

Should Women Preach?

By [Deb Martin](#), on November 19th, 2014

Should women preach?

Yes and no.

Unfortunately, this seemingly simple inquiry is a loaded question. It is often asked in hopes of merely ascertaining one's ecclesiastical position on women in ministry. Sadly, this question has become a tool with which to draw a line of division separating believers into two groups (complementarians and egalitarians). It is easy to see how one's answer to this question can provide a catalyst for heated debate. Most assuredly, the question is important; but it is also controversial, and one that deserves serious attention today.

As a Christian woman in ministry, I often observe that when this question is asked, the first inclination is to erroneously equate the action of "preaching" with the position of "pastor," thereby confusing the proclamation of the gospel with an authoritative role within the church. The question in disguise becomes, "Should women be pastors?", a question that should be answered quite differently than, "Should women preach?" It is a subtle yet important distinction to make.

I'd like to offer that simply put, preaching refers to proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. By that definition, all Christians are called to preach. The act of sharing the good news of Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension to the Father and the completion of his atoning work on the cross for the forgiveness of sin is the foremost privilege and responsibility of Christians regardless of gender. All believers are to proclaim the good news (1 Pet 2:9); all believers are called to go and make disciples so that others may have eternal life in Christ. All believers are to be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks a reason for the hope that is in them (1 Pet 3:15). The gospel is a Christian issue, not a gender issue.

With that said, preaching the gospel does not qualify someone to be in a position of authority within the context of the local church. Not all Christians, (men or women) should assume they are qualified to serve in an authoritative role as pastor/overseer. That is, just as there are Scriptural commands for believers to share the gospel, there are biblical qualifications for those who hold offices of responsibility within the context of the local church.

Scripture clearly teaches that within the context of the local church (that is, an organized assembly of professing, believing Christians who gather to worship and observe the ordinances), women are not to have an authoritative role over men (1 Tim 2:15). Yes, women should preach; but no, women should not have responsibility for the

spiritual growth and guidance of a congregation of male and female believers. This responsibility is reserved for those who hold the authoritative position of elder; a position for which qualifications are clearly described in Scripture (1 Tim 3, Titus 1).

Some claim that an interpretation of Scripture that disallows women to hold authoritative positions over men erroneously (and unbiblically) limits women in their ability to influence others for Christ. But I ask, how can that be? Scripture clearly calls (commands!) all Christians to be influential in sharing the gospel, and all Christians are equipped to do so through the power of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Bible specifically instructs wives to be influential in their husbands' lives within the context of submission (1 Pet 3:6-13). Careful consideration of this principle should lead one to reflect on the relationship between the Father and Son, in that Jesus did everything from a posture of submission to His Father and under the Father's authority (Mt 26:39, Jn 12:49).

Should women preach? YES! Christian men and women must share the hope that is within them with those perishing in this lost world and preach the gospel whenever and wherever they can; it is a command from Scripture that Christians should obey with joyful hearts. Should women strive to be influential in the lives of others, even their husbands? Yes. Again, this is a command that women should obey with joyful hearts, within the God-ordained framework of male headship. Should women hold authoritative positions within the local church through which they are responsible for the spiritual growth of an entire congregation of men and women? No, for the Bible clearly teaches that submission to authority is a command that all should obey with joyful hearts.