

Should Women Preach Sermons in Church?

by: Pam Rehm / Blog #57

The question of whether women can give sermons in church keeps coming up. As a Christian woman, I hear it discussed among congregations, Bible studies, and online conversations. Many churches are now ordaining women as pastors, bishops, and elders. Some branches of Judaism even have *female rabbis*. Women are preaching and leading in ways that would have been unthinkable just a couple of generations ago. I see why some women ask, “If we’re gifted in teaching, encouraging, and serving, why can’t we also give sermons or be pastors? After all, we as women want to serve God with all our hearts.”

So, it’s natural to wonder how our gifts fit within the Church. Personally, as a woman, I’ve spent a lot of time thinking about this.

The Connection Between Sermons and Spiritual Authority

A sermon is more than sharing thoughts about the Bible or reading Scripture aloud. It is an act of spiritual leadership that involves teaching sound doctrine, encouraging God’s people, correcting error, and helping guide the congregation. Interestingly, in Titus, Paul explains that elders are to be male, husbands of one wife, appointed to oversee the Church, hold firmly to God’s truth “as *he* has been taught,” and teach in a way that both strengthens believers and refutes false doctrine. He gave similar instructions to Timothy, charging him to faithfully preach God’s Word with patience, exhortation, and sound teaching as a “man” should, holding “himself” accountable for “his” own household (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

However, before we decide conclusively who should do this, let’s understand how the Bible defines “Spiritual Eldership” in the Church. One thing I’ve learned over the years is that the Bible often defines responsibilities differently than modern culture does. At times this can be difficult for us because we naturally look at ability first. But Scripture repeatedly points us back to God’s design and His purpose for each role.

Paul’s Instructions Concerning Teaching Authority

If preaching involves teaching and exercising spiritual leadership and/or eldership over the congregation, does the Bible say who should do it? Paul answers, “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And *I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man*, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control” (1 Tim. 2:11-15).

Clearly, Paul connects teaching and authority, but bases his instructions on the creation order rather than first-century customs.

The Pattern of Church Leadership

When we look at the qualifications for elders and bishops, the Bible consistently points to men for these roles.

Paul wrote “If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work” (1 Timothy 3:1), and he must be “the husband of one wife.” Titus was given the same instruction when appointing elders. Since preaching sermons is one of the main duties of elders and pastors, the plain biblical pattern places this responsibility with *male* church leadership.

Did Women Ever Preach Public Sermons?

People often bring up examples like Deborah, Esther, Priscilla, and Philip’s daughters. When I read about these women, I don’t see them being held back by God. I see women who served God faithfully and played important roles. Their examples remind us that influence and faithfulness are not measured by position or title.

I’ve often noticed that Scripture spends far more time praising faithfulness than discussing positions. Rather than wishing they had different roles, I find myself as a woman wanting the same faith, courage, and willingness to serve.

Equality Does Not Require Identical Roles

Equality doesn’t mean that men and women should have identical roles and responsibilities. As a mom of both a daughter and a son, I’ve spent years watching how differently God created them. They each have strengths that the other doesn’t. Those differences do not make one more valuable than the other. *They are simply different.* That’s one reason I have never been convinced that equality requires identical roles or responsibilities. The Bible teaches that men and women are spiritually equal before God, while also showing that He has given them different roles, functions, and responsibilities. There are many things that my husband can and should do that I have no business trying to do, and I’m ok with that.

But men and women are equally created spiritually in God’s image, and both are heirs of salvation. Paul said, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). Peter reminds husbands to honor his wife, “as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered” (1 Peter 3:7).

Both receive God’s Spirit and are called to be part of His Kingdom. But the Bible still teaches *distinct roles* in the family and in the Church.

As Christian women, we shouldn’t see God’s instructions as limitations on our worth. The Bible is full of faithful women who served God, encouraged others, and set examples that should inspire us today.

The Heart of the Matter

As Christian women, I think many of us have wrestled with questions like this at one time or another—I know I have. But the older I get, the less concerned I am with titles and positions and more concerned with faithfulness, encouragement, comforting, and serving.

When we read about women of the Bible, we should see women who trusted God, served where He placed them, and left powerful examples for us. Their influence wasn't diminished because they weren't elders, pastors, or in leadership. Their examples shine because they were willing to serve God humbly and faithfully in the roles and functions He gave them.

For me, that is really the *heart of the matter*. The question is not whether women are capable. The question is whether we trust God's wisdom enough to follow His design. If we do, then we can serve Him joyfully, knowing that our value comes not from a title, but from being beloved daughters serving God as He opens opportunities for us to reflect Him in our lives.