

Equal and Same are not Equivalent Terms

The United States Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution both justifiably recognize the equality with which all persons are to be treated under the law. However, equality never has, does not now, and never will preclude a distinction made between equality and sameness. The distinction relates to spiritual matters in that all have equal opportunity to salvation and membership in Christ (Gal. 3:26, 27), but not all members in Christ have the same office (Rom. 12:4).

Because one recognizes that distinction in roles allows some individuals to act while forbidding others, does not, as society claims, make one guilty of discrimination. May a regular citizen vote in congress? May a civilian identify himself as a police officer? No indeed! Why not? Because role distinctions permit some to act, while restricting others who are in different roles.

American society, and now even the Lord's church, are ripped apart by those who have failed to recognize that God has assigned specific roles to men and women, both of which authorize and inhibit action, depending entirely on whether one is male or female. Man's assigned role forbids him to be in a spiritually submissive role to the woman. Woman's role forbids her to be head over the man (1 Cor. 11:3).

Those who have expanded the role of women to include leadership in spiritual activities in mixed groups of men and women, deny the inspiration of the scripture by accepting the argument that Paul's instruction in First Timothy two is culture rather than the timeless instruction of the Holy Spirit. The silent submission in which the woman is to learn (1 Tim. 2:11), is no more a mere cultural practice than is the fact that she, rather than the man, bears children (1 Tim. 2:15). Both of the above are inherent to the role God has given her, in which if she is faithful, she will be saved!

As sad as it is that many write off Paul's instruction to simply cultural influence, it is as disturbing that others who claim to accept Paul's writing as the Lord's commands (1 Cor. 14:37) have nevertheless become careless, reckless, haphazard, and hypocritical in practice. Those who rebuke the error of granting spiritual leadership roles to women in the worship assembly, but would grant it outside of the assembly when the group is mixed, are as guilty as the Jews of whom Paul wrote: *"Therefore thou art inexcusable O man, whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things"* (Rom. 12:2). They are no different from the ones of whom Paul wrote to Titus: *"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate"* (Tit. 1:16).

Paul's restriction is not to be taken as forbidding the woman to teach over or in any other way usurp spiritual leadership over the man in the worship assembly, but at any time! Thus, whether it is in the Lord's Day assembly or out of it, if Christian men are present, it is sinful for a woman to lead a prayer, a song, or perform any other act which would place her in the leadership role over the man. This **does not** forbid her to make comments or answer questions in a class setting, for such does not put her in the leadership role. However, she may not scripturally be the teacher in such a circumstance, because that would violate 1 Timothy 2:12.

Much needs to be said about the exalted role that God has given to the Christian woman. She can participate in teaching a man who is in error on a point of truth (Acts 18:26). Christian

mothers are to teach their children (1 Tim. 5:14; 2 Tim. 3:15). Older women are to teach younger women to be sober, love their husbands and children, be discrete, chaste, keepers at home, good and obedient to their husbands (Tit. 2: 3-5). Even though some deny it, it is illogical, unreasonable, and perhaps would deprive a lost man the opportunity of obeying the gospel, if a woman could not teach a non-Christian man.

Because God's word does not allow the woman to take the leadership over a Christian man or men in spiritual activities and gatherings does not mean she is not as good nor as important as the man: it means that she is different, not in value, but in her role, and her role is as important and God given as the man's.

It is useful to note that when women are placed in the role of man, often it is because the man has shirked his responsibility as a man. A question that deserves an answer is: When Eve was placed in the position of deciding to eat or not eat the forbidden fruit, where was Adam? Had he been practicing his role as the spiritual head of his wife, he would have been protecting her from evil, as his role required. Even so, when women are placed in positions of spiritual authority and leadership, isn't it often because the man has refused to fulfill his obligation in the matter? One error does not justify another, but let each one accept the responsibility that God has discharged to him or her, and let us not step out of our roles whether one be a man or a woman.

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