

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY

We believe that women are equal to men in the Kingdom of God. They bear the image of God, they receive the same Spirit, the same gifts and share the same commission to go into the world and make disciples (Galatians 3:28; Genesis 1:27; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Matthew 28:19).

We also believe that God has designed men and women differently and assigned them different roles in marriage and in certain settings within the church. It is our desire not to minimize these roles or ignore them, but to recognize they are God's design (Ephesians 5:22-33, Colossians 3:18-19).

In arriving at a position on the role of women in ministry at Westgate Church, we believe that Scripture must be our final authority on this matter and we discovered there are four primary passages that discuss this issue: Galatians 3:28, 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 1 Corinthians 14:26-35; and 1 Timothy 2:11-13.

We understand from Galatians 3:28 that the issues surrounding the woman's role in ministry have absolutely nothing to do with our standing before Christ. There is absolute equality before the throne of Christ in redemption. We do not, however, understand this verse to teach that the differences in the sexes are done away with in Christ, or that the established roles for each sex cease.

We understand from 1 Corinthians 11 that women were allowed to exercise their spiritual gifts in the public worship setting in a manner which demonstrated their submission to authority. This would include both her husband and the leadership of the church. In the first century it appears this attitude of submission was demonstrated by a veil covering her head. In our church this is accomplished by our Elders simply acknowledging a woman's godly character and recognizing her qualifications to minister.

In 1 Corinthians 14, we believe that the command for women to keep silent is not a prohibition against participation in the service, but a reference to interrupting it. Since women of the first century were not usually allowed to study the Old Testament Scriptures in depth or sit close to the speakers in the synagogue, they likely would have had a number of questions. Now, enjoying a new freedom in the church, they were frequently talking and asking questions. Paul admonishes them to stop interrupting the service and ask their husbands these questions when they get home.

In 1 Timothy 2:11-13, Scripture says that women are not allowed to teach men or have authority over them. It is our understanding that from these verses and the illustration of the order of creation, that God desires the patterns He has mandated in marriage reflected in the church.

Based on our study of these passages then, it is our position that women may be involved in ministry in any department and at any level at Westgate Church except holding the office of elder. We hold that the ultimate responsibility and authority for the leadership of WestGate Church rests in our elders. It is the expectation that elders will consistently call men and women to the higher way of following Christ as they shepherd the flock here. This would mean leadership that has the potential for confrontation and discipline. We do not believe that women should be placed in that position. She can, in cooperation with her giftedness and character, be involved at any other level of ministry here under the submission of the elders.