vowed could be saved from their foolishness by the father or husband. This was to teach us that God and Jesus can save us from our own foolishness.
- Sarah called Abram Lord. She obeyed Abram in telling others she was Abram's sister.
- God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. We don't always understand why God asks us to perform certain duties, but we are able to perform them because of our understanding and faith in the principles of God. Abraham knew God would raise Isaac from the dead.
- The issue is usurping authority, grasping for authority, taking authority. It is not for us to take that which is not ours. It is according to divine appointment and wisdom.
- Our physical manifestation of male, female, husband, and wife is to be guided by spiritual principles.
- The spiritual principles are eternal, if we live according to them, God will bless us. Remember that while we are flawed and will imperfectly perform authority and submissive roles, Jesus is perfect and will never use his authority incorrectly. Thus, we do our best to apply the principles in our lives and outwardly manifest this through our roles within our relationships and the ecclesia. Which results in God's blessing, as he can work through willing but flawed children.
- Paul states 'don't desire to be a teacher as there is greater condemnation' (Jam 3:1). There are consequences to grasping for certain roles, both positive and negative.
- We also can't be the servant who buries their talent because of fear of judgement (Mat 25:24-30).
- It is by God's appointment that we are male or female. We are predestinated according to His wisdom and foreknowledge. Our freewill only allows us to choose either obedience to eternal life, or disobedience to eternal death.

5 minutes for discussion

Clarification questions? Is the 1st century ecclesia example still relevant for us today? Will there be a new and better way revealed for us to worship God? Would it have been better if Christ selected 6 women and 6 men for his disciples? Are there practical and natural reasons for the structure of men and women in the ecclesia? What are the spiritual lessons found in men fulfilling roles associated with authority and women fulfilling roles associated with submissiveness?

Eldership, Speaking, Prayers, and Serving

The 1st century ecclesia only provides examples of a small number of formal roles and activities. In these examples, there is very clear and explicit requirements for the roles in question. We either believe Jesus was able and correctly established the 1st century ecclesia, or we believe he was incapable or unwilling.

Some of the questions that help us come to the correct conclusion in each specific activity are: Does the Bible highlight a difference between male and female roles? Do these examples and commands represent what we should do, and/or what we should not do? Are the divine principles important for us to manifest through our gender, or is it optional? Are there exemptions to these formal roles, and if so, under what conditions should be applied?

It needs to be highlighted that out of the countless roles and responsibilities required to successfully maintain a healthy ecclesia, only a few are by divine appointment only for men.

Prayer by a woman uncovered was considered uncomely (1Cor 11:13 cp Eph 5:3; Mat 3:15). We'll get to the topic of head coverings soon, but it's important to understand that in prayer the role of a woman was different than a man. Once again, this was not fair or equal, but by divine principle.

There are two types of prayers. The first is called prayer and is a form of conversation with God. This form is more often a request, but can be a form of praise. The second is singing. This form is most often praise, but can be a form of request. Throughout both Old and New Testaments we can witness both men and women participating in both, but there are differences. There is not a single example of a formal prayer given by a woman for a group which includes male and female, but there are formal parts women have in singing that include male and female. There are several private prayers given by women that are recorded.

- Miriam – (Exo 15:1, 20-21 cp Num 12:1-16)
- Deborah – (Jdg 5:1 cp 4:5, 7-9). To be killed by a woman (Jdg 9:53-54; 2Sam 11:21)
- Hannah – (1Sam 1:13; 2:1-10)
- Elizabeth – (Luk 1:39-45)
- Mary – (Luk 1:46-56)

Whereas the examples provided of men giving prayers for a group which include male, and female are divinely provided: Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Josiah, Hezekiah. Paul clearly places a difference between men and women in the context of prayer (1Tim 2:7-15). Paul goes further and includes specific instruction for women to not teach. But perhaps the most interesting phrase is “nor to rule over men”.

Paul through divine inspiration is placing a difference between male and female. God has called men to perform one role, and women another. Together they become complete, whole, and fit for the purpose God has called them.

Why should women remain silent, and when is the applicable? Paul provides us additional information and context to understand this. A woman was not to remain silent always, but in the ecclesia there was a requirement to show subjection (1Cor 14:34-36 cp 1Pet 3:5-7). In addition to help us understand why Paul is so blunt here for the role of women, is an issue within the ecclesia where there is contention or multiple different messages being expressed in the ecclesia (1Cor 14:29-33). It is in times of these differing opinions a women must be careful to not usurp the authority God has demanded of the men.

- Male – Apostles (1st century only by holy spirit guidance) (Luk 16:13; Act 1:26)
- Male - Bishop/Superintendent (1Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-16)
- Male - Deacon/Teacher (1Tim 3:8-13)
- Men, women, old, young, widows, servants, masters (1Tim 5; 6; Tit 2:1-10)

5 minutes for discussion

Clarification questions? List all the roles women can perform ecclesially? Why are men directed by divine appointment to perform the roles of superintendent, and teachers? What are the principles being taught in the gender specific roles and the principles being taught in the shared roles?

Head Coverings

This particularly small subject is oddly enough, the wedge issue in many of the discussions related to the roles of women and men in the ecclesia. Perhaps fittingly so, as there is no doubt that the physical practice literally teaches the spiritual principle of authority and submissiveness. Thus, an understanding and application of head coverings will lead naturally to appropriate application of other roles.

What we often forget, or perhaps due to our human nature we focus only on one side of this topic. Men are directed to not wear a head covering, while women are directed to wear a head covering. Thus, the activity is not focused on one gender over the other, but rather it expresses a difference between genders that must be expressed outwardly. Therefore, by implication it's not 'good' enough just that there is an obvious difference between men and women physically, but also that there should be a difference in how they present themselves to God together.

Naaman wanted some great 'work' to gain a miracle cure of his leprosy. All God asked was obedience in a simple task that by all appearance was dirty and not worthy of his position and capabilities. A simple act of humility is what God required.

The head contains the brain. The body is submissive to the head. The head represents Jesus Christ. We must be 'in Christ' if we want to be redeemed. Our relationship with Jesus while based on faith, requires an outward showing. Faith without works is dead (Jam 2:14-26).

There are a few common arguments put forward to remove the requirement for sisters to wear head coverings (1Cor 11:1-16).

- The context is historical and cultural roles of women and men in Corinth, they did not apply to all places and certainly not today
- Paul was giving his own advice, it should not be considered a commandment (1Cor 7:6, 12, 25)
- Paul is teaching spiritual lessons, there is no expectation for literal application

How do we understand the principles and how do they apply to the passage in questions?

- Divine inspiration – If we adapt the passage to only include Corinth, which it does not explicitly state we profess a better comprehension and understanding to that of our forefather (2Pet 1:16-21).
- Paul had the holy spirit, we do not. All scripture is inspired. God is not only able, but also willing to clearly manifest himself to us in his Word. By it we have hope of life (2Cor 11:5, 23-31).
- All spiritual lessons must be practice in our natural lives. There must be an outward showing of the spiritual lessons, otherwise it is just hot air (Jam 1:22-27).

We have few activities or symbols within the 1st century ecclesia that are given to us by example to provide an outward reminder for us of our relationship with Jesus Christ.

1. Baptism (Mat 3:15; Mar 16:14-16)
2. Emblems (Mat 26:26-28; Luk 22:19-20; 1Cor 11:17-34)
3. Head covering (1Cor 11:1-16)

What we find with closer inspection is that these three outward manifestations of Godly principles are teaching the same identical lessons found in the Passover. The Children of Israel represented the ecclesia of God. The bride called out of the world to become heirs of the promises.

1. Cleansed - Blood of the lamb on the home (Exo 12:7 cp Eph 1:7; Heb 9:14, 22-23; 1Joh 1:7)
2. Meal - Eat the lamb, with unleavened bread and leave nothing remaining (Exo 12:5, 8 cp 1Pet 1:19-20; Joh 1:29; 6:35)
3. Prepared - Clothed to leave immediately (Exo 12:11 cp Isa 61:10; Rev 3:18; 16:15; Rom 13:14)

We can see again these same three principles in the Exodus.

1. Baptized in the Red Sea (1Cor 10:2)
2. Received the Word of God (1Cor 10:3; Exo 24:11-12)
3. Journeyed toward the Promised Land on moments notice (1Cor 10:7; Exo 32:25)

These three symbols provide divine principles and can also be categorized the following way.

1. Calling – God reveals the light
2. Faith – Partaking in the word of God results in faith
3. Works – The fruit of our faith

What think ye, is the outward display of head coverings based on gender too uncomfortable to our modern sense of self, equality, fairness, competency, wisdom, and freewill? Or is it a simple manifestation of our understanding of divine principles and the following of inspired direction for the 1st century ecclesia and us?

5 minutes for discussion

Clarification questions? How does the practice of head coverings positively assist our thoughts within the ecclesia? How does the practice of head coverings positively preach to external observers? Is the practice of head coverings to reinforce man's authority or Jesus'?

Conclusion

Over the course of the five classes, we have explored the fundamental principles that govern our understanding and application of God's word. These principles are expressed with examples to provide us a way to understand how God's wisdom is greater than man's.

Biblical equality is not the same as worldly equality. We should not be grasping for equality. Fairness is not something we should even want in truth, as it would only lead to destruction. The structure of world and the situations we find ourselves in are there to teach us the necessary lessons that lead to eternal life. It is through suffering and the putting to death our own fleshly desires that we will overcome.

It is God who calls, it is God who declares. God provides for us without ambiguity how we must worship Him. Jesus Christ is God's beloved son and the word made flesh. He is the perfect manifestation of the Father. He is the revealed mystery. There is no mystery left to expound upon. There is no need, nor will there be further inspiration expressed. We will not discover a new and better way to worship God.

We have not been called by God because of our own competencies. It is not our own glory we are displaying and presenting as our offering to God through our service. We are returning to God that which he has given to us. Our worship is an open declaration of condemnation of our own flesh and the declaration of God's righteousness. Our roles and appointment are by the foreknowledge and wisdom of God. We are born into them, and we must live up to our calling. Our freewill allows us to choose whether we will or will not obey.

The ecclesia is a physical manifestation of our relationship with Jesus Christ. The only name by which we can be saved. We the body are preparing ourselves for our groom, so that when he returns, we are ready for the marriage feast. To be ready requires sufficient oil of the word, and garments undefiled by the flesh.

Should we follow the example of the 1st century ecclesia? Should we listen to the wisdom of the apostles whom through divine inspiration of the holy spirit gave a handful of simple and easy practices to follow? Do we see value in the outward show of authority and submissiveness as prescribed by God in our daily lives, and weekly worship? Do we believe God knows best?