

# Evotional

**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> April 2008 (pm).

**Speakers:** Neil Durling.

**Message title:** “The Church is dominated by males and oppresses females.”



**Bible passage:** Galatians 3:26-29.

## **The message in brief:**

If asked to name some famous Christians down through the centuries, I guess most of us would come up with men; they tend to dominate the scene. The subject of women's involvement in church often brings *low depth* but *deep passion*.

### **Broadly speaking there are two different views to women in ministry:**

- 1: The *complementarian* view of women in ministry: Ministry roles are differentiated by gender, and they use the Scriptures to back their viewpoint. Most highly respect women, but say that women should not teach or be involved as ministers or elders (ironically, many complementarian churches will happily let a woman be a missionary and lead a church abroad!).
- 2: The *egalitarian* view of women in ministry: Equal ministry opportunity for both genders - using the Scriptures to back their viewpoint. Most highly respect women, and say women should be able to teach or be involved as ministers or elders.

In many areas of your life, the greatest examples will be females. For me; my best Doctor, best Theology Lecturer and best Sunday School Teacher were all females. And yet, in church, females are often “relegated” in their roles. Before we think we're o.k., we need to remember that our view of women is so ingrained that we take it for granted what women do / don't do. What does our church look like to a newcomer? What if someone shared Alicia's view of church from their experience at BGBC?...

“I feel the church is very sexist, yet I don't believe that Jesus was sexist. From what I have observed, women in the church basically sit in the sidelines and are only able to work with children, answer the phones, be secretaries, and serve men. They seem to be given no voice. The church seems pretty much like a boys club for adults.”

### **People cite many non-biblical reasons against women in ministry. For example:**

- “It's the tradition that I grew up with.”
- “I wouldn't want a female minister.” Some people who think this hide behind theological reasons that they don't really agree with because they don't want to be accused of being sexist.
- “A female minister will make me more feminine.” This won't happen!
- “The twelve disciples were all men. If Jesus wanted women in leadership why didn't he choose some as disciples?” Taken to its logical conclusion you could also say that they were all Jews, therefore gentiles can't be leaders either.

It seems we need to have a well-thought-out understanding of the Bible on this subject and, regardless of our viewpoint, we must be ready to talk intelligently about it. The world watches how we say what we believe as much as the beliefs we hold. Whether a *complementarian* (1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15) or an *egalitarian* (Deborah; judge and leader of the people [Judges 4-5], Philips four prophetic daughters [Acts 21:9], Lydia; leader of the church in Philippi [Acts 16:11-40] and Aquilla and Priscilla, Paul's fellow workers [Romans 16:3-5]) can I say why my point of view is valid and (just as important) why the other isn't?

If a man and a woman are both given the same Bible passage, commentaries, eight hours to study it, and they come to the same conclusion, then why can one preach and the other not?

The context of the creation narratives to the Galatians: In a pre-fallen world men and women are equal. From the beginning of his ministry Paul has championed the cause of unity in Christ. But the Galatian Christians were going back to their old rules and regulations which brought about divisions. Paul reminds them of the truth...

**You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, (26):** The Church is the bride of Christ (Revelation 19:7) but here Paul tells them they are “Sons of God”, through their union with Jesus. At this time, sons had all the rights and received the inheritance, daughters got nothing.

**for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (27):** Conversion and baptism went together in Christianity; baptism is an outward sign of an inward grace. To be clothed in Christ means to be like him. We wear Jesus as a garment and that is who God sees when he looks at us. Differences that earlier might have separated them have now disappeared because they all look like Jesus.

**There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (28):** Josephus wrote: “Woman is inferior to man in every way.” (*Contra Apion* 2:24) Jewish men would thank God in their prayers that they weren't a

pig, a gentile or a woman (in that order). In the New Testament “*there is*” always seemed to be used in the negative; therefore, the divisions mentioned are negative in God’s eyes. Moreover, in other letters of the time, only the “main” person (e.g.: Greek, free, man) is mentioned. It is radical for Paul to mention both groups here, furthermore, to put “*slave*” before “*free*” is incredible. These divides are negative and mean nothing because all are one (*heis = an entity*) in Christ Jesus. We are all one person. Charles B. Cousar writes: “Being in Christ does not do away with Jew or Greek, male or female, even slave or free, but it makes these differences before God irrelevant.”

**If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. (29):** The Judaizers had held before the Galatians legal ways of becoming the seed of Abraham. Paul says we become that seed and gain Abraham’s inheritance through belonging to Jesus.

**Question:** How do I view and treat females?

**A prayer:** Father God, thank you for removing divisions and making us one in Jesus. Amen.