

Elders at WBC

The Question of Gender Session 4

- A. Summary comments
- B. Good Questions



Summary Comments From the Study

WORTH NOTING:

Everybody is inclined to a pre-determined position / conviction about this issue, so **everybody** who chooses to participate should enter this discussion carefully, respectfully, and with the self-disciplined intent to listen and learn as much or more than they speak or defend. We start by asking God to temper us, soften us, and show us where we can encourage each other. If we all genuinely entered the discussion with such a mindset, it's hard to imagine that good things would not come from it.

There is a common mistake made in the misuse and mis-application of scriptures in defence of both positions. We should always do the leg-work to better understand scriptures, not only in what they say, but in understanding the **literary and cultural context** in which they were originally scripted. It's difficult to rightly separate **practice** from **principle**, but it is necessary since not all stated Biblical **practices** were meant for the church to adopt endlessly, but the **principles** were. The process of appreciating that separation is best done in community with each other.

Our recent history and current cultural realities are most often NOT HELPFUL TOOLS in discerning the complications around this issue. The culture we are ministering in is increasingly confused about the Biblical framework for gender, so overemphasizing gender issue from a cultural perspective will muddy the water. Furthermore, the historical record of male leadership in the church is painfully littered with poor examples of self-serving men who have violated the Biblical standards for leadership. To identify those as the normative result of "men only" elders is not a helpful argument since they are not the benchmark for a Biblical model.

The vast majority of us enter any sphere of change with a deep rooted sense of suspicion. Healthy suspicion is actually good, and generates insightful questions. Unhealthy, ungrounded or misplaced suspicion is almost always corruptive and cause for bitterness to easily root. Each of us should be willing to question our own suspicions to determine if they are healthy or not.

OF GREAT IMPORTANCE:

The Bible provides a very clear framework for qualifications of leadership in the church, and a Biblical framework must have priority over our traditions or personal preferences.

Any church governance model, regardless of its perfection or flaws, will demand that the church body will intentionally practice **bi-directional trust** - that the congregation trust the elders and the elders trust the congregation. Without such trust, no model or framework will matter. Furthermore, such shared trust takes 10X as long to earn as it does to spend.

Questions form the Website and Notes

Isn't the Bible very clear that Elders are to be men?

So, isn't what the Bible says the end of the discussion?

Apart from any discussion about gender, what are the qualifications for a person to be an elder?

If we use 1 Tim 3 as a reference for qualifications of elders, does that mean an elder must be a married person (as per v2)?

What is the role of an elder's spouse? Why is that relevant?

How does a person become an elder in the church? What is the process for being chosen?

**If the office of elder were limited to men only:
what does that mean for women who share the spiritual gifts of elders?**

how will women have any voice in leadership of the church?

does that mean the door is closed to ever seeing a woman as a pastor?

**If the office of elder were open to women:
would qualified men end up sitting back and not serve?**

how do we respond to the concern that "it's not Biblical?"

will this affect how the board of elders operate?

How can the church make a good decision without alienating people and causing division?

Is the elder's role primarily support to the pastor or a voice for the congregation?

How many elders does the church need? Where will we find them now and in the future?

What is the best way for me to raise questions or voice my concerns about this?
