

A Biblical Discussion of the Roles of Women in Ministry at North Wake

Abridged Version

1. The Value of a Woman and the Value of a Woman's God Given Role

Because we believe the Scriptures (the Holy Bible) to be the final and chief authority for life and practice, it is the first place the elders of North Wake turn when seeking guidance regarding issues of doctrine and practice. In relation to understanding the value and role of women in the church, we understand that the Scriptures serve both as the final source of authority regarding the nature of reality as well as guidelines to understand the nature of morality.

In order to understand the Bible's teaching on this subject it is important to first understand what the Bible teaches about the created nature of men and women. We affirm that in Genesis 1:26&27 the Bible teaches that God equally created both man and woman as image bearers who share equal value and dignity in the eyes of God. In addition, we recognize that in Genesis 1:28 and Genesis 2:18-20 God created man and woman with distinct differences built into the very fabric of their being. That is, God created men as male and women as female and these two genders are meant to compliment each other. While Scripture is not exhaustive in its explanations of these differences, it is nonetheless clear that there are distinct differences between men and women that transcend mere physical differences. God then created Eve to be a "helper" suitable (complimentary) for the man.

In addition to understanding the created nature of men and women it is also important to grasp the moral implication of how being created as man or woman ought to affect behavior. Morality always has its roots in the way God created things. In Genesis 2:20 God clearly designates a distinct role for Eve when he creates her as a "helper". Thus, because men and women are created by God to be different, it is right and good for the Church to recognize and affirm those differences as precious gifts from a loving Father.

Finally, it is important to recognize that nowhere does Scripture indicate that the distinct roles of men and women carry any different weight or value. In fact, just the opposite is true. Fulfilling one's God given role not only serves as an affirmation of God's wisdom in creating men and women as He did, but also demonstrates in action the most God- like or Christ-like behavior possible for each gender.

In conclusion, the elders of North Wake Church affirm the following three points as faithful to the teaching of Scripture:

1. Men and woman are equal in value as image bearers.
2. Men and women have been given different roles as image bearers.
3. The roles given to men and women, while different, are of equal value.

II. How, Then, Should Women Serve at North Wake?

The obvious question that follows is: “How, then, should women serve at North Wake?”

At North Wake we desire to ensure that women have the opportunity to exercise their spiritual gifts for the edification of the body. This includes the use and expression of teaching and leadership gifts. However, any expression of these gifts must be done inside the parameters that God's Word establishes for his people. Behind every command and directive of Scripture lies the heart of a loving Father who desires to provide the best for his children and protect them from harm.

In this regard, we believe 1 Timothy 2:11-15 to be particularly directive and normative in our understanding of God's loving provision and protection:

Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. (ESV)

In this passage, Paul restricts women from engaging in two activities: teaching men and having authority over men. Since these are the primary responsibilities of those who hold the office of elder/overseer/pastor (1 Tim 3:2-5, I Tim 5:17; Tit 1:9; 1 Pet 5:1-3), a woman should not function in this office because this would require her to exercise these two prohibited activities

Being persuaded by the Scriptures, the Elders of North Wake, then, advise believers to be careful to avoid situations that would result in women teaching or exercising spiritual authority over men. For a discussion including specific examples of this in various ministry situations, contact the North Wake office for the longer version of this document. Far from being “restrictive” in nature, we believe and affirm that adherence to these Scriptural guidelines places believers of both genders in the clearest position of blessing before the face of the loving Father who loves and died for the Church.

We also recognize and affirm the reality that many opportunities and needs exist for women to teach and lead other women, which would be a faithful application of Titus 2:3-5:

Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. (ESV)

III. Special Area of Consideration: Deaconesses

In regard to the question of ***Deaconesses***, the North Wake Church Constitution reads as follows:

SECTION V. *Deacon/Ministry Coordinator Responsibilities*: Deacons, also called Ministry Coordinators, shall serve the church by coordinating and overseeing specific areas of ministry assigned to them by the elders. (Acts 6:1-7) Women may serve as deaconesses in certain cases (1 Tim. 3:11; Rom. 16:1), provided such service is consistent with the biblical teaching concerning the role of women in church leadership (1 Cor. 11:2-16; 14:33-36; 1 Tim. 2:11-15).

One note of further clarification is necessary. We are aware that there is division regarding the interpretation of I Tim. 3:8-13 in regard to this matter. While we believe there is some ambiguity regarding the interpretation of whether or not women can serve the church in this official capacity, we carefully and clearly want to affirm that there is no ambiguity regarding *how* she may serve. I Tim. 2:11-15 makes it clear that she is not to have the role of doctrinal instruction to men and not be in an authoritative role over men. Thus, the position of deaconess is understood in contrast to elder as a position of service and, for women in particular, limited by qualifications made clear in I Tim. 2:11-15.

For further Biblical, theological and ethical reflection on this document as well as other areas of special consideration please contact the North Wake office and ask for the longer version of this document.

