

Wednesdays at West Side West Side Church

**Culture:
Its Creation, Fall and Redemption
A Case Study on Gender**

Session # 4 – The Counter-Cultural Church

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How Do We Resolve:

- **Dueling Scriptures:**
 - 1 Timothy 2:12 – “I do not permit a woman to . . .”
 - 1 Corinthians 14:34 – “Women to be silent in church”
 - 1 Corinthians 11:4-5 – but women are praying and prophesying in church!
 - Galatians 3:28 – “No male and female in Christ”
- **The Underlining Effect:**
 - Underline the verse that “speaks” to you
 - Use it as a lens to interpret others on that topic

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Our Approach

- **The Strategy:**
 - Identify all relevant N.T. passages on gender
 - Record on note cards
 - Interpret according to 1st century culture
 - Sort and re-sort – and look for patterns
- **The Criteria:**
 - Approach the New Testament as an historical document
 - “Entire Counsel of God” – all relevant Scripture texts addressing gender are included
 - Each text is considered and allowed to “speak”
 - If we do it right: The categories will reinforce each other in a way that makes sense both historically & logically

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The Emerging Pattern

- **Descriptive Texts**
 - Women in ministry or leadership activities - often in counter-cultural ways - are simply described
 - Without qualification or defense
 - Indicates these activities were common and accepted
 - Not “WWJD” but WDWD? “What **Did** Women Do?”
 - This category formed (roughly) one-half of the cards
- **A Significant Discovery** – especially compared to the typical emphasis in the church through history as well as today
- **Therefore the primary criterion for further sorting**

4

The Emerging Pattern

- Instructive Texts
 - How did the “Descriptive” activities come about?
 - A patriarchal culture; women’s roles focus on the home – *minimal* interaction with men in public
 - Identify texts that would have encouraged women
- These texts “instruct” us
 - Encouragement for women to act in these ways
 - Encouragement for men to support & welcome

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The Emerging Pattern

- Corrective Texts
 - Only two cards/texts remaining! (1 Tim. 2 & 1 Cor. 14)
 - Texts that would have discouraged women
- Justification for “Corrective” Category
 - Context: Addressing problems in one situation
 - A sharp contrast with the other two groups of texts
 - If made primary, they cannot explain the behavior, activities & values found in the other two groups
 - The Descriptive & Instructive explain the Corrective
 - New freedom and opportunity sometimes leads to problems
- Together these three categories provide a picture of “gender life” in the New Testament Church

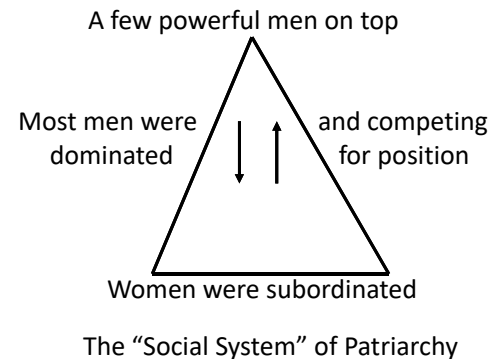
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Impact on Men by Jesus

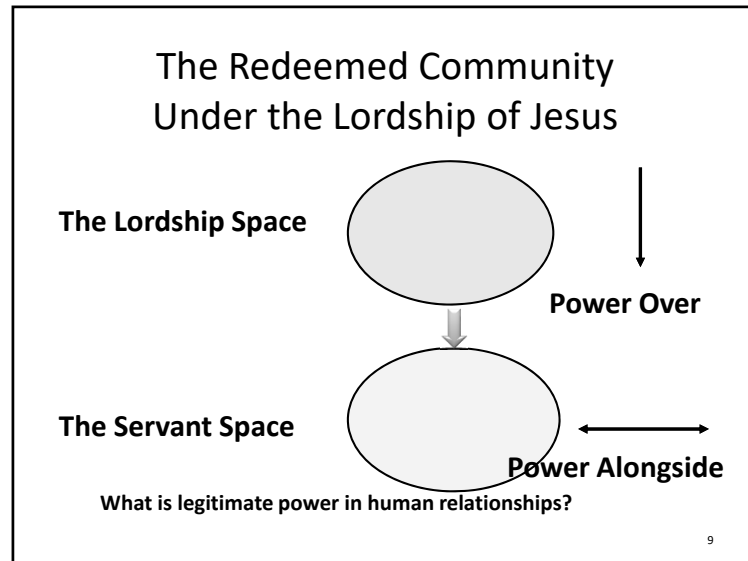
- The model for leadership is servanthood, not dominance
- The male ego must be disengaged
- Authority is necessary but also a temptation, due to the pervasiveness of the world’s approach
- Rather than “power over” others, we are to seek “power alongside” them – for their benefit & growth
- Power under Jesus’ model becomes a “positive sum” matter rather than a “zero sum” one
- We cannot understand the issue of women in ministry without first understanding the culture of the N.T world and the way in which Jesus sought to challenge men and their role in it.

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The Impact of Scarcity



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Impact on Women by Jesus

- Jesus challenges the expectations & limitations on women’s activities in traditional cultures:
 - Women as sex objects for men
 - The sexual double standard that favors men
 - Role expectations – Men in public, female at home and serving her husband
- Jesus empowers women as both disciples and proclaimers of his message
- The Risen Lord even sends a woman as a “messenger” (i.e. apostle) to the apostles!

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The Early Church

- Acts and the Letters of the Apostle Paul
- Does the emphasis we saw in the Gospels appear in the early church?
- The Framework we have identified:
 - Descriptive & Instructive – this session
 - Corrective – the next (& last) session

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Descriptive Texts

- Scripture texts that describe what women were doing
- WDWD: “What Did Women Do?”
- Acts 18:26 – Priscilla *taught* (a man!)
 - She and her husband, Aquila taught Apollos “the way of God more accurately”
 - Her name mentioned first (most times in the N.T.)
- Acts 21:9 – Philip’s four unmarried daughters *prophesied*

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Descriptive Texts – Romans 16

- Rom. 16:1-2 – Phoebe
 - “A deacon of the church in Cenchreae”
 - A “patron” a of many, including Paul
 - Bearer & interpreter of the letter to the Romans
- Rom. 16:3-4 – Priscilla & Aquilla
 - Coworkers with Paul who risked their lives for him
 - He and “all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them”

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Descriptive Texts – Romans 16

- Rom. 16:7 – Junia – an apostle (along with Andronicus)
 - “Junia” – confirmed as a woman’s name
 - Scribes & Translators have not been comfortable with this
 - Some later manuscripts changed the gender of the name
 - 13th century – change made its way into Martin Luther’s German & subsequent other Western translations
 - Some propose “well known to the apostles” (ESV)
 - Early church fathers recognized Junia as a woman apostle – in a virtually unanimous understanding (e.g., John Chrysostom [AD 349-407], Bishop of Constantinople)
 - Story of Mary Magdalene in John 20 should settle the issue of a woman sent by the Lord!

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Descriptive Texts – Others

- 1 Cor. 11:4-5 – Both men & women are praying & prophesying in the assembly
 - Paul’s only concern is their proper attire
- Phil. 4:2-3 – Euodia and Syntyche
 - Who “labored at Paul’s side in the cause of the gospel”
 - Paul counts them among his coworkers
- Rom. 16:6, 12, 13, 15 – Several women mentioned – outstanding women who had “worked hard in the Lord”

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Descriptive Texts – Summary

- Note what is missing:
 - No effort to justify, common & accepted
- Note what is present: Women are . . .
 - Recognized publicly & equally with men
- “In the Greco-Roman culture, though there were exceptions, it was not considered proper to give women public recognition,” she states, except for performing stereotypical women’s functions related to their roles as wife and mother. On the other hand, “Paul is countercultural because he commends women in the same way as men and for the same things for which he commends men”
 - Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle’s Vision for Men and Women in Christ*

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From “Descriptive” to “Instructive” Texts

- Descriptive texts raise an important question:
 - What encouraged women to do these things, and men to accept – even welcome them?
- Instructive texts “instruct the church”
 - We’ll see that the “instruction” was consistent with what was said & done by Jesus Himself

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Instructive Texts

Acts 2:17-18 – A Mark of the New Age

- Peter quotes Joel 2:28-29 on the Day of Pentecost to explain what God is doing:
 - “In the last days, God says,
 ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
 Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
 your young men will see visions,
 your old men will dream dreams.
 Even on my servants, both men and women,
 I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
 and they will prophesy.”

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Instructive Texts

- 1 Cor. 7:4-5 – Practical equality in marriage
 - Vs. 4 - The only place where “authority” is used explicitly in the marriage relationship - *reciprocal*
 - The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. (Cultural)
 - ***In the same way***, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. (Counter-cultural)
 - Vs. 5 – Decision making – *mutual*
 - Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. . . .
 - The wife does not provide “sex on demand” for her husband

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Instructive Texts

- 1 Cor. 7:7, 32-35 – God approves singleness
 - A woman’s value is not in marriage & childbearing
 - The goal is to “live in undivided devotion to the Lord”
 - Women – and men – can both do this as singles
 - (Makes clear this is a gift – not expected of everyone)
- 1 Cor. 11:11-12 – Mutual Dependence
 - Not a relationship of authority and subordination
 - In the Lord neither is independent of the other:
 - Woman was created from man, but man is born of woman
 - But all things come from God
 - This evens out the balance (a “circle of life” analogy)

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Instructive Texts

Spiritual gifts – Several Lists in the New Testament

- 1 Corinthians 12:8, 28 – for the common good
 - Wisdom, knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguish between spirits, tongues, interpretation
 - Apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, of tongues & interpretation
- Romans 12:6-8 – as functioning within the body of Christ
 - Prophesying, serving, teaching, encouragement, giving, leading, showing mercy
- Eph. 4:11-13 – to equip the saints for the work of service, to build up the body of Christ. . . .
 - Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors & Teachers
- 1 Peter 4:10-11 – to serve others
 - Speaking, serving

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Instructive Texts

- Spiritual gifts – No Gender Restrictions
 - Rom. 12 is key:
 - Paul had never visited; little shared knowledge
 - This would be the place to mention restrictions, if there were any (especially considering the gifted women mentioned in Ch. 16)
 - 1 Timothy written roughly six years later
 - I desire that **all** may prophesy (1 Cor. 14:1, 39)
 - These texts give no indication that leadership is a male function
 - The gifts are specifically given to build up the body
 - Men cannot say to gifted women, “I have no need of you” (applying/paraphrasing 1 Cor. 12: 21)

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Instructive Texts

- Gal. 3:26-28
 - ²⁶ So in Christ Jesus you are all children [sons] of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile [Greek], neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
 - Baptism sets women in relation to Christ in precisely the same way that it does for men (the same for Jew & Gentile, slave and free)
 - All are equally members of the same family!

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Instructive Texts

- Gal. 3:28 – What’s the Point?
 - Background
 - A Jewish synagogue prayer: “Thank you God that I was not created a Gentile, a slave or a woman”
 - Instructive in what this text explicitly **rejects**:
 - Pride in maleness, in racial/ethnic background, and in social-legal status
 - Instructive in what this text explicitly **affirms**:
 - Neither ethnic/racial, social/legal, nor sexual distinctions are valid for determining the status of those “in Christ”

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Instructive Texts

- Gal. 3:28 – Are there social & ethical implications?
 - Neither Jew nor Greek/Gentile
 - Gal. 2:11-14 – Paul calls it hypocrisy when Peter withdraws from eating with Gentiles – “they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel”
 - Eph. 2:11-22 – reconciled through the cross – which put to death the hostility
 - Neither Slave nor Free
 - Eph. 6:9 – Masters & slaves have the same Lord, who does not show favoritism
 - Phile 15-16 – Philemon to receive Onesimus back, “no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother”
 - Nor Male and Female – What we’re seeing here!

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Instructive Texts

- How do we achieve this practically?
- An underlying principle
 - “God’s work of reconciliation is disruptive to those who occupy positions of status and power, but liberating for the marginalized.” (Mark Husbands, Wheaton, Hope & Northwestern Colleges)
 - Relevance to Jew/Greek, free/slave, & male/female
 - Gal. 2 – Peter & the Gentiles; Philemon & Onesimus
 - Relevance to Mark 10:35-45 & John 13:2-10
- Do Christians today have difficulty with this?
- A practical example – the Roman Household

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The Christian Household

- Eph. 5:21-6:9
 - ²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ, ²² wives, [submit yourselves] to your own husbands as you do 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 ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

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The Christian Household

- Eph. 5:21-6:9 (continued)
 - ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰ for we are members of his body. ³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”
 - ³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

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The Christian Household

- Eph. 5:21-6:9 (continued)
 - ¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— ³ “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”
 - ⁴ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

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The Christian Household

- Eph. 5:21-6:9 (continued)
 - ⁵ Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. ⁶ Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. ⁷ Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, ⁸ because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.
 - ⁹ And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

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“Mutual Submission” (Eph. 5:21)

- Eph. 5:21-6:9 – “See! Nothing Changes!” (?)
 - Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord
 - Children, obey your parents in the Lord
 - Slaves, obey your masters with respect and fear
 - “Men are not told to submit to the others!”
- Change begins with those in positions of privilege, status and power
 - Eph. 5:29-6:9 – The impact on the man as husband, father and master

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“Mutual Submission” (Eph. 5:21)

- Eph. 6:9 – Impact on the master:
 - Treat slaves the same way; do not threaten
 - Has the same master as his slave – the Lord, who does not show favoritism – relativizes his authority & power
- Eph. 6:4 – Impact on the father:
 - To raise his children - not to serve him and increase the family honor (i.e., for his own interest) but:
 - To not provoke his children to anger
 - To bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord

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“Mutual Submission” (Eph. 5:21)

- Marriage in Roman times:
 - Arranged marriages with a man in his late 20s or early 30s & wife in her early teens
 - Marriage typically not companionate (little or no emotional intimacy)
 - Wives to produce heirs (particularly sons) and manage the household
- Eph. 5:25-31 – Impact on the husband:
 - Love (“agape”) wife as self/Christ loved the church
 - Give himself up (sacrifice) for her
 - Nourish (care for) her & make her glorious & radiant
 - Leave father & mother for her (change first priority)

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“Mutual Submission” (Eph. 5:21)

- Submit: “to place yourself below the other”
- *Head & Body*: A metaphor of sharing life
 - Eph. 1:9-10 to unite: Greek “kephale”=head, “anakephale”=head up or unite/bring unity
 - Eph. 1:22 God placed (subjected – active of passive/ middle submit) everything under Christ’s feet for the church (Christ raises the church to reign with Him)
 - Eph 4:15 The church submits to her head, Christ, for growth, maturity and love
 - Eph. 5:23ff Christ as head of the body is compared to Savior (life-giver), not Lord – and how the husband accomplishes the results of 4:15

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A Core Value of the Church

In a very hierarchical culture . . .

- Phil. 2:3 (based on the example of Christ)
 - “Value others as better than (or above) yourselves”
- *Rom. 12:10*
 - “Be devoted to one-another in love; honor one another above yourself”
- 1 Peter 5:5
 - “All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another”
- Eph 5:21
 - “. . . Submitting to one another in the fear of Christ, wives to your husbands . . .”

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Instructive Texts

- Paul’s “pursuit of radical self-humiliation”
 - His suffering and weakness – 2 Cor. 11:21-12:10
 - Ch. 10-12 – His challenge to the false apostles (who are exercising culturally expected dominance)
- His authority from the Lord is to “build up and not to tear down,” in contrast to dominance
 - 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10 – Greek “Exousia” (usual word in N.T.)
 - Theme of servanthood in leadership pervades his writings (1 Cor. 9:19-23)
- Could authority be misused/abused?
 - 1 Tim. 2:12 “A women/wife not to have *authority* over a man/husband”
 - Greek “*Authentein*” – *which includes idea of dominance.*
- Next week: The “Corrective” texts (and more)!

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