

Sermon #2 “Every Member Ministry” 21SEP25

Eph 4:16 (p1175) *“From him (Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work”.*

- Last Sunday we saw in our Bible overview of men and women,
 - two golden threads that run throughout the Bible.
 - We saw that men and women
 - are totally **equal**
 - in value dignity and worth in God’s eyes in Creation,
 - in fallenness, pride and rebellion,
 - in rescue from sin and its curse through Christ to be part of his bride, the church, and are...
 - heirs together of a wonderful future in the new creation.
 - We also saw that there are **differences** between the sexes
 - Not just in our physical and psychological make up but in role:
 - **Within marriage**- husbands to sacrifice and wives to submit
 - (something I tried to show was deeply misunderstood, but actually a very glorious pattern when a husband lays down his life for his wife, and she voluntarily yields to his lead as Jesus does with his Father).
 - But also **within the church**, which we’ll see more of. Next week I’ll be showing why I believe the Bible teaches that the overall pastor and the elders of a church should be a man.
- Today however, we’re going to look at a few verses that emphasise the various ministry roles that are open to **both** men and women.
 - Hence our title on this partnership Sunday, “Every member ministry”.

Let’s pray for God’s help as we look at his word. **PRAY.**

- The first passage that we start with today is **Ephesians 4**, which Rebekah read to us. Do make sure you have it open (p1175).
 - It’s a passage we have looked at before in our series on the Church.
 - But it’s a hugely important one on the theme of what we call “every member ministry” or the “priesthood of all believers”.
- It’s a passage about **unity** in **diversity** for **service**.
- **Unity** (v1-6)- did you see the 7x “one’s” there: *One body, one spirit, one hope, one lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father*.
 - The church is to be one because God is one.
 - Father, Son and Spirit, different persons in one God.
 - And in his image, we are (v3) to make every effort to maintain the unity that the Holy Spirit gives.
 - That’s an important reminder to work at our unity on this topic.

- The church is the beginnings of what God is doing with the universe!
- He's uniting all things together under Christ!
- Did you know where the universe is going? United under Christ.
- **Unity** but, like God, the united in **diversity**.
 - God has given different gifts to different people.
 - First the word gifts that we will return to: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers.
 - And they are v11 to "equip his people for works of **service**,
 - So that v12 "the body of Christ may be built up". [cf 1 Cor 12]
- **Unity in diversity** for **service**.

And that brings us to our first point today.

1) MEN AND WOMEN ARE TO BE INVOLVED IN SERVING

- As we hear God's word preached on a Sunday, as we read our Bibles day by day, the whole church should be energised & motivated to serve one another.
 - And Paul is talking here about the whole body, all God's people being equipped for works of service, **men and women**.
 - That's what I'm praying for today as we hear this sermon.
 - We'll all think "how can I get stuck in?" Is there more I can do?
- ▲ It's often been said that church can be like a football game, where a few people are doing all the hard work and getting exhausted, while the rest of the people are like the crowd, sitting back and watching.
 - Thankfully it's not like that at CCH.
- I look at the rota on a Sunday and today there are at least 25 different people serving in different roles, let alone all the informal acts of service over lunch, the chats on the way out, the little catch ups
 - "how has the start of term been going for you?"
 - "any news on your op?"
 - "do you need a meal, or help with the kids so you can get a break?"
 - "can I mop that up for you!"
- **Men and women are to be involved in serving.**
 - If you haven't joined a team yet, or offered to help on the rota have a word with Charis afterwards.
 - If you want to provide a meal for someone, there are still several people in or outside our church we'd love to help.
 - If as you look at your timings for a new term, you discover you could do a couple of hours a week unpaid admin for CCH or paid for the Cambridge Gospel Partnership, let us know.
- But it gets bigger, as we see more formal church roles for men and women.
- Flick back to Paul's letter to the Romans chapter 16 (page 1142).
 - Some people have a view of Paul as a lone ranger, solo operator, cold and calculating, and certainly cold towards women.

- That couldn't be further from the truth.
- As he finishes his letter to the Romans he signs off with a massive list of greetings to and from his fellow workers.
 - And LOADS of them are women.
- He specifically speaks of them as “fellow workers in Christ Jesus”, including female fellow workers.
- This has to qualify our understanding of the complementary roles of men and women, particularly for those who come from a background where traditionally women aren't seen as church workers.
- Because the first on the list is Phoebe.
 - Romans 16:1 *“I commend to you our sister, Phoebe, a deacon (or servant or minister) of the church in Cenchreae”*
 - And as you can tell from the footnotes, there's obviously debate about how people understand Phoebe's role, (the Greek word is *diakonos*).
 1. Was she a “**servant**” in an informal use of the word, serving the church generally, for example by carrying the letter (though that actually meant a huge amount of responsibility).
 2. Was she a “**deacon**”- after all there is a good case to make from 1 Timothy 3 that women can take that formal office in the church.
 3. Was she the “**minister**” of the church there, ie its pastor and preacher though that would have to be measured against other passages.
 - If you want to dig a bit deeper, on the door are 20 copies of Church Society's Crossway magazine¹ which last spring focused on this topic.
 - And in there there's an article about Phoebe.
 - I think the second one makes the most sense, she was a deacon, in a formal or semi-formal role within the church.
 - And within our Anglican tradition within AMiE women can be ordained to the role of Deacon (see the Dig Deeper sheet for a paper on this from AMiE²).
 - Deacons don't necessarily preach but have a senior leadership position alongside men serving the church.
 - Well wherever we end up with Phoebe, and I commend to you that article, she is a great example of a woman who served, [like our own Phoebe who is helping in the kids work today].
 - It's also great to have Beth in full time paid employment in our church doing the brilliant work she does among children, youth and families.
 - We'll be hearing from her a bit at the Q&A discussion evening, where she'll also be on the panel.
- **Men and women are to be involved in serving.** Lay or full time. Next....

¹ <https://www.churchsociety.org/resource/crossway-spring-2025/>

² See the 2024 AMiE paper on Anglican Orders which can be found at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cJwAYSTzuxmRGd65HJ6vu01huliGo1CX/view?usp=sharing>

2) MEN AND WOMEN ARE TO BE INVOLVED IN PRAYING

- This will be a short point, (and perhaps not a very controversial one), but both men and women are to be involved in praying.
 - Since each member of the body of Christ (male or female) has the incredible privilege of access to our heavenly Father, we can equally come to talk to him with all our prayers and requests. Wow!
 - So we shouldn't be surprised to read in **Acts 1:14** that *"All these <men> with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers"*.
 - But this is not just in private or in a small group, in Corinth Paul specially addresses both Men and Women praying in the church gatherings.
 - So **women**, we love it when you volunteer to do the prayers in church.
 - It takes a bit of time to prepare
 - And possibly a bit of bravery
 - But you aren't being tested for theological soundness
 - You are leading the family in talking to our Heavenly Father.
 - Make sure you consider ticking the box on the rota availability survey to do the prayers- you'll be given lots of help, and could even team up with a friend.
 - And **men**, just in case we are tempted to take a back seat in prayer,
 - And find ourselves strangely busy on the 2nd Wednesday of the month when we can make all the other Wednesdays.
 - or mysteriously sleepy in our quiet times, can I remind you of Paul's desire in **1 Timothy 2:8** *"Therefore I want the **men** everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing"*.
 - Not only is that Bible permission to raise our hands in worship, but a reminder, that while men often want to use their fists for a fight, we should use them in the much more powerful/**crucial** exercise of prayer. Take a copy of the prayer diary home with you. Prayer is something we can do even when we can't do much else. ///
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- OK we've talked about **serving** and **praying**, but what about **speaking?** didn't Paul say something about the women being silent in church?
 - He did- please turn in your bibles to 1 Cor 14:34-35 (page1155)
"Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says, if they want to enquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in church". Phew-deep intake of breath!
 - Now 1 Cor 11-14 is part of a long section on the use of gifts in the church and good order in church. And in it's a passage that raises lots of questions.

- Here are just some of those questions (on the screen)...
(leaving aside for a moment the issue of charismatic gifts³)
 1. In a verse like that, isn't Paul being demeaning or condescending to women?⁴
 2. Isn't all of this section just culturally bound to the 1st Century anyway⁵.
 3. And if we really took this section of the Bible seriously & consistently (see 1 Cor 11) we'd be insisting that women wear hats in church?⁶
 4. *IS this total silence for women in church*
- Now the short answer to all of those questions is **no**.
- If you want the longer more nuanced answers,
 - then download my sermon notes on the **website**,
 - you'll find some longer answers and some resources in the footnotes.
 - and do come and chat where these are important to you,
- But since this is a sermon not a book, I want to get to our 3rd main point....

3) MEN AND WOMEN ARE TO BE INVOLVED IN SPEAKING

- Yes there are circumstances when the women need to listen (and we'll come to them), but (to answer the last question) it's not an absolute ban on speaking because it's made in the context of everything else that Paul says here,
 - not least 1 Cor 11:5 (please turn back to p1152) *"And every woman who prays or prophesies"*.
 - And look at 1 Cor 14:3 for a description of how prophecy works. *"But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort"*.
 - Prophecy is a part of Bible preaching and teaching⁷
 - But it can also be contained within the kind of
 - **Encouragement** that goes on in chats after church
 - **Testimony** that happens within church
 - **Discussion** that happens within a homegroup.
- Which is why we encourage women to be involved in all of these as much as they can. In fact that passage we started with in Ephesians 4, all of God's people are to *"speak the truth in love so that we grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head that is Christ"* (Eph 4:15).

³ See our Seminar (during Covid!) on [the Holy Spirit](#) for a fuller treatment of gifts, prophecy and tongues.

⁴ No, God speaks through him as an apostle, so even if we find it strange or uncomfortable, we need to humbly submit ourselves to it asking for the Spirit to speak to us even though our culture has changed since. Read Scripture with Scripture (especially 1 Cor 11:5) and we see Paul isn't prohibiting any female involvement in a service. See [Isaiah 66:2](#) and [2 Tim 2:7](#) and for the right attitudes to Scripture.

⁵ No there are principles here which map across to all cultures. Yes that takes care. We'll see more next week.

⁶ See <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/should-women-wear-head-coverings/> by Benjamin Merkle.

⁷ Yes there's a debate about exactly what prophecy is in the New Testament church (as opposed to the kind of Jeremiah prophecy that brought the Old Testament into being) too! I am a cautious continuationist, believing that God speaks through his written word the Bible, but that he can direct our Bible laden encouragement sometimes in supernatural ways to bring his word to bear in stunning application.

- And as Paul says to all the congregation in Colosse (including the women) *“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts”*. (Colossians 3:16).
- Men and women are to be involved in **speaking to one another**.
- I think that was the big personal lesson for me as we read this book **“Embracing Complementarianism”** by Graham Beynon and Jane Tooher⁸ as a staff team in preparation for this series.
 - It brought home to me the rich value of men and women ministering the gospel to one another across the sexes.
 - Yes there’s a place for single sex groups for focused applied teaching and accountability, but there’s something rich about men and women with their different perspectives and experiences digging into God’s word together and applying it to one another’s lives.
- But as well as informal speaking encouragement, what about formal teaching?

4) MEN AND WOMEN ARE TO BE INVOLVED IN TEACHING

- Well the teaching word was actually used of all the congregation in our last verse from Col 3:16 so it looks like teaching is part of that corporate every member word ministry.
 - And the word is used in Titus 2:3 specifically of the women. *“Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to **teach** what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God”*.
 - Older women are to teach younger women.
 - This can happen in all sorts of settings in church including formal talks.
 - Older women are there at the Tuesday women’s bible study to share wisdom.
 - Jean did a great talk at the craft event last Christmas.
 - Emma studied at Bible college for 3 years alongside Aussie trainee vicars, and she’s got some great talks up her sleeve for women both in evangelism and encouragement.
- And while I do believe the NT stops short of having female elders and pastors, men and women can be involved in a teaching ministry in contexts other than Sunday preaching
- This can include writing, discipling, small group work, and pastoral work...
- Take **Priscilla and Aquila** for example- their names were mentioned as fellow workers next in that list in Romans 16 after Phoebe.

⁸ [“Embracing Complementarianism- Turning Biblical convictions into positive Church culture”](#), Graham Beynon & Jane Tooher, Good Book Company.

- In the book of Acts (acts 18:16), there's a man called **Apollos**.
- He was a Jew who was steeped in the bible, was very eloquent and was already preaching accurately about Jesus.
- But his understanding was deficient and when Priscilla and Aquila heard him speak, they took him aside and both of them explained to him the way of God more accurately.
- In fact with Priscilla's name mainly coming first it's possible that she did most of the talking and was perhaps the more theologically clued up one.
- Do you see that rather than discouraging women from speaking about their faith, the Bible encourages it, as it does the men?

As we come to a close in this second sermon, I hope you can see that even for a church like ours, that does believe that men should take a lead as elders and preachers, there are a huge number of ministries, including word ministries that are open to all the men and women of the congregation .

- In this book "Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood" (a reference book on this topic), John Piper one of the editors, lists at least 88 different ministries (from counselling to care ministries from writing to mission initiatives) that are open to women.
- Different churches (even with the same theology) will come to slightly different places on the few ministries that they reserve only for men, and we'll look at those next week. But there's so much to do!
- But for now- the message is, men, women, "How can I get stuck in" in using the gifts God has given us in building up the church?
 - For some you are new to the Christian faith completely. I hope you've seen something of the adventure of serving Jesus today. Your first step is to read a gospel or join a course like Christianity Explored to find out whether you agree that he is worth serving. Let us know if we can help.
 - For others, you are already serving him, but you've got pretty weary from life (and to be honest church), and you don't think you can do any more. Well, we recognise that people regularly need to review their serving like they do their giving. And for some, your health or your mental health or your work may mean you can't do as much as others. That's fine. Don't feel bad about others serving you!
 - But can I encourage all of us to serve not because I, the pastor, am watching (and you may or may not get an email thank you afterwards), not because you are doing it to impress others, but because you are doing it to serve Jesus who has so marvellously served you.

Let's pause and think about that for a few moments in quiet, before we sing a couple of songs together in glorious harmony about what the church is and can be.