

Some Biblical Principles Related to Men's and Women's Roles

Men's and women's roles have undergone much discussion and change in recent decades. How are we to understand what God teaches us about these things? In 2016 the elders of RGC hosted a Bible study with our church to listen to and discuss God's words to us about this important topic. Following is a brief summary of what we found, along with a few recommended resources, including the sermon series we preached after completing our study.

1. When God created human beings male and female, He made them equally in His own image, He gave them equal access to Himself, and He called them equally to be stewards of creation. (Gen. 1:1; 1:26-31)
2. Men and women are to labor side by side as coworkers in the gospel, fellow disciple-makers, and coheirs of grace. (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:1-16; Gal. 3:28; Phil. 4:2-3; 1 Peter 3:7)
3. As God's image-bearers, men and women are designed to complement each other in mutually enriching ways. As men and women submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and share in the blessings of the gospel, God gives some unique roles in home and church. These role distinctions are not based on competencies and reflect neither superiority nor inferiority. Rather, they reflect eternal patterns we observe within the Trinitarian relationships between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
4. In the home, the distinction calls a husband to exercise servant leadership, which means that he that seeks the good of his wife by being her gospel partner and friend who expresses the caring, sacrificial love of Christ to her. Likewise, a wife is to seek the good of her husband by being his gospel partner and friend who willingly and voluntarily helps him and submits to him. This submission resembles the respectful, wise, loving submission of the Son for the Father and the Church for her Lord. How this works out will vary in each marriage, and we encourage wives and husbands to work this out under the influence of the Word, with the help of the Spirit and the community of the church. (Gen. 1:26-28 & 2:18-25; Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Pet. 3:1-7; Col. 3:18-19; John 5:19; Phil. 2:5-8)
5. In the church:
 - a. Ultimate authority in the church always rests with Christ who reigns in the church through the Word and by the Spirit. (Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:18)
 - b. We encourage all believers, women and men, to flourish by using their Spirit-given gifts, including leadership and teaching. God has designed the church so that it is interdependent and the well-being of the unity of the church requires that each one use their gifts for the common good. The church cannot be united, healthy, or growing if women and men are not free and encouraged to lead and teach and use their gifts. (1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:15-16;

Col. 3:16; Titus 2:3)

- c. The role of elder/pastor/overseer is given uniquely to qualified men who are affirmed by the church and who know, feed, lead, and protect the church. (1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17-20; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-5)
 - d. Expressions of governing authority and authoritative teaching in the church are to be carried out by the elders or those men they affirm. (1 Tim. 2:11-12; 1Cor. 11:2-16; 14:33-35)
 - e. The elders of the church are responsible for overseeing all leading and teaching in the church. Leading and teaching occurs in many ways which are not governmental or authoritative and those roles are open to both men and women. For example, they might serve as ministry team leaders, contexts where teaching is more interactive and leaders serve to facilitate discussion, small groups, seminars, and classes, etc. (1 Cor. 12:4-7; Col. 3:16; 1 Pet. 4:10-11; Acts 18:24-26; Gal. 3:28)
6. The position expressed in these principles – *men and women together in God's image, in gospel partnership, and in complementary roles in marriage and ministry* – is to be distinguished from any form of patriarchy that demeans or mistreats women.
 7. *What if a member disagrees with our position?* This is not a primary doctrine. We unite around primary doctrines such as the gospel and the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture. Disagreement about any topic should always be carried out with charity and humility. Those who disagree will need to do so in a way that supports the ministry of our church and promotes the unity of the Spirit. Depending upon the nature of any disagreements with this position, those disagreements may close the door to some church leadership positions.

Recommended Resources

[Why This Issue Now?](#) Tim Keller, Kathy Keller, John Piper, Kathleen Nielson, and Don Carson discuss complementarianism in a pre-conference panel at our 2014 National Women's Conference in Orlando, Florida.

[God's Good Design: What the Bible Really Says About Men and Women](#) by Claire Smith.

RGC Sermon Series: Men and Women Together

- [Men and Women Together in God's Image](#)
- [Men and Women Together as Gospel Partners](#)
- [Complimentary Roles in Marriage and Ministry](#)