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Clergy Appointments

Women as Presbyters

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There is a lot of jargon associated with clergy appointments some of which is explained in our leaflet "Clergy Appointments - An Overview".

Women as presbyters

In 1992 the Church of England General Synod voted to allow women to be ordained as 'Priests' in the Church of England. However, nearly a third of the laity of the General Synod voted against this development and many clergy and laity have subsequently left the Church of England. Some of those opposed were anglo-catholics but many evangelicals also believed it to be an improper development. This leaflet seeks to explain the evangelical arguments against.

The first matter to address is what the Bible teaches about the nature of Christian leadership and how this relates to ministry in the Church of England today. If you are concerned about our use of the word 'presbyter' or 'priest' please refer to the note at the end.

Leadership

In the Old Testament Church leaders were of great importance. Priests, prophets, kings and judges were all of significance in the life of the people of God and the Old Testament draws attention to many particular, and sometimes peculiar, leaders.

It might be thought that in the New Testament Church this would not be so:

- We have no need for a King because Christ is our King and indeed we are all as Christians equal - Jew and Gentile, slave and free, men and women.
- We have no need for a Priest because the self-sacrifice of Christ, our High Priest, fulfilled the sacrificial system and now all Christians are priests - a holy priesthood.
- We have no need for Prophets because the Holy Spirit has been given to all.

A note on the words presbyter and priest.

The New Testament appears to use the words '*presbuteros*' (presbyter meaning elder) and '*episcopos*' (overseer) interchangeably. A different word '*hiereus*' is used to describe the Aaronic priesthood of the Temple and the priests of paganism. This word '*hiereus*' is used to describe Christ and indeed we are told that all Christians are a 'royal priesthood'.

In the old Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible the word *sacerdos* was used to translate *hiereus* and *seniores* was used to translate *presbuteros*.

The Anglo-Saxon word 'priest' derives from the Biblical word 'presbyter'. Unfortunately this word has for a long time been used to also translate the Biblical word '*hiereus*' in our English Bibles. So we are not embarrassed to use the English word priest to describe Christian ministry, so long as we are understood to mean the New Testament ministry of the presbyter and not the Old Testament or pagan priesthood. There are some similarities between New Testament ministry and Old Testament priesthood but there are also radical differences because Christ fulfilled the Old Testament and now through the Holy Spirit all believers are part of a Royal Priesthood.

use modern language liturgy people will not come to church. Statistics prove the lie in both arguments - the numerical decline of the Church of England has not been halted by these moves. Indeed what we have seen is that as the Church continues to try and make itself more acceptable and relevant to people today it has actually made itself more and more irrelevant, because people cannot see in the Church any conviction or truth that is different from the world around.

The gospel is the power of God to salvation for them that believe. The modern world is no different to the Roman empire of the 1st Century, biblical teaching on morality and social order is a million miles from the every day world which surrounded those first Christians. Yet by their faithfulness to the word of God, and by the grace and goodness of God, the world was slowly transformed. A pagan empire whose standards were completely alien to the teaching of Christ slowly accepted the message of the early Christians and in many areas biblical morality took root. This is the challenge that faces the Church of God today. Will we abandon biblical faith which seems too hard for the world? Or will we trust that God knows best for His creatures? Are you prepared to say with the Lord Jesus, not my will be done, but Yours.

Nevertheless leadership is a key feature of the New Testament Church.

Jesus chose for himself twelve Apostles. There was a wider group of disciples, men and women, yet the twelve had a special role. Of those twelve there were three, Peter, James and John, who were particularly close to Jesus, and these three were privileged to be the sole witnesses of the unveiled glory of the Lord Jesus at what we call the transfiguration. Peter and John continued to be key leaders in the post-Pentecost Church and eventually alongside them was James the brother of the Lord. When we turn to the letters of Paul we see that he was recognised by others as a leader and he both appointed and nurtured other leaders. Leadership was clearly part of God's plan and purpose for his people. Leadership was not a late or regrettable development.

It is in the pastoral epistles, where the church is moving from first generation to second and third generation believers, that we find guidance on what the continuing pattern of leadership should be. Thus, for example in Titus chapter 1, Titus had been instructed to appoint elders (*presbuteros*) (verse 5) who are also described as bishops or overseers (*episcopoi*) (verse 7). Within a few more generations, if the writings of Ignatius of Antioch are genuine, then a pattern had developed of a Bishop together with Presbyters and Deacons. The equivalent of such Bishops today would be the Rector of a thriving market town with perhaps a church plant and a few villages under his care. Ignatius did not oversee an hundred churches and 10,000 members like many modern Bishops.

The nature of leadership

There were to be leaders in the Christian Church, but what was the nature of their leadership? The following is not exhaustive, but it covers the main roles.

- Leadership is to be modeled on Christ (1 Cor 11.1). This must shape every other facet of Christian leadership.
- Leaders are to be servants (eg. 2 Ti 2.24). Jesus gave this model particular shape when he washed his disciples feet.

Though the leaders of the gentiles lord it over them, that is not to be the way with the leaders of the people of Christ. The leader is to be the servant of all.

- Leaders are shepherds (Acts 20.28). They are to take heed to the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers. Like the Good shepherd himself the leaders must feed and nurture both sheep and lambs.
- Therefore, the leader is also a teacher (1 Ti 3.2). When Paul lists what is required in a leader it is all personal qualities together with the ability to teach.
- The above can be thought of as positive roles but there are two further roles which we might be tempted to think of more negatively.
- Leaders are to govern as stewards (Tit 1.7), they have authority. It is generally the leaders in the Church who make the decisions (Acts 15.6) though with the whole church (Acts 15.22). Organizational dynamics mean that this must usually be so.
- Leaders are also to discipline. This can be an area of great difficulty yet they must confront wrong (Acts 5.3, Tit 1.13). Discipline is also part of the ongoing work of teaching the scriptures since in doing so the teacher will necessarily rebuke and correct.

These tasks of leadership are many and diverse and in the scriptures they are not confined to a few. There were then, as there are now, diverse ways in which leadership was exercised. Nevertheless, in the New Testament church and beyond there were particular people - the elders / presbyters - who had a particular role of leadership. As our practice has developed in the Church of England it is priests/ presbyters who correspond most closely to the biblical role. Before leaving the nature of leadership it needs to be said that there is one final feature of Christian leadership which is also modeled on Christ - bearing the cost. Whether in small measure or large, leaders will have to drink the cup of Christ (Mt 20.22). Indeed, history shows that

is Galatians 3.28: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' If the justice argument is right then the Apostle Paul who wrote these words in Galatians, not to mention the Holy Spirit who caused them to be written, obviously did not see as clearly as we do what they meant to say. Paul evidently saw no contradiction with the teaching we find elsewhere on the different roles of men and women. Much modern theology is done by taking a principle and applying it to every circumstance regardless of whether the conclusions we reach are in accord with the bible. The logic goes something like this, God is love (clearly true), so love is always right and therefore homosexual love, however expressed physically, is always right. But we must have the humility to admit that if our conclusions contradict the bible then we have gone wrong somewhere. Either our assumptions were wrong, or our logic is wrong, probably both.

The bible teaches both the equal value of women and men, but also that they are different and have different gifts and different roles.

'But I feel called by God.'

This is the most difficult objection to answer, and yet the answer is simple. It is like the person who has prayed hard and come to the conviction that it is God's will that they should marry X, only to find that X is equally clear that they must marry someone else. One of them is wrong (probably both), and the person who is wrong is either misinterpreting their own feelings, or being misled. The Church of England has never ordained people simply because they felt called by God. Calling must always be tested and that must begin with the tests laid down in scripture. The scriptures precluded certain people from being appointed as elders and this includes women.

A gospel imperative.

Some people believe that unless we have identical ministries for men and women our message will be undermined, we will find that people do not listen. Therefore it is essential, for the gospel, that we adapt to the modern world. A similar argument was used 20 and more years ago in relation to liturgy. It was argued that unless we

two of them continued to share an itinerant ministry together even to the extent that they were martyred just a day apart. Many godly women have laboured in the same way and it would not seem odd to speak of them and their husbands in the same breath.

Finally, if we convince ourselves that Junia was female, and an Apostle in a technical sense who had a teaching office, why did Paul and the early churches still insist that women should not teach? Were they completely inconsistent, unable to follow through their own teaching and break from their patriarchal mindset? Did they not notice their inconsistency. Or is it not safer to assume that some or all of these flimsy suppositions about Junia are wrong. Humility demands that with such dubious evidence we do not build the church on our own ignorance, but accept the wisdom of the past.

Mary Magdalene.

This appears to be a new argument that has only recently surfaced. On the day of the resurrection Mary Magdalene was sent by Jesus to Peter and the others. It has been argued, that because Mary was sent by Jesus with a message about Him, she was an Apostle. Therefore, women could be apostles and so women can be presbyters in the Church.

If an apostle is a messenger then there is a sense in which one could say that Mary was an apostle. But this would hardly justify the logical steps then taken to reach the conclusion. But if we are to use language so loosely then why should we not make the same claim about others too? Jesus told the Pharisees to take a message to Herod "*Go tell that fox...*" (Luke 13.32), does that also make them Apostles of Christ?

This particular argument has all the appearance of clutching at straws.

A matter of justice.

Many believe that allowing women to be priests is 'a matter of justice'. Some who used this argument in 1992 in General Synod have subsequently used exactly the same argument with regards homosexual practice. It is deemed unjust to treat people differently because of their gender or sexual practices. The often cited scripture

when the Church has been persecuted it is often the leaders who have suffered first for the name of Christ.

Leadership today

In scripture the primary focus of leadership is not on Church government but on service, pastoring the flock and teaching. At its best in history that is what Christian ministry, in its many and various forms, has aspired to. There is therefore much to be concerned about today. Many of the models of leadership being promoted today do not have the primary roots in the scriptures. Some seem to treat the Christian minister as the same as a manager in a business, whilst others give all the appearance of seeing ministry as a spiritualised form of Social Work. We are in danger of borrowing too much from the world around us - Jesus warned his disciples about this (Mt 20.25) - when our primary model must be Christ. The temptation is to take on the models of leadership used in professions or in industry. There is much talk today of contracts, appraisal, career paths, remuneration packages. Sometimes when churches advertise for their next minister it sounds more like a specification for a managing director of a company than for a minister of the gospel. If these things are of any importance they must be secondary and those who lead should be more concerned with imitating Christ - being servants, shepherds, teachers.

Is the Biblical teaching on gender and ministry still relevant?

Behind the issue of the roles of men and women in Christian ministry lies the question of authority. In fact this question lies behind most religious disputes.

The classical evangelical position is that Scripture is normative for Christians. By this we mean that it does not simply describe what the early Christians did, but rather it gives us positive models for our own faith and conduct today. We believe that the Bible is divine revelation, that is, the very Word of God. This is what the Christian Church has historically held through the last 2,000 years. This is also the teaching set out in the Formularies of the Church of England, for

example Article 6, but also in our Canons of the Church and in the Worship and Doctrine Measure.

This truth about Scripture, that it is the very Word of God, dictates how we understand and interpret what the Bible says. We cannot entertain the idea that one part contradicts another and we will always try to uphold the harmony of the whole. We will approach the Bible with a great deal of reverence and humility knowing that we are handling the oracles of the living God. Justin Martyr, one of the early Church fathers, commented when dealing with difficult passages; *“since I am entirely convinced that no Scripture contradicts another, I will rather acknowledge that I do not understand what is written”*.

We also believe that God has spoken, with the desire that we should hear, and He has spoken in ways that are intelligible to us. Therefore, in general we should expect that the Bible will not be difficult to understand or require great expertise to make sense of it. Because God has spoken then what matters supremely in interpreting the Bible is not how we read the Bible, but rather what God, its author, intends to teach us through it. This will make us particularly eager to test our understanding today against that of Christians through the ages. Finally, because God has spoken we will be eager to listen. One of our Anglican Homilies says that *“the Holy Scriptures are God's treasure-house; wherein are found all things needful for us to see, to hear, to learn, and to believe, necessary for the attaining of eternal life”*.

We have sought to set out above the classical understanding of the nature and authority of the Bible and what the Bible teaches about the nature of Christian leadership. We will now seek to show that the Bible does give us a model and pattern for Christian ministry and that this includes the expectation that only men should be presbyters.

Greek word in question is *kephale* which means head (the thing above your shoulders) - we still use it in a variety of medical terms - eg. cephalic. In Ephesians 6 this play on words between head and body is clearly intended. For most people the head is the place from which the body is governed and this is why in Greek and English head refers to authority and leadership, as for example with a Head Teacher. In Greek literature head is used thousands of times in this normal sense. There are a very few instances of the word referring to the starting point of something, or source. Where the word is used in that sense it is just a way of speaking, it does not mean that the head is the source.

Junia

Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. (Rom 16.7 – KJV).

It is claimed that Romans 16.7 refers to Junia, a female apostle and that since the apostles had a teaching and leadership role this means women should occupy such roles today.

There are several problems. First, this verse is all we know about Junia from Scripture and the evidence from the early Church period is not particularly early and not entirely consistent.

Secondly, it seems likely, but is not certain, that Junia was female. Some have said that the medieval church changed the name to Junias to cover up the existence of a female apostle. But the confusion already existed amongst early writers and arises from changes in the way Greek script was written.

Thirdly, it is also not certain that Paul is saying that Andronicus and Junia were apostles at all. The verse more likely means that the apostles noted these two as worthy of particular respect.

Fourthly, we do not know whether Paul is using the term apostle as a title for a particular office, or as a general description such as in 2 Cor 8.23 which has the same original Greek word but where most modern translations have the word 'messengers'.

Fifthly, some in the early Church said that Junia was the wife of Andronicus and that he was one of the 72 sent out by Jesus. The

What about Deborah?

It is argued by some that the example of Deborah, as a woman in leadership, points us to the fact that this is acceptable. That Deborah should be invoked shows how uniform male leadership is in the rest of the Bible. Of course Jezebel would be another example, but she is rarely cited!

We must read the bible properly, as a whole. The book of Judges stands out like a sore thumb. Its leaders are not simple role models - would you want a Vicar like Samson, who slept with prostitutes? The book covers 400 dark years and resonates to the words 'everyone did what was right in his own eyes'. Sadly this is becoming a motto for our day too.

In Judges the commands of God and the book of the law are never mentioned. It is strange, therefore, that people should see such a lawless time as a model for the Christian Church. Moreover, in the account of Deborah, part of the point is that the leader of Israel is a woman. She, knowing that it is not good, pushes Barak forward, but he refuses, this is interpreted as weakness on his part. The prophecy that a woman will kill the enemy serves to underline the point. (As it turns out it was another woman, Jael, who used a tent peg to do the deed - hardly a glorious death for Sisera!)

What the book of Judges does show is that in extremes the commands of God are adaptable. In the case of women's ministry, women pioneer missionaries sometimes led churches because there were no men. Once men were up to the task, the God given practice of a settled and well ordered church prevailed.

When is a head not a head?

In Ephesians 6 it is stated that the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church. The logic of this position is followed through in 1 Corinthians 11 with regards teaching and the roles of men and women in a congregation. This is what people mean by headship.

Against this some say 'the commonly used word for headship is a Greek word meaning "source", e.g. the head of a river is its source'. This is a very misleading statement, indeed it is simply wrong. The

Biblical teaching on gender and ministry

Qualifications for a Church elder

The letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus give instruction as to how the Christian Church and ministry were to be patterned as the Church moves out of the apostolic era. Paul is giving guidance to these two men and in particular instructing them about how others should be appointed to Christian leadership.

1Tim. 3:1-7 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of an overseer, he desires a good work. An overseer then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

The title 'overseer', is the Greek word '*episcopos*' which is sometimes translated in English as Bishop. However, it is widely recognised that there is no distinction in Scripture between this role and that of the *presbuteros* (presbyter) or elders who are referred to in 1 Tim 5.17 and 1 Tim 4.14 as well as frequently in Acts and elsewhere.

What can be seen from 1 Tim 3 is that there are certain standards expected of those called to this Christian ministry. Mostly these have to do with the personal conduct of the person, but also to their ability to teach.

However, it can also be seen that it is assumed and stated that the overseers are men.

A similar list can be found in Titus:

Titus 1:5-9 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I

commanded you; if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For an overseer must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

Here can be seen quite clearly the equation of elder (presbyter) and overseer (*episcopos*) and again the explicit expectation that the minister be a man.

Jesus' disciples

This practice and teaching in the early Church is entirely consistent with the example of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Jesus appointed leaders in the new community he chose men. He does not appear to have been bound in other areas by the social conventions of the day. Indeed, there were a number of women amongst Jesus' disciples including some who were very close to Him and who have been an inspiration and an example ever since. Nevertheless, Jesus did not appoint the women as leaders. This pattern was continued in the post-pentecost church and indeed has continued from then on until the last few decades. As the Church spread from Israel to the graeco-roman world it encountered a culture that was male dominated but which had no shortage of priestesses, goddesses and families run by matriarchs. But the Church did not attempt to compromise on the pattern which Jesus had established.

Christian tradition

Whist the practice of the Church through the ages does not carry any binding authority for Christians we note that from the beginning until the last few decades, almost without exception, the Christian Church has accepted and practiced what the Bible taught that its presbyters (priests) should be men.

Some common objections to the classical teaching.

Isn't male leadership a thing of the past, like slavery?

Firstly, slavery is not a thing of the past. It is said that there are more people in actual slavery today than ever there was at the height of the slave trade. In the United Kingdom slavery is not legal yet many people, such as domestic servants, live effectively as slaves and we are content to buy goods which have been produced in sweatshops around the world.

Given that such things exist how should the Christian respond to it? The Bible does not call on us to outlaw slavery, it simply treats it as a fact in a fallen world. We do not find arguments for the abolition of slavery nor for the assertion of the rights of the slave. Instead we find arguments about the duties of those who are slaves, and those who are masters.

The expectation of slave and master is that they will seek to live in a way that is honouring to Christ. This is a principle that is relevant to working relationships such as employee and employer. What is more, if people truly followed the biblical teaching, the abuse that has been part and parcel of slavery would be non-existent and slavery as a practice would not survive long.

The principles that we see in relation to the slaves and masters are directly relevant to the issue of gender roles and ministry. The desire of the Christian is not to assert their rights, but to live to please God.

In passing, it is worth noting that in Ephesians chapters 5 & 6 when we read about slaves/masters and husband/wife we find sandwiched in the middle reference to children and parents. If you choose to say that the pattern of relationship between men and women is a thing of the past like slavery then are you prepared to follow the logic and say the same for the relationship of children and parents?

though this may be what happens and if so no-one saw this as inconsistent with the idea that men should exercise the teaching role. The prophetess was not a leader nor a teacher, it was God who spoke through her.

- Lydia was one of the first believers in Philippi (and hence in Europe). A woman of means, she was the head of her household and when she came to faith her household were also baptized (Acts 16.14-15). She accommodated Paul and friends in her house.
- Lydia also draws to mind the wife of noble character in Proverbs 31.10-31 whose management of household affairs is comprehensive and extensive encompassing business enterprises.

These various passages demonstrate that there is no expectation in Scripture that Christian women take a secondary or docile role. There is much ministry to be done and whether it be in the home or outside it the Christian woman can and should serve God to the best of her ability. Such faithful ministry is pleasing to God and should be honoured by His people.

At times in Scripture and in the history of the Church it has been necessary for women to take roles which should have been exercised by men. A clear example of this is Deborah one of the Judges of Israel (Jdg 4-5). She reluctantly takes the role because the men will not. Likewise in the history of Christian mission there have been instances of godly women who established churches and led them. When the men had grown to Christian maturity they were willing to follow the pattern set down in Scripture of male leadership. Though there may be times when it has to be otherwise, in the Christian household and in the Church our desire should be to honour and live out the distinctive roles that reflect our mutual dependence and our desire to please God.

Men and women are different.

The reason for all this goes back to creation, in that God has made men and women different. In recent decades many have tried to play down gender differences but this trend shows signs of beginning to be reversed in western culture as people emphasise more the differences between men and women.

Men and women complement one another, God has made us differently for good reason. Therefore in the marriage relationship men and women have different roles which makes the marriage a strong, if sometimes bewildering, relationship.

Headship in the Christian fellowship

Gender distinctions are also upheld in the Christian household in that the man was to provide leadership, even to the extent of being called the head (cf. Eph 5.23). Much ink has been spilt over the meaning of this word head, but it properly refers to the thing above your shoulders (*cephalus* in Greek). This is the place from which the body is governed, hence the use of head to refer to chief, ruler etc, as in 'head teacher'.

In an attempt to justify their ideas about women's ministry some have sought to argue that 'head' in Greek can mean source and hence origin, being a reference back to creation. However, whilst there are instances where head is used in this sense they have to do with the head being the top (such as the head of a pint, or a head of the river). This use to mean source is rare in Greek and it is foolish to build an argument on this fact when the ordinary meaning is so clear and easily understood.

However, what does the idea of being 'head' mean in practice? Here we must fall back on our primary model, headship must be modeled on Christ, it is not a matter of rights or privilege, but of duty, service and love.

What is true of the Christian household is in some degree true in the household of faith (1 Cor 11.3). What we do in church should not contradict what we do in the home. This appears to be why the presbyters, part of whose function is governance and discipline, are to be men (cf. 1 Ti 3.2f, Tit 1.5f). Again we assert that this is the

natural and obvious meaning of Scripture. Moreover it is how earlier generations of Christians understood the Scriptures and how they put it into practice. Therefore, those who wish to claim that this understanding is incorrect must be clear of why they think it wrong and what is their authority for acting differently. If your authority for changing this practice is simply your own logic, or the social trends of the day, then you are building on shifting sand.

Trouble in Corinth

The Pastoral Epistles (Timothy and Titus) show us the Biblical instructions for the ongoing Christian community. The pattern of male presbyters is entirely consistent with the practice of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we look at the early churches we also see issues arising which are tackled on the basis of the same principles.

For example in 1 Corinthians 14 we see evidence of problems in the church though we do not know their precise nature. The surrounding instruction particularly concerns the need for order in church meetings when it appears that in Corinth there were such things as tongues and prophecies.

In amidst instruction on how to deal with these the Apostle Paul addresses an issue to do with women, apparently married women. His instruction is that they were to keep silent in the congregational meeting, they were to be 'submissive' rather than asserting themselves and thus they were to uphold the Biblical pattern of marriage. Paul even grounds this appeal in the 'law'. (1 Cor 14.34-35). We cannot be certain about what was going on in Corinth and clearly Paul did not see this instruction as being at odds with the fact that there were women prophets, and we don't know whether the prophetesses prophesied in the congregational meeting. What is clear is that the practical instruction Paul gives is consistent with what is taught elsewhere about the differing roles of men and women and that presbyters to be male.

Creation Order

In 1 Timothy 2 v12-14 Paul addresses a similar issue and again he is consistent. The role of teaching and authority in the Christian congregation was to be exercised by men and Paul does not defend

this on cultural grounds, but argues that it stems from how God has made us. Adam was made first and he was given authority and leadership responsibility over Eve. This is therefore God's good design for His creation as this was the order set before sin entered the world. After they had sinned, God charged the responsibility to Adam even though Eve had been deceived first (Gen 3 v9).

The distinctive ministry of women

None of what we have seen above should be taken as meaning that women are inferior. Elsewhere the Apostle Paul explicitly states that in Christ there is neither male nor female (Gal 3.28). However, what we see is that the differences between men and women are to be reflected in the family and the Church.

There are several examples and instances of women ministering in particular ways in Scripture all of which are models for today so long as they are not applied in such a way as they undermine what we have already seen.

- The women with Jesus provided for him out of their means (Luke 8.2-3)
- Priscilla and her husband Aquilla had a joint teaching ministry when they instructed Apollos in their own home (Acts 18.26). It is interesting that Priscilla is named first, which could imply that she had the lead role, but this may be reading too much into the text.
- Timothy had known the Scriptures from childhood (2 Tim 3.15) and it seems likely that he had been taught them by his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois who are both mentioned by Paul (2 Tim 1.5).
- There were women prophets in the early Church including the daughters of Philip (Acts 21.8-9) and some women in Corinth (1 Cor 11.5). These gifts of prophecy seem to have gradually died out as the apostolic age closed and the teaching was now to be found in the Scriptures which articulate the apostolic faith. But during this time God spoke through prophets both men and women. The Bible does not say that women exercised these gifts in public meetings,