

Grace Downtown CG Discussion Guide

April 30- May 3, 2018

Topic: "Church Leadership"

Series: Theology in Life



Announcements:

Kingdom Prayer (5/6): Meet at 4pm the first Sunday of each month in the Fellowship Hall classroom on the 1st floor of Chinese Community Church to pray with others for our church, our city, and our world.

Women's Leadership Council Book Talk (5/14): Join women of Grace Downtown for a conversation on the book *Living Into Community: Cultivating Practices that Sustain Us*, by Christine Pohl from 7-9 pm at WeWork Apollo (810 7th St NE).

Network Worship and Members' Meeting (6/10): Save the Date! Our next network-wide worship service and members' meeting will be June 10 at 10:30 am at Grace Meridian Hill, 810 Shepherd St, NW. There will be no 5 pm Downtown worship service.

CG Education Curriculum: Community groups have begun a 10-week education curriculum. We will explore theology proper, presbyterianism, and topics of our day. The purpose is to generate healthy discussion and to guide each other in understanding a biblical perspective on these topics. Your care group elders will visit at some point across the 10-week span and will also be available via email to answer lingering questions.

Church Leadership

Scripture References

Acts 6:1-4; Acts 15:1-6, 22-31; 1 Peter 5:1-5; 1 Timothy 3:1-13

Resources

Women's Responsibility and Authority at the Village Church -

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwj014WezPPXAhXBzIMKHZfHA10QFggNMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.thevillagechurch.net%2Fmediafiles%2Fuploaded%2Fa%2F0e1140761_1390938876_article-womens-responsibility-and-authority-at-the-village-church.pdf&usq=AOvVaw22uTKToCrFyPgJhzpaOo44

Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15, by Andreas J. Köstenberger -

<https://www.amazon.com/Women-Church-Fresh-Analysis-Timothy/dp/0801020204>

Women in the Church Interview with Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner -

<https://www.crossway.org/articles/women-in-the-church-interview-questions/>

PCA report on women serving in ministry –

<http://www.pcaac.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Women-Serving-in-Min.-of-Ch.-Study-Committee-Report-with-admended-recommendations.pdf>

An Analysis on Women in Ministry from an Egalitarian Perspective (representing the opposing view) -

http://fuller.edu/uploadedFiles/Siteroot/Communication/Women_in_Ministry/Women-in-Ministry-A-Biblical-Basis-for-Equal-Partnership.pdf?utm_campaign=women-in-ministry-download&utm_medium=autoresponse-email&utm_source=formassembly-auto-responder&utm_content=download-link

Introduction:

Since the ordination of women is an important and sometimes controversial issue in the church, we will be spending much of our discussion time on that topic. But first, a brief introduction to church government is needed.

There are two offices in the Presbyterian church: elder and deacon.

When scripture talks about elders, it uses a few different titles, such as presbyter, teacher, or bishop. Different titles describe different roles that the elder fills, not different offices. Some are called to preach (pastors), but all elders are equally charged with watching over and governing the church. They fulfill this charge by instructing and guiding the church, setting an example of godliness, comforting those in need, exercising church discipline, praying for the church, and working to make disciples.

The diaconate is a distinct office from the elders, charged with carrying out a biblical vision of justice and mercy in the church. The role of deacon is to minister to those in need, to the sick, to the lonely, and to anyone who may be in any kind of distress. The diaconate collects the financial gifts of the church, as well as managing and distributing its resources. Deacons also oversee many of our ministries at Grace, such as the Mercy Team and City Prayer. As with elders, deacons are elected by the local church.

Similar to the government of the United States, church government in the Presbyterian Church consists of different levels. The body of elders in a local church makes up the “session.” Above the session, there is a “presbytery,” which is made up of the pastors of local churches in a given region. Above the presbytery is the “general assembly,” which is made up of all churches in our denomination. Each level of government addresses matters that are appropriate to its level. The session presides over the local church and its individual members. The presbytery presides over ministers, sessions, and churches within a certain region. The general assembly is concerned with matters that affect the whole Church.

And now, to the question of whether or not women should be ordained as elders in the church. As a note, we will be re-visiting “complementarianism” specifically later in the series.

1 Timothy 2:8-15:

“⁸ I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ⁹ likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰ but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. ¹¹ Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵ Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.”

Why do we believe that certain men are called to the office of elder?

Precedent: As a church that values the authority of Scripture, the only good reason for holding any belief is its biblical support. What do we find on this topic? In reading the Old Testament we find while there were women prophetesses, and even a women judge (prior to kings), there were no women priests. God reserved this role for certain (not all) males from the tribe of Levite. Moving to the ministry of Jesus, he chose twelve male apostles. Some have reasoned that Jesus was conforming to cultural expectations, but that seems very unlikely as he was killed (in part) for violating cultural expectations. Progressing to the organization/formation of the New Testament church discussed in 1 Timothy, a similar pattern is followed. In the section concerning elders (1 Tim. 3) only men are addressed (pronoun “he”, “husband of one wife”), whereas in the Diaconate section both men and women are addressed. Earlier, in 1 Tim. 2.11ff, Paul says that in the Church women are not to “teach and exercise authority” over men. Many scholars and churches understand that the “teaching and exercising authority” are a conceptual pair (go together); meaning they are referring to the kind of authoritative teaching/doctrinal oversight expressed through preaching and church discipline (which belong to the office of elder). So, the biblical witness is consistent throughout.

Basis: The reason for certain men being called as elders is not primarily because of gifting (a layman/woman may be a better teacher); gender (as the majority of men are not elders); human tradition (which is idolatry); or super-spirituality (elders are sinners in need of grace). The basis lies in the Lord's calling. God's gracious provision of leaders for his Church, fathers for his spiritual family.

Qualifications: The fact that men are ordained to the office of elders does not mean that men in general have authority over women (or that all women must submit to all men). More so, laymen are called to submit to the authority of elders (just as laywomen). In 1 Tim. 2 when Paul says that women should “learn quietly in all submission” he is not speaking literally, for elsewhere women are given instructions as to their prophesying and

praying in public worship (1 Cor. 11). Nor, is the Bible prescribing that all women must have the same temperament (naturally quiet). The command means to be teachable and humble. A woman may be an extrovert, confident and demonstrative, and still fulfill this command. As well, she can lead, participate and teach while honoring this command. What then does Scripture mean in 1 Tim. 2 when referring to Eve's being "deceived"? Not that women are more given to deception than men (for all sinners "the heart is deceitful above all things", Jer. 17.9). Rather, Eve was deceived when she rejected God's authority. What does Scripture mean when it says "Women will be saved through childbirth"? Obviously it is not being literal for that would mean unmarried or barren women can't be saved! Rather, a figure of speech is being used (synecdoche) that likely means, 'As a woman perseveres in her God given call, it evidences her salvation is for real'. Lastly, the prohibition for women not to exercise leadership via the office of elder does not extend beyond the church (e.g. market place, corporate world, etc).

Implications: Both unordained men and women should joyfully and fruitfully exercise their gifts--whether teaching, evangelism, hospitality, service, etc--under the oversight of the elders. The New Testament teaches that elders are to "equip the saints for the work of ministry" (not do all the ministry). At Grace Downtown non-ordained men and women have the same freedom and opportunity to exercise their gifts and leadership.

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you define your position for the roles of men and women in the church? Is it based upon scripture?
2. Why is the exclusive ordination of men and not women to the office of ruling elder and teaching pastor problematic in today's culture
3. What is your response to scripture when you read something that makes you feel uncomfortable? What is the difference between a biblical response and an unbiblical response to hard truths of scripture?
4. If you're still unsure about what you believe Scripture teaches about the ordination of women, what are some steps you could take to help come to more clarity? (e.g. read through the Scriptures, read the resources provided with the study, talk with other Christians or an elder, pray)

(Continued...)

Prayer:

...for encouragement. Praise the God of all comfort whose name is a strong tower. Ask that the Lord would strengthen us to be confident and courageous for he is with us wherever we go, and he will uphold us with his righteous right hand. Ask that Grace DC continue to grow in the goal of becoming a community that bears one another's burdens.

...for wisdom, insight, and discernment. Confess that we forsake wisdom for the pursuit of earthly idols. Pray that we would love and seek after wisdom. Pray that God would give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him and that we may know the riches of his glorious inheritance.

...for a spirit of love. Praise God for his abounding steadfast love. Give thanks that even when we were dead in our trespasses, our the God of love made us alive together with Christ. Pray that we would love God with our whole being and that we would love our neighbors as ourselves. Pray that we would find rest in the knowledge that nothing in heaven and earth can separate us from the unconditional love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.