

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation” ~ Romans 1:16

FROM THE EDITOR

The July/August edition of FCGN addressed an important issue that has been discussed by many people - the role of women in the church as revealed in the Bible. I received questions concerning the role of women in the church in response to those articles and I appreciate the questions that were sent! Some feel that the church is “holding back” women from serving God in their full capacity. Emotional appeals that dismiss clear teachings of Scripture are often made in an effort to allow women to “share their talents” in worship and leadership roles. However, God’s design for the work and worship of the church is not subject to the constant changes in societal beliefs and practices. The Bible is very clear regarding the role of both men and women in the public assembly of the church, and there is no room for compromise on that issue. The mistake that many are making, however, is that they want to limit this discussion to just that - the role of women in the public assembly. Scripture teaches that the men (*males*) are to lead in prayer “*in every place*” (ASV - 1 Tim. 2:8). Obviously that is not a reference to prayer in general, otherwise women would be forbidden from praying at all! By inspiration of the Holy Spirit Paul wrote that only men can serve as elders and deacons in the church (1 Tim. 3:2, 12). The requirement of elders and deacons to be males does not nullify the great good that women can do (2 Tim. 1:5). The following article addresses what women can do to the glory of God without compromising the truth of His word. While many have been and are pushing for change in this area, God has been very clear in His word. We should be thankful to God for the good that women have and can do in service to Him!

SO WHAT CAN WOMEN DO?

Scott McCown

Scripture is clear in teaching the concept of male spiritual leadership. Male spiritual leadership is a concept that takes root in the earliest pages of the Old Covenant based on the principle of the firstborn. Notice the language of Exodus 13:1-2, “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is Mine.” God claims ownership of every firstborn of both man and animal. Turning to Numbers 3:5-10 we read, “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. And they shall keep

his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle. And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle. And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto them out of the children of Israel. And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest’s office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.” Aaron was the firstborn and his sons would follow him as priests. The next two verses point out that the tribe of Levi would be the surrogate firstborn for all the people and belonged to the Lord for leadership and service in worship to Him.

Today, Christ serves as our High Priest (Heb. 4:14-15) having that responsibility as the Firstborn of God (Rom. 8:29). Paul calls Christ the “Firstborn of all creation . . . the Firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:15, 18). As God’s Firstborn, Christ is the Passover Lamb keeping Satan from destroying His children (Heb. 11:28). Jesus has the rule as the head of the Body, His church by virtue of His status as the Firstborn. He offered the sacrifice of Himself for her and rules as Lord of lords.

But what does the *firstborn* principle have to do with male spiritual leadership? The apostle Paul equates the order of creation with firstborn in First Timothy 2:13, “For Adam was *formed first*, then Eve.” LaGard Smith surmises that as first created or *firstborn* that Adam, being aware of the law about eating the fruit, “bore the responsibility for two sins – his sin of eating the fruit and his sin in failing to exercise spiritual headship.”¹ According to Smith, Scripture clearly teaches male spiritual leadership in the Lord’s church and in the home yet, headship in Scripture is not so much an honor as it is a responsibility of service. After Adam and Eve sinned, this headship becomes part of the punishment of man (Gen. 3:16). Men need to be aware of our responsibility for the spiritual well-being of our family and the Lord’s church. Woe to the man who shirks that responsibility!

Our dilemma over women’s role results from a worldview that looks at leadership as authority and not a Biblical view of leadership as service. Likewise, the dilemma results from an over-emphasis on what occurs at the public assembly versus the everyday life of believers.

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“Women have a role in the life of the church - they are not regulated to the sidelines...”

In the 1994 Spiritual Sword Lectureship titled “*Women to the Glory of God*,” one speaker referenced this quote, “The time has come to stop looking at those things women cannot do and emphasize instead those areas in which she can serve . . . to (God’s) glory.”² This truth is found as we understand that the Greek words diakonos (*deacon*), doulos (*slave*), and oiketes (*servant*) are not gender specific, but apply equally to both male and female. All Christians are servants of Christ.

Women have a role in the life of the church - they are not regulated to the sidelines of the life of the church. Jesus’ own genealogy in Matthew 1 includes five women – Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheeba, and Mary. Romans 16:1 mentions Phoebe as a servant (*diakonos*) of the church. In Acts we read of Priscilla and Lydia as prominent women and servants in the church. Paul instructed Titus that the older women are to teach the younger women (Titus 2:3-5). In Philippians 4:2-3 Paul calls Euodia and Synthyche by name telling the church (men included) to assist them in their ministry (*labored with me in the gospel* - Phil. 4:3).

The question remains concerning what specific areas of ministry are open to women. What can women do? There are multiple areas of ministry open to women within the context of Scripture that encompass the greater scope of life in Christ. They are much of what Jesus calls the “weightier matters” (Matt. 23:23).

Women can edify the church (Rom. 14:19). Many women are natural encouragers. Throughout my life, from the time I was in Bible classes to my first attempts at directing singing, public prayer, reading scripture, and preaching, more women than men shook my hand, patted me on the shoulder, and told me how proud they were of what I did. I would not be who I am if not for their building me up.

Women can instruct and admonish the church (Rom. 15:14). This is a vital role any woman can play. I can think of several women who have guided me in my youth; women who taught me scripture, and many who continually demonstrate the Spirit of Christ in their lives as they let the Word of Christ dwell in them (Col. 3:16).

Paul tells all Christians “through love serve one another.” (Gal. 5:13). Peter tells Christians to use their gifts to “serve one another.” (1 Pet. 4:10). Women serve by teaching children and youth. Women serve by caring for family and others. Women put men to shame in their willingness and ability to follow Christ and take up the towel of service. I know Christian ladies who see needs in the community and take care of those needs as a Christian. More than a few churches have a good reputation because of the women who have hearts for service. Men, we must help these women (Phil. 4:3).

Much of that service is from a mindset of empathy; a mindset that bears the burdens of others (Gal. 6:1-2). Women tend to have a greater capacity for compassion

than men and outdo us in care for others. Many times, as I am at the home of family who is mourning loss, there are ladies from the church already there helping by serving, listening, holding a hand, or organizing a ministry of care.

Women can pray. Every Christian has access to the throne of God through our High Priest and we are to pray for one another (Jas. 5:13). The country music chorus reminds us of the power of a godly woman’s prayer:

When Mama prayed, good things happened.
When Mama prayed, lives were changed.
Not much more than five foot tall
But mountains big and small crumbled all away
When Mama prayed.³

Women change lives and change the world with prayer answered by God.

Women can and do love. Jesus commanded that we love one another as He loved (Jn. 15:12). Women love with a seemingly unlimited supply. They love with a genuine love in Christ that leads them to edify, instruct, admonish, teach, serve, bear burdens, and pray for others. Love seeks the best and works toward the best for others. Women can and do lead the church in love.

The allotted space does not allow for us to explore how women can practice forgiveness (Eph. 4:32) or stirring up love and good works by togetherness (Heb. 10:24-25). Still, we state in this article that the role of women in the church is much greater than the limited roles of the public worship assembly. My prayer and aim is that we do more to emphasize the work of women, and every Christian, in the world around us as well as the work we do for each other. As the adage says, “Enter to worship, leave to serve.”

Maybe that is the deeper meaning of Romans 12:1, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” These areas are our reasonable service to God. If we (men and women) neglect or de-emphasize them, can our worship ever truly be acceptable to God?

*Scott preaches for the Central church of Christ in
Tuscaloosa, Alabama.
He also writes a religious blog: The Morning Drive
(<http://scottmccown.wordpress.com>).*

End Notes

1. Smith, LaGard. *Male Spiritual Leadership*, (21st Century:Nashville) 1998, pp 41-42.
2. Miller, Dave, “The Role of Women: The Exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:11-15,” *Women to the Glory of God: Spiritual Sword Lectureship 1994*, Jim Laws, ed. (Sain:Pulaski, TN) 1994, p 289.
3. Overstreet, Paul L., Rory Lee, *When Mama Prayed*, (Ole Media Management:Nashville)

2018 - 65 Years and Counting!

Barry O'Dell

"This issue marks the beginning of an enterprise to better acquaint the brethren of this county with one another and to further the work of the churches of Christ. Our aim is simple. To express ourselves spiritually, to become of 'one mind' as commanded, to bring before the brethren ideas that each of us may have for advancing the borders of His Kingdom." These are the first words of the first edition of Fulton County Gospel News in 1953 as written by Boyd Morgan. According to articles from the past, FCGN was, in



the beginning, a local effort limited to Fulton County, Arkansas. The first edition was mailed out to 200 homes in Fulton County with a postage rate of one cent per paper. Currently the church of Christ at Mammoth Spring is mailing out approximately 9,800 copies of FCGN at a rate of about thirty-one cents per paper. The paper reaches 49 states and 12 foreign countries!



On the financial support of FCGN. In 1953 Boyd Morgan wrote that the paper was supported equally by three congregations in Fulton County – Welcome Hill, Pilot, and Moten. Today, and for many years, congregations of the Lord's people have faithfully sent their contributions to the church at Mammoth Spring and they are kept in a separate account designated specifically for expenses related to the paper. This year (2017) FCGN received support from 19 congregations and 25 individuals. We cannot say **Thank You** enough to our supporters! You make this work possible and help us in spreading the gospel around the world. There are many expenses that are accrued for FCGN. Envelopes, tape, labels, paper and printing costs, computer software for

postage purposes, etc. are necessities for this effort. Besides the financial costs, there are many hours of work that are involved in the preparation of the mailing. The members of our congregation, stuff and stamp both domestic and international envelopes and label every individual paper that is to be sent out. This congregation is a wonderful group of people who do many good things for the Lord and His work.



On the editors of FCGN. From 1953 to 2017 there have been 13 editors of the paper and nearly 500 writers who have contributed articles. Beginning with Boyd Morgan and Clovis Ragsdale, FCGN has remained faithful to the simple gospel of Jesus Christ. In the first edition brother Boyd Morgan wrote, *"This paper is intended for services to all brethren and for encouraging the carrying of the gospel to all sections of the county devoid of the truth."* Throughout the history of the paper each editor has contributed his own style to the paper while remaining true to God's word. If you're interested in this topic you can visit the paper's website (www.fultoncountygospelnews.org) and check out our PDF archives.

I, Barry O'Dell, began working with the church in Mammoth Spring in August of 2014. My family and I are honored to be involved with the church here and I am honored to serve as the editor of FCGN. I greatly appreciate the six men who serve as elders and oversee the work of the church here. Many good people over the years have done many good things to get us where we are today! My goal as editor is to always provide sound, Scriptural articles that are based on the truth and that are easy to understand. In 2018 each edition of FCGN will include one or more articles from editors and authors of the past. I hope that you enjoy the paper!



November/December 2017 Contributors

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John Smith (Goldsboro, NC)	\$25.00

Biblical Worship

- Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-24)
 - Prayer (Acts 12:5; Phil. 4:6-7)
- Vocal music only (Eph. 5:19; Heb. 13:15)
 - Giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7-8)
 - Preaching (Acts 2:42; 20:7)

The Churches of Christ

- Bible only (Rom. 1:16; 2 Pet. 1:3)
 - Name (Rom. 16:16)
- Began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4)
 - Established by Jesus (Matt. 16:18)
- Purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28)
- Established in the 1st century (Acts 2:47)
- Body of Christ and Christ alone is the Head and Savior (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23)
- Added to the church today just as in the 1st century (Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Cor. 12:13)

Salvation

- Belief and baptism (Mk. 16:16)
- Repentance and baptism (Acts 2:37-38)
- Belief, confession, and baptism (Acts 8:37-38)
 - Hear, belief, baptism (Acts 18:8)
 - Faith and baptism (Gal. 3:26-27)
 - Baptism does save us (1 Pet. 3:21)

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