

The Life Challenge

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." John 10:10

Series: Gifted, Called & Affirmed
Title: What Does Paul Say About Women
Speaker: Brian Cooper
Text: Galatians 3:23-29; 1 Corinthians 9:1-24
Date: January 13, 2019



WARM-UP

In most areas of life we highly value people who have given significant time and focus to developing certain skills or enhancing certain areas of study/knowledge (ie. Doctors, Appliance Repair Persons, Professional Counsellors, etc). Within the sphere of the church, however, it seems that such individuals are sometimes viewed with suspicion, or are labeled "elitist."

- **Why do you think this happens in the context of the church? Do you think it's a fair or unfair assessment?**

Part of the reason that the "women in ministry" issue has been so debated is that it is NOT a simple, straightforward issue in scripture. It does take a lot of hard work to honestly wrestle with what the Bible is communicating. This, in part, is why our family of churches (the MB's) give freedom to churches to come to their own informed conclusions on the matter.

- **Given that this issue is often considered "debatable", share your thoughts on whether you think it's better to err on the side of "restriction" or "freedom" when it comes to the issue of "women in ministry"? List pros and cons for each of those choices.**

DISCUSSION

What Paul Says...

This weekend, Brian Cooper dealt with many of the Pauline writings about women in his teaching. What parts of his presentation most stood out to you? Why?

Read Galatians 3:23-29

- In regards to the relationship between men and women, *"If the parallel with slavery is correct [in Galatians 3:28] ... then the task of the church is to listen to Paul's revolutionary insights, to shed its dominant male orientation (for the sake of men as well as women), and to discover the fellowship which can occur only when all members are truly free. ...To say that the church should only be interested in the spiritual development of women and men and should avoid all discussion of the social import of equality in Christ is like saying the church should never have involved itself in fighting the institution of slavery. The fact is that Galatians 3:28 has enormous implications which Paul himself could hardly grasp, much less implement, and which remain for the church to carry out."* Charles B. Cousar
- **What are the major points Paul is making in Galatians 3:23-29? What implications do you think this passage has related to the discussion of the role of men and women in the kingdom of God?**

Read 1 Corinthians 9:1-18

- Paul demonstrates a laser sharp focus on the effective communication of the gospel; this is his priority. He claims to choose to, "endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:12). A

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study of some of Paul's apparent "restrictions" on women appear to have a contextual basis; he gives special instruction to women in specific contexts, not because he doesn't believe women are equal partners in the gospel with the same freedom to give leadership, but because in certain circumstances exercising such freedom could create an obstacle to the gospel. Just as Paul was willing to give up his rights for the sake of the gospel, where contextually appropriate, Paul was willing to call others to suspend their rights for the sake of the gospel.

- **What "rights" do we have as Christians, walking in freedom in Jesus, that we might need to suspend in certain circumstances, or for periods of time, in order to ensure the gospel can be seen and experienced by others in an unencumbered way? Can you think of any examples that might specifically pertain to males or females?**

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

- *"Paul himself adapted the gospel to every situation he encountered: a Jewish expression for Jews, a Gentile expression for Gentiles, and a philosopher's approach when on the Areopagus. What Paul did was simple: he knew the Story and the Plot, he listened to God and was open to the Spirit, and he discerned how to live out that gospel and speak that gospel into each cultural setting. Paul's mode was renewing and always renewing." Scot McKnight*
- **In our current Canadian culture and context, what do you think Paul would have considered to be advantageous for the sake of the gospel in regards to the role of women in the church? Conversely, what postures regarding the role of women in the church would he have considered to be a barrier to the gospel in our present context? Why?**