

## WOMEN IN MINISTRY

In Tom Brokaw's book "The Greatest Generation Speaks," Veronica Mackey Hulick tells of her service during World War II. Veronica was 20 when she joined the Navy WAVES [Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service]. She and about 1500 other bright young women worked for hours at the monotonous job of wiring red, yellow, green, and blue wires to small wheels. Later, they discovered they had helped build a set of Navy computers, even though the word "computer" had not yet been introduced into the American vocabulary. These enigma machines had been invented by Alan Turing months earlier. Later the group was transferred to Washington D.C. They were all sworn to secrecy with the consequence of being shot if they leaked any information about their project. It took about 500 women each shift to run the 120 computers that they had helped to build. When they got a printout from a computer, they couldn't read it. But rather, they ripped off the printout, knocked on a door at the end of the room, and gave it to a hand that came out only long enough to grab the paper.

When the war was over, each young lady was taken into an office and had to swear on the Bible that they would never talk about their work. They were each given a letter instructing future employers not to ask about their activities during the war. It took 50 years for these women to learn of their noble efforts to end the war. In 1994, 80 of these women gathered in Dayton, Ohio for a reunion. It was then that a Navy historian told them about the fruits of their labor. They had been responsible for sinking between 750 and 800 German U-boats. They had helped to shorten the war by one or maybe even two years and had saved countless lives.

Veronica was thrilled to at last be able to tell of her work during the war, but grieved for those ladies who died never knowing the huge role they had played in the war effort. Veronica writes: "...It was a different time in our history. We were patriotic, disciplined, caring, and just so thrilled to know we were doing something special to help end the war. We never sought recognition. I always thought of us as the unsung heroines of WWII."

Today I wanted to begin by saying that some of the unsung heroes in pastoral ministry today in churches all around the world are women. I am happy for the women pastors and staff that we have as a church. A little over a week ago pastor Shirley, Bev, Natasha and Joshua were ordained through the Evangelical Association at Canada Christian College as licensed ministers in the Province of Ontario.

This did bring up the issue of women in ministry again for us as a church. What does ordination mean? What about women pastors? So today I want to address the issue of women in ministry and explain where we as a church stand biblically on this issue.

This church is part of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada. In our fellowship, the official position is that women are not to be called pastors. In fact, we are one of the only Fellowship Baptist church in Canada that I know of to have women pastors. Why is that?

There are two predominant theological positions concerning women in ministry;

### 1. The Complementarian Position

The first view is that, while men and women are equal in standing before God, they have different complementary roles in serving. Basically it says that women should serve in the church but not in the role of pastor. Women and men have different complimentary roles. This revolves around the issue of headship. In the beginning, God created men and women to be different.

We see in the fall that the relationship between men and women changed.

Genesis 3:16-19 To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." 17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

Part of the curse for women was that "your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." Through creation and the fall, men are placed in a position of headship. Men are expected to be the spiritual leaders in their homes.

Ephesians 5:21-25 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

We see this truth today in different ways. While both men and women provide spiritual leadership to their children, men do not naturally take spiritual direction well from their wives. Numerous studies have shown that, in the case of a Christian man having a non-Christian wife, the odds are that the wife will eventually come to faith. However, in the case of a Christian woman having a non-Christian husband, the odds are that the husband will not come to faith. Of course there are exceptions to this, but generally speaking men do not take spiritual leadership from women well.

When it come to women in ministry, there is one verse that is always quoted:

1 Timothy 2:11-12 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.

The complementarian argument is that, since the position of pastor is a position of spiritual authority, and since men are called to be in spiritual authority then pastors should only be men. Again, this is the view that the fellowship our church belongs to, the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada, holds to.

## 2. The Egalitarian Position

The second position says that, even though the relationship between men and women was corrupted through the fall, in Christ there is now full equality. The New Testament model is of equal submission that we are called to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

It is clear from scripture that both men and women are called to be filled with the Spirit.

Joel 2:28-29 And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

We see that, through Christ, these words given to the Prophet Joel have come to fulfillment.

Acts 2:1-4 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Since both men and women have been filled and given the gifts of the Spirit, they should both be faithfully using the gifts they have received in the church.

1 Peter 4:10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

1 Corinthians 12:7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

When I was in Seminary I had a friend who was a girl (not a girlfriend) who was in a class with me. I had heard her speak before in front of the class and she was a very gifted speaker. I told her that she should take the preaching class, but she just laughed. In the denomination that she was a part of women were never permitted to preach or speak from the front of the church. I kept encouraging her to take the preaching class and eventually she did. She won the award for best preacher that year!

In the Egalitarian position, women can hold the title pastor and serve in any role a man would serve including lead pastor and elder. There are many different denominations that hold to this view of scripture. The denomination of the church that I grew up in (Convention Baptist or Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec) would hold to this view.

So which one of these positions does our church hold?

### 3. The BBC Position

The Fellowship of Evangelical churches holds very clearly to the complementarian view. So what about our church? On the surface you would assume, since we have women pastors, that we as a church hold to the egalitarian position. That is not true. We as a church, like the rest of the fellowship, hold to the complementarian view as well. It is just that we define a few words a little differently.

Let's look at this scripture again;

1 Timothy 2:11-12 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.

On the surface this verse would seem to say that women should not have the title pastor. After all, the position of pastor is a position of authority so to have a woman pastor is to have a woman in a position of authority over men. However, there are two words here that have to first be defined.

The first is the word PASTOR.

We are part of a fellowship of churches in which the average sized church is about 100-150 people. In most fellowship Baptist churches there is only one pastor – the lead or senior pastor. In this context, the pastor is the central and key leader in the church. But is this the case in all churches? Does this mean that pastors are always the heads of the church?

The word pastor in the Greek is POIMEN which means shepherd. It refers to the role of caring and nurturing others. The bible uses different words when describing church leadership.

The word elder is the Greek word PRESBUTEROS. It refers to a spiritually mature individual who is placed in a position of leadership within the church.

Titus 1:6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

For leadership within the church, Paul also uses the word overseer or bishop, which in the Greek is the word EPISKOPE which means leader.

1 Timothy 3:1-2 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach

So how do these words relate to one another? Do they all mean the same thing? NO, they are different. There are times when these words are used interchangeably. There are times when a pastor is also an elder and overseer;

1 Peter 5:1-2 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers -- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve

However, there are clearly also times when these words do not overlap. In this church you can be a pastor without being an overseer or elder, and you can be an overseer or elder without having the title pastor. We do not give the title pastor to our elders and we do not give the title elder to our pastors.

Last year Patrick was ordained through the fellowship. He had to defend his theology but also preaching and leadership styles. It was very clear through that process that, in the eyes of the fellowship, the word pastor generally means the person who is leading the church. In other words, the lead pastor. Again, in a small church, this is usually the case.

However, we are not a small church. As churches grow the role of pastor changes. In a small church the pastor does everything. They preach, they do all the counselling, they conduct all the weddings and funerals, they help teach the children and youth... everything. When you are in a church of 100-150 people that is not difficult. However, as the church grows the pastor cannot continue to be all things to all people. Additional staff are required to do the work, and the role of pastor becomes much more specialized. Here at BBC we have a pastor of small groups, youth, children, care etc. They carry the role of pastor because that is what they do (care and nurture) but they are not elders/overseers. As a church, only the lead pastor (me) is on the Board of Elders.

So the word pastor, especially in a larger church, does not always mean elder or overseer.

The second word we need to define is the word AUTHORITY.

It says in this passage we read that “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have *authority* over a man.” What does it mean to have authority? Again, I would argue that this must mean church leadership, not individual ministry leadership. All pastors are not elders and all elders are not pastors. We have a Board of Elders who, along with the Lead Pastor, lead the church. They provide spiritual authority and leadership.

All the other pastors we have on staff provide leadership over their own individual ministries, but they all are under the authority of the elders who lead the church. As a church we believe in SHARED AUTHORITY, not INDIVIDUAL AUTHORITY. As the lead pastor I am in a position of authority, but as part of the Elders I recognize that this is a position of shared authority. I cannot just make unilateral decisions because I am part of a team. It is the team that is important.

The pastors of this church provide care and leadership to the various ministries of the church, but the ultimate authority is through the elders. Therefore, having a women pastor providing leadership to a ministry under the authority of the board of elders is perfectly fine and not a violation of scripture.

The way most Fellowship Baptist churches get around the issue of women in ministry is to give their women leaders the title of director instead of pastor. This really makes no sense to me. Being a director is still a position of authority. If you believe that women should have no individual authority over any man then they should not serve as directors because that is a position of authority (directing volunteers and telling them, including men, what to do).

As I mentioned, a week ago Pastor Bev, Shirley, Natasha and Josh were ordained through Canada Christian College. This means that they are now licenced ministers with the Province of Ontario. Basically, it means that they went through a process where they were interviewed, had their theology checked and now have a registration number which allows them to perform weddings in Ontario. Let me be clear, this was not a church ordination, it was done through an outside organization. This is very different than the ordination that Patrick went through last year where the church through the Fellowship ordained him.

Some have asked the question why we as a church are not publically ordaining them. The simple answer is that we are a Fellowship Baptist Church. Again, we are one of the only fellowship churches in Canada to have female pastors, for the reasons I have just mentioned. While we are complementarian theologically, practically we are different because we are a larger church. This has been the case for many years, long before I came to this church. We as a church have not made this an issue.

There are other churches that have made this a divisive issue with the fellowship. There are churches that are not far from here that have left the Fellowship because of the issue of women in ministry. We as a church have chosen to simply live at piece and not make this an issue. Are we still complementarian in our theological understanding of this issue? YES. Do we interpret what that means practically slightly different than other Fellowship Baptist churches? YES. Do we choose to make this a divisive issue? NO. We choose to not make this an issue.

Think of how often in scripture it is the woman who is the vehicle for ministry. Who prompted Jesus to perform His first miracle? A Woman! Who ministered to Christ during His public ministry? The women! Who anointed the body of Jesus? The women! Who stayed with Jesus throughout his trial and crucifixion? The women! Who were the first witnesses to the resurrected Savior? The women! Who makes up the majority of the population of most churches today? The women!