

From the Elders

Summation of Listening Group #1

On October 9, 2016, the Glenwood elders hosted the first listening group of our congregational study of women's roles in the church. First of all, thank you so much for your willingness to share your praises and concerns with us. As a family, we need to listen to one another, and you honored us with your presence and your words.

There were many questions asked during the listening group, and we believe most, if not all, of those questions will be answered as we progress through our study. Some of the questions, such as "Where is this study taking us?" are impossible to answer at this stage. We have committed to study together and to discern together where God might be leading us. We ask you to be patient and prayerful as we move forward together.

The listening session also surfaced a handful of questions that we believe are possible to answer now. Knowing that many members of our family might have similar questions, we thought it might be helpful to use this space to offer brief responses to some of those questions.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GLENWOOD CHURCH OF CHRIST / NOVEMBER 2016

Question: *The video shown on October 9 of Jeff Childers was helpful in setting the stage for our study and for showing the multiple viewpoints related to any study of women in the church. If we were unable to see the video during our combined adult class or if we would like to see it again, is there a place we can see it now?*

Absolutely! The video was recorded during the 2014 Pepperdine Bible Lectureship, and it has been on YouTube since that time. You may access that video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmDIBZzq9dg>. Also, know that this video as well as a seemingly endless number of resources on this topic have been collected and placed on Glenwood's website here: <http://glenwoodchurch.com/resources/women-in-the-church>. This site contains articles, books, chapters, and videos representing many viewpoints on this issue. We pray these resources will bless you as you engage this topic during your own individual study.

Question: *If we have questions about the video, when will we have a time to address those questions?*

There will be many times throughout our study for folks to engage in dialogue about this topic. One of the first occasions will occur during the weekend of November 4–6 when Ken Cukrowski, Dean of the College of Biblical Studies at ACU, will join us. Ken has spoken all over the country on this issue and has written extensively on this topic. During his sessions, there will be a considerable amount of time dedicated to questions and answers. We have seen Ken teach on this topic numerous times; he is a teacher at heart. We believe he will do a wonderful job of answering all of our technical questions about the Bible and practical questions about how he has seen this issue addressed in numerous churches across the country.

Additionally, we, the elders, will host several focus groups in the spring of 2017. These gatherings will allow all of us to dialogue about this topic after having gone through extensive personal and congregational study on this topic. We believe it will be best if we delay our conversations until we all have had the opportunity to study this topic together in greater detail. We look forward to those times of dialogue with you.

Question: *Will only one viewpoint be expressed during our study?*

No. The task force was given specific instructions to help us engage in a thorough study. We hope that the video shown on October 9 will testify to that reality. Just as the other speakers will do, Jeff Childers presented multiple viewpoints in his presentation, allowing us to see the pros and cons of those positions.

In an attempt to find the best qualified teachers on these topics, the task force sent inquiries to numerous colleges associated with Churches of Christ, including ACU, Harding, Oklahoma Christian University, and Lipscomb University. Members of the Bible faculty at each of these institutions sent us their recommendations for possible speakers. As you will see, the speakers come from different schools. Rather than trying to convince us to adopt their specific viewpoint, each speaker will provide the evidence on all sides of the issues in question.

We acknowledge this study is a difficult one, which is why we are attempting to be deliberate, thorough, balanced, and thoughtful about our congregational process. We hope you are praying for discernment as we are!

Question: *Knowing the potential disunity a study like this one can cause, why are we even studying it?*

First, know that the unity of Christ's church is extremely important to us. We grieve any time one of our brothers or sisters decides to leave our family over this or any other issue. We value relationships in a deep way. In fact, Glenwood has always valued our relationships with each other, which makes a time such as this so difficult for some of us. We do not enjoy disagreement!

We believe, however, that the church has never shied away from difficult topics of discussion. Our New Testament bears witness to that fact as the earliest Christians debated what to do about Gentiles in the church. Other Christians throughout the centuries have together studied other challenging topics, such as the Trinity, slavery, fellowship between different Christian denominations, divorce, and whether or not the church should support Christian colleges or children's homes with their budgets. Each of these issues (and so many more) presented significant challenges to church unity. Nevertheless, each time, faithful men and women searched the Scripture and listened to the Spirit for guidance. We are committed to that same path.

No one, least of all your shepherds, enjoys conflict. Nevertheless, we know that sometimes conflict is unavoidable in life, including life in the church. Ultimately, conflict is an important ingredient for growth, and we pray God uses our time of discomfort to deepen our trust of Him and our relationships with each other.

Question: *Are other congregations studying this topic?*

Yes. In fact, as evidenced from our conversations with other elders and ministers of congregations across the country at lectureships or other gatherings associated with Churches of Christ, it is apparent that this issue is being discussed by dozens, if not hundreds, of other congregations right now. Additionally, numerous congregations within our fellowship have already studied this issue. Some of those have made significant changes to their worship assemblies; others have made no changes at all. Books written by Churches of Christ authors, sermons presented at our lectureships over the past decade, and conversations with countless church leaders all bear witness to the fact that the study of women in the church is taking place all around us.

We believe this is not a conversation Glenwood can ignore. And, in fact, Glenwood has engaged this topic in varying degrees for the past two decades. Even though such a topic has the potential to cause increased anxiety, we believe, along with many leaders of sister congregations, that it is time to engage this topic through an in-depth study of God's Word.