

BIBLICAL GENDER DISTINCTIONS at Medway Community Church

At Medway Community Church (MCC) we believe that God has designed men and women with distinct roles for the life of the church. If a church fails to effectively mobilize either men or women for the Gospel, the church is wasting at least half its resources. Therefore, we desire to be faithful to Biblical distinctions in gender, while simultaneously respecting the God-given dignity of men and women.

Q: At MCC, do you believe the Bible teaches women are functionally the same in everything but physiology, or does the Scripture draw additional differences?

A: In contemporary language, there are essentially two views related to gender roles. The first view is called *egalitarian*, and understands men and women to be largely identical aside from anatomy. The second view, and the one MCC holds, is *complementarian*. Complementarians believe that men and women were created to be precisely equal in dignity and standing before God, yet distinct in the spiritual roles for which God has designed and equipped us.

Q: So what are the distinctions that Scripture draws for gender differences?

A. Primarily, there are two: one relates to life in the home, and one relates to life in the local church.

- *In the home:* Ephesians 5 teaches us that men are appointed to the role of Christ-like servant for their wives, leading the family with a humility, sacrifice, and self-forgetfulness that mirrors the love Jesus has for his church. Wives, likewise, are called to graciously honor their husband's leadership; never in a servile manner to be sure, but rather in such a way that a wife reflects the church's honor of Christ.
- *In the local church:* Scriptures like 1 Timothy 2-3 and 1 Peter 3 teach that in the church, women are invited and encouraged to serve in all the various areas of church life, save the role that carries a spiritual authority over the church body. Put simply, the Bible appears to reserve the role of pastor/elder for males only.

Q: At MCC, you are a two office church: elders (which include the pastors) and deacons. Are women invited to be deacons, and if so why?

A. Yes, we believe the office of deacon is Biblically open to both men and women. The reason is two fold:

- *Spiritual authority versus physical care:* the role of elder is designed for spiritual oversight and authority of the church family (caring for spiritual needs). In contra-distinction, the role of deacon is focused on mercy ministry to the local church community (caring for physical needs).
- *Clear Biblical precept:* Faithful Christians can and do disagree on the role of women as deacon. 1 Timothy 3, in the context of a discussion on deacons, uses a Greek word (*gunaikos*) that could be translated either "wives" or "women," therefore leaving an interpretive question. In addition, Romans 16 references a woman named Phoebe as a *diakanoi*, raising a translation question of "servant" or "deacon". Given honest questions like these, MCC chooses to leave the office of deacon open to either gender.

Q: Okay, so Scripture draws gender distinctions for the family and the church. Does MCC believe that the Scripture teaches gender difference in other spheres (for instance, women in politics or business leadership)?

A. No. There is no instruction in the Bible that would limit a woman's role in secular vocation, where the question of spiritual oversight does not exist.

Q: At MCC, are women invited to serve in leadership roles with various committees, small-groups, or Community Groups?

A. Yes they are. We see no Biblical conflict when a woman leads ministry teams and committees, or when she facilitates small-group & community group discussions. Aside from formal, Scriptural teaching

(exegetical instruction), or the authoritative exposition of God's word within a mixed gender worship context (i.e. preaching, 1 Timothy 2:11-14), women are welcome to lead various gatherings (including where men and women participate).

Q: So just how big a deal are gender views today? Should sincerely held differences of opinion affect the relationship among Christians?

A. We believe that if it's in the Bible, a doctrine is worth studying and striving to understand. However, we also believe that gender distinctions are a secondary issue, and not equivalent to core Gospel truths (deity of Christ, historicity of the resurrection, Trinitarian nature of God, etc). Christ-loving, God-fearing Christians can have sincere disagreements on gender issues, without the need to break fellowship or question one another's salvation.

(Unanimously Approved by Board of Elders, 09/2013)

