



Answers *for a* Changing Culture

01 Can Women Be Pastors?

Men and women are equally made in God's image and essential to Christ's church. Scripture also calls us to understand pastoral oversight according to God's design.

EMBARK

The question, "Can women be pastors?", is one of the most debated questions in the church today. For some, it sounds like a question about fairness, dignity, opportunity, or cultural change. For others, it is a question about biblical authority, church order, and obedience to Christ.

*Scripture does not treat women as less valuable, less gifted, or less necessary to the church. Women served faithfully throughout the Bible and remain essential to local church ministry. So before we answer, "Can women be pastors?" we need to ask what Scripture means by **pastor**, how that role relates to elders and overseers, and how God calls both men and women to serve His church.*

1. When people ask, "Can women be pastors?" what do you think they are usually asking underneath the question?

EXAMINE

READ Genesis 1:26-28

2. What does this passage teach about the dignity and calling of both men and women?
3. Why must we begin here before discussing different roles in the church?

READ 1 Timothy 2:11-15

4. What two activities does Paul restrict in verse 12?
5. What reason does Paul give for this instruction in verses 13-14?
6. Why does it matter that Paul grounds this instruction in creation rather than merely in local culture?
7. What are wrong ways to either use or dismiss this passage?



READ 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9

8. What kind of man must an overseer/elder be?
9. How do these qualifications connect pastoral leadership with character, teaching, and guarding sound doctrine?

READ Acts 20:17, 28 and 1 Peter 5:1-4

10. What terms are connected in these passages: elder, overseer, shepherd, or pastor?
11. What are these leaders responsible to do for the flock?
12. Why does this make it difficult to separate "pastor" from elder/overseer as a different office?

READ Romans 16:1-7, Acts 18:24-28, and Titus 2:3-5

13. What kinds of ministry do women carry out in these passages?
14. How do these examples show that women are active, valued, and necessary in the work of the church?
15. Why is "women should not serve as pastors/elders" not the same as saying "women should not minister"?

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS:

Do I instinctively judge this issue by Scripture or by cultural assumptions?

Do I believe different roles must mean different worth?

Have I treated pastoral office as the only ministry that really counts?

Do I honor the ministry of women as essential to the health of the church?

Are there ways our church could be clearer in titles and stronger in equipping women for ministry?

EXPOSE

Our struggle with this issue often reveals assumptions shaped more by culture, reaction, or fear than by Scripture.

We confuse equal value with identical roles

The Bible teaches that men and women are equally made in God's image, equally saved in Christ, and equally necessary to the church. That does not mean every role in the home or church is interchangeable.

We treat pastoral office as the only ministry that matters

If "real ministry" only happens from the pulpit or through an official title, the church has already misunderstood ministry.

We sometimes use titles in confusing ways

If pastor, elder, and overseer describe the same biblical office, then using "pastor" for someone who is not qualified or recognized as an elder creates confusion. The New Testament regularly connects pastor, overseer, and elder as descriptions of the same shepherding office.

We may resist Scripture when it challenges modern assumptions

Culture often calls role distinctions oppressive; Scripture calls us to test that assumption, not baptize it.

We may fail to honor the necessary ministry of women

A church may keep biblical boundaries and still fail to encourage, equip, and honor faithful women in ministry.

ENGAGE

Discuss these matters with your table and summarize your findings to share with the group.

Step 1: Clarify

What is the real question underneath "Can women be pastors?"

Step 2: Connect

How do Acts 20 and 1 Peter 5 help us understand the relationship between pastors, elders, overseers, and shepherding?

Step 3: Discern

How can a church uphold biblical teaching on pastoral leadership without minimizing the gifts and ministry of women?

Step 4: Apply

What is one way our church can better encourage men and women to serve faithfully within God's design?

MEMORIZE

1 Peter 5:2–3 CSB "Shepherd God's flock among you, not overseeing out of compulsion but willingly, as God would have you; not out of greed for money but eagerly; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."

Remember... *The question is not whether women matter, whether women are gifted, or whether women should minister. Scripture answers yes. The question is whether the Bible gives the pastoral office of teaching and oversight in the gathered church to qualified men. Before we answer, "Can women be pastors?" we must ask, "What is a pastor, biblically?"*

CHOOSE ONE CONCRETE STEP...

- *pray for your church's pastors/elders to shepherd faithfully*
- *thank a woman who has served Christ and strengthened your faith*
- *study 1 Timothy 2–3 and Acts 20 with humility before God*
- *encourage someone to use his or her gifts for the good of the church*
- *ask whether Scripture or culture has shaped your view of ministry*
- *look for a way to serve the church without needing title, platform, or recognition*