

Royer: One of the most wonderful things about working together as the body of Christ is seeing how everyone's gifts contribute.

Helvig: Yes, and gender is never mentioned in the passages about spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:4 and 7 says

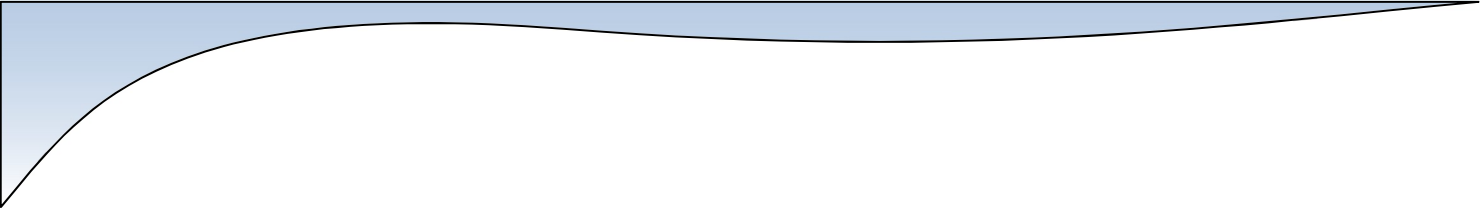
There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 1 Corinthians 12:4,7

Are spiritual gifts different for men and women?

Dallaire The Holy Spirit throughout Scripture has never favored one gender over the other. So, all the gifts and the abilities and the miracles and the supernatural abilities, divine abilities, that are given to humans by the Holy Spirit are never given because one is a male or female.

Stackhouse It's often asked "Why does God give gifts to women that they can't use?" And my complementarian friends will say "She can use it, she just can't use it for mixed audiences or over the age of puberty. Or something. They are welcome to teach, but they can teach just mixed groups when they're young, or they can teach mixed groups when they're older so long as their husband approves or the elders approve." Actually there's all these ways of kind of fudging the system. Have the courage of your convictions. If you really think women should keep silent, then don't have any more women singing in your church in congregation or front. If you don't think women should not teach men, then women should not teach men, at all, don't have them teach. That includes books by women, and women who come in as famous conservative speakers. Nope. Either have the courage of your convictions or re-assess those convictions.

M. Thompson I think if women aren't exercising all the gifts they are given by God, we all miss out. And I think we all miss out because God created us male and female together. This is who we are as human beings. In Christ we are re-created, men and women together in Christ. In Christ, there is no male or female. And, just as Jesus brings together Jew and Gentile, Jesus re-creates out of creation that new unity of male and female. So, in order to image both God's good creation and the re-creation in Christ, we need men and women side by side. And if we don't have that, we all miss out of that wonderful picture of what redeemed humanity is supposed to look like.



J. Thompson 3:38:15 – 3:55:14 I can't think of anything more tragic than to squander someone's gifts. When in fact they're not just avocations. They're not just hobbies. But they really are who the person is called to be. God's given her a word. Why would you not want to hear it?

Royer: There are many gifted women. But often they are prevented from being pastors.

Helvig: And that has a profound impact on the local church.

Should women be pastors?

Pierce The question of women being in a pastoral role, I think first of all has to step back one notch and ask "What does it mean to be a pastor?" The role of pastor is serving a congregation. And in the New Testament we don't know anything about a senior pastor. We know about a plurality of leaders. And, I think it would be perfectly OK, in fact, I think it's important for women to have a voice in the leadership of the church along-side of men. Rather than asking who gets the hierarchical position over another. If men and women bring different things to the table, whether that's by virtue of our creation or our cultural background, then it is critical we have both voices at the table. Or otherwise, the church is not being served in the best way it can be served. So, it's not just OK for women to be in church leadership, we need men and women together in church leadership.

For Paul, the church was the people of God, the new community, and he is calling men and women, like he called Jews and Gentiles to be side by side with none of the old restrictions, privileges or disadvantages.

Dallaire If I want to understand what a pastor is, I have to go to the Old Testament, the Lord is my shepherd. A pastor is a shepherd. And what does a shepherd, a pastor do? A pastor comforts. A pastor leads a flock. A pastor protects. A pastor provides. And all of the things are very much things that women do, naturally.

Groothuis If you think there is a hierarchy, where men are above women and this is God's intent and God's design, then women who have the same gifts as men are not allowed to express them. For example, let's say a woman is hired as a connecting pastor at a church and she is considered a pastor and she is a leader in some respects. But, the church says "But, you're not allowed to preach." And let's say that woman won a preaching award at her school. And she's not allowed to preach. That doesn't make any sense. Because if she has this gift, and she's biblical, and she's filled with the Spirit, and she loves the church, and she's trying to reach the world, then why should she not preach? At my school, Denver Seminary, several years ago women won the preaching award, in fact two years in a row, women won the preaching award. And it was not affirmative action. They were the best. There's no question. So, I know that women can be very gifted in teaching and preaching the Scriptures.



How can we encourage women in ministry?

Thulson There are several ways where I think pastors, like myself, can encourage women in their leadership and their teaching. One, of course, is to teach what the New Testament has to say about this. But then, even more important, in a sense, is to model this. So, in our church right now, for example, we have women elders who serve as leaders, including the last chair of our church, who was a woman, and did a beautiful job. We also have a preaching team that includes women.

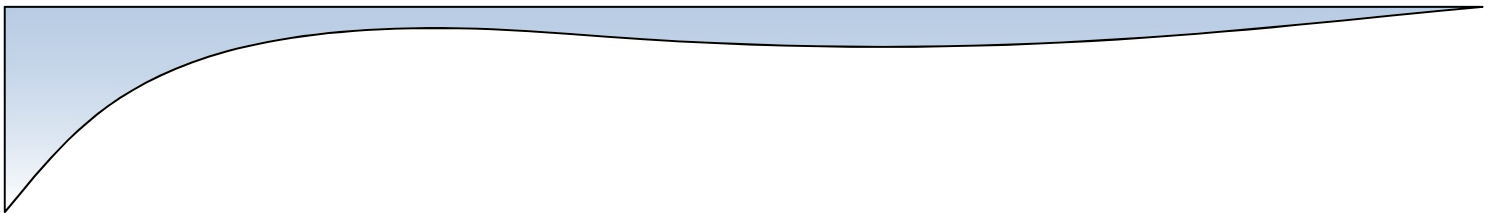
Dallaire I encourage our women, who are in the Master of Divinity program, who believe they have a call on their lives. I encourage them to just keep moving forward. God will open the door and don't get discouraged if there is one door that is closed. Maybe it's not the right time for you to be in that context. Keep trusting God. Keep walking with the Lord and you can't go wrong. There's no other way, like he said "Who else should we follow? You're the one who has the words of everlasting life." So, let's just keep going with Jesus and he'll open the doors for you.

J. Roese Well, I'm a pretty good preacher. And it started causing a bit of a turmoil in our church. Because the men wanted to come to our Bible Study. And then the men would ask the men's pastor why his Bible Study wasn't as good as our Bible Study. And then the women wanted to know why Jackie wasn't preaching from the front. And then our senior pastor needed a fill in. The only person on staff who was really skilled and had the education happened to be embodied in a female body.

Our elders decided to re-visit the issue of whether women could preach from the pulpit. They gathered together a dinner and invited women leaders from all over the metroplex. And said to us "We're not here to debate the text. We're not here to put you down. We just want to know your story. And one by one women shared. And you've done this long enough to know the stories, right? "My dad said I 'could do anything' until I got in the church. I was never invited into a meeting. I was never given the funds to run the ministry. I was disregarded, devalued, ignored, invisible, on and on." And some of them cried. And that set the tone. Because you can argue the text, but when you know somebody and you love them and you care about them, you're willing to ask and put on another glass, another lens, right, and say, let me at least consider another perspective.

In August, I was invited to be the first female preacher of that church in 40 years. Now mind you this church was birthed out of DTS pros etc. and so this was kind of a big deal in Dallas, Texas. One of the senior pastors of a mega church north of us got wind that I was going to preach and he sent out a letter to all the pastors in the metroplex saying that it was time to have a conference on the role of women in the church because a church down south of him was going liberal. Somebody called the newspaper and they recorded this pastor saying this church was cancer, liberal, brother church mind you.

I preached. I had a bodyguard that stood next to me for three services and the news was there, TV was there, and our church really did well with it. The men in my church stood by me. I felt like the elders let me come



underneath their wings and took a lot of punches for me. My husband stood in front of me and took the punches. And, my brothers loved me well inside that church.

And I saw what it looks like for mutuality to happen. And we were a better church because we had women and men together. We were really doing sister/brotherhood from that point on. It was beautiful.

Royer: It is beautiful to see everyone gladly serving in the church with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Helvig: Our next session addresses what the Bible says about marriage relationships. We will hear about submission, decision making and whether mutuality threatens manhood.