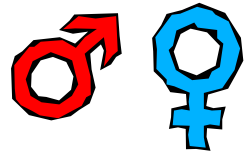


*A position paper of the Craigmores Christian Centre on ...*

# *The* **Role of Women** *in the* **Church**



In this day of woman's rights, it is important for us to understand what God says about how women should contribute to our worship. The following points may be helpful to outline what we believe the Bible teaches in this area and what should happen here at Craigmores.



## **Men and women are equal before God**

Men and women have the same value and worth before God. They are equally significant, as fellow heirs in Christ. Both have the same spiritual standing and privileges as the chosen children of God. Both share a common calling as His Holy Priesthood. While men and women do have different roles, yet they are still commanded to respect and submit to each other. Our future destiny as kings and priests who will reign with Christ is independent of our sex. (1 Cor 6:2,3; 11:11-12; Gal 3:27-28; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:5,6; Ep 5:18-33; Math 22:30.)

## **Women are not to exercise authority over men in the church...**

Though they are equal, the Bible does command women not to teach, or to exercise leadership over men in the church. At the heart of the issue, is the woman's submission to the authority of the man. This principle is taught from the order of creation and the implications of the fall, so it cannot be dismissed as just a reflection of the culture of that time. Therefore today, women still must not minister in ways which may be interpreted as a challenge to the authority ordered by God. (1 Cor 11:3,8-10; 14:34; 1 Tim 2:11-14.)



## **The Bible teaches submission – not silence**

While 1 Timothy 2:11 says “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission”, the word for “silence” is also used to describe how women are to have a quiet gracious demeanour in the home, (obviously not meaning total silence.) Verse 12 also says “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man.” This highlights that the focus is submission, not silence.

1 Corinthians 14:34,35 says “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.” In the early church, teaching was fairly interactive, like Jewish synagogues or Greek debating schools. In this setting a woman’s submission was in evidence by their silence, as they saved their questions til they got home, so as not to be seen as challenging the preacher.

While 1 Cor 11:5,13, suggests that women both prayed and prophesied in the worship in the church, including the Lord’s Table, they were not permitted to teach or exercise authority over men. It is also worth noting that, since the early church met in houses and in small gatherings to break bread, whatever is taught about women’s participation should equally apply whenever the church is present, even including home groups.



### **Why do some women wear a veil?**

In Paul’s day, the veil symbolised a woman’s submission to authority. In many cultures the veil is still recognised as a symbol of submission, but in our culture wearing a veil is not so significant. Some Christians believe that Paul’s instruction to the Corinthians, for women to wear a symbol of authority on their heads, still applies today. Others believe that while the principle of submission that Paul taught was timeless, the specific application he made, was only relevant where the culture used and recognised the symbol of the veil.

Whether the instruction to wear the veil is based on culture or not, the principle that the veil symbolises, of women submitting to God’s appointed authority is as binding as ever. (1 Cor 11:7-10;13-16)

Because godly people, who love and study the Word of God, differ on this subject, at Craigmere we believe we should respect one another's convictions and allow each other the freedom to follow our own conscience.

Therefore, we do not teach women at Craigmere to wear head-coverings, however, we do understand, respect and appreciate those women who from the Scriptures feel a conviction to wear them as a symbol of authority on their heads.

## **What are the implications for women at Craigmere?**

As an Eldership, we want to be clear that we do value the gifted contributions by the women which wonderfully enrich our services in...



- ***singing an item,***
- ***sharing of testimony,***
- ***praying out loud in a prayer meeting,***
- ***sharing in mixed small groups, and***
- ***giving a children's talk.***

In all this, we are careful to what extent, and over who, authority is being seen to be exercised.

In light of Scripture, we believe women should not preside over the meetings, preach, or be in Eldership at Craigmere. We also believe that it is wise to leave the challenge of leadership around the Lord's Table at Craigmere with the men of our fellowship. In our society, where men's leadership is resented, and is under attack, there is a subtle yet constant pressure for men to abdicate their responsibility to lead. There is also no doubt, that women leading at the Lord's Table would offend many who would see this as usurping authority. The Scriptures warn us to avoid giving such offence.

From time to time, a woman may be invited to participate in a more prominent way, for example when a woman missionary is invited to speak on a Sunday morning, but such occasions will be under clear direction from the elders.

In all we do, let us strive to have the same mind which was in Our Lord Jesus, in regarding each other as more important than ourselves. As we reflect His humility, we can truly worship Him in Spirit and in truth. ?

## **Are women relegated to a minor role in ministry?**

It is important to remember that our mission is to make disciples. 50% of that work is with women. Furthermore, we are increasingly realising that evangelism and establishing new Christians is about *relationships*. The primary context of the church's ministry therefore, is not our public meetings, but our personal lives and our homes.

In 1 Thessalonians 2 Paul wrote about how he had imparted not just the gospel to them, but his own life. He reminded them about how he involved himself in their lives and built a deep relationship with them. So many times in the gospels we see the way Jesus made profound connections with people in similar real-life contexts. In Acts 2:44-47 we see how the early church in Jerusalem was established through hospitality, as they shared with one another over meals, from house to house.

To be effective in raising up disciples who can reproduce themselves it is essential that we build relationships with the people in our sphere of influence. Relationship takes time. It requires programming our recreation to include people in our lives. It means being prayerful and strategic about hospitality.



The church's capacity to win souls and establish disciples is determined more by how families set their social agenda than any other ministry structure. Since it is mostly the women who manage the family's hospitality and social relationships, it is probably true therefore, that the real effectiveness of the church in making disciples lies more in the hands of the women than the men.

The examples of Mary and Martha, Priscilla, Lydia and many other leading women in the New Testament challenge us to empower women to take the initiative in developing this disciple-making lifestyle in the church. Through their sensitive nurturing and caring concern for others, they can not only help other women become disciples of Jesus Christ, but they also hold the key to developing homes that will have a profound impact through hospitality.