

April 21, 2014

To our Family at Clear Lake Church of Christ

For the last three years our church's leadership has sought to determine how best to unite our body on the issue of women in the Sunday morning assembly. It has been an exhaustive process focused on prayer, study, discussion among our leadership, discernment and more prayer.

Shepherds' Desire

It is our desire to travel together on paths that provide hope for all of our church family as we seek to glorify God together.

We take seriously our responsibility to *"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood."* (Acts 20:28).

It is our prayer that we lead with one mind and one voice, heeding God's call for unity in the church. Our desire for the church is that *"the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Romans 15:4-6)

How we treat each other and how we project to the world is important because the church is a reflection of God. Jesus said *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5:14-16)

Clear Lake Church of Christ is a very spiritually diverse body. We come from a wide variety of spiritual backgrounds and perspectives. Because of our differences, we are aware that this subject can be very emotional.

Harmonizing Scripture is Difficult

Traditionally, our heritage has viewed I Timothy 2 as controlling the role of women: *"A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet."* (I Timothy 2:11-12).

However, the Apostle Paul seems to give different instruction: *"But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved."* (1 Corinthians 11:4-6).

These two passages from the same author instruct women differently. On one hand, women must "be quiet" while on the other hand a woman "prays or prophesies". To address this difficulty, we identified principles that allow us to combine scriptures such as these while still recognizing the Bible's authority.

Basis for Change

With focus on the three following principles, we are making changes that expand women's roles in worship.

1. God created both male and female to reflect His glory and goodness.

"Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:26-27)

2. Both men and women have been gifted by God for the purpose of building up the body of believers.

"For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully." (Romans 12:4-8)

3. Find the balance between what "could" be changed and what "should" be changed. The Apostle Paul described the challenge of weighing his own rights against the rights of other Christians.

"I have the right to do anything, you say – but not everything is beneficial. I have the right to do anything – but not everything is constructive. No one should seek their own good, but the good of others." (1 Corinthians 10:23-24)

Conclusion

For many years, our church family has embraced women as ministers and ministry leaders as well as in countless roles of service to our members. We believe that there can be differences among churches depending on the particular circumstances and issues of the time. Our vision is to continue to

affirm women in their current roles and to be inclusive through expanded activities and roles of service in worship.

What Next?

We will follow where God leads us. We hope that these changes will encourage our sisters to find and use more of their gifts in a climate of greater freedom. Some worship activities in which we hope to encourage greater participation are scripture reading, drama, serving communion, blessings, ushering and testimonials. We hope these changes find the equilibrium that the Apostle Paul described in I Corinthians 10:23-24.

When our love for Christ and our devotion to Him overcome the things that make us different from one another, then our unity will be like light shining in the darkness. In the words of Jesus, "*A city on a hill cannot be hidden.*"

This is the consensus of the shepherds following extensive periods of prayer, study of scripture and considering the spirit of unity for this church family. It is our objective to be true to God's word and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.