

Is the Bible Biased Against Women?



Questions from August 10, 2025

(1) Distinguish Between Descriptive & Prescriptive

- Ancient Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cultures were very patriarchal. Just because the Bible describes their practices doesn't mean it prescribes or endorses them (like polygamy).

(2) Understand Jesus' View of the Old Testament – Matthew 19:3-8

- Some laws were divine concessions given to regulate hard-hearts, not perfect expressions of God's will for his people.
- Start with the Creation account to see God's original design.

(3) Carefully Study the New Testament Teachings on Women.

There are many positive portrayals of women learning & doing ministry. But there are five hard passages that are often misunderstood:

- 1 Cor 11:1-16. The point of the passage is modesty.
- 1 Cor 14:34-35. Since most women were uneducated, Paul tells them to ask questions at home, not during sermons.
- 1 Peter 3:6. Sarah listened to Abraham responsively & respectfully, and he did the same to her (Genesis 16:2; 18:10-12, 21:12).
- Ephesians 5:21-33. Submission does not mean unconditional obedience. It means respect (v33). The husband's leadership is not about making all the decisions. It is about taking the initiative to sacrificially love, provide for, and protect his wife.
- 1 Timothy 2:11-15 may mean that only men could teach with authority as senior pastors / elders because (A) they are the "first-born" gender, or, because (B) they were the first to be educated.

Ice Breaker

- (1) Share how you are doing and pray for each other.

Digging Deeper & Living Out

- (2) Read Point 1. What is the difference between descriptive and prescriptive? Can you think of some behaviors that the Bible describes or even regulates in the Old Testament, but doesn't promote?
- (3) Read Point 2 and Matthew 19:3-8. How did Jesus explain the fact that God gave a law allowing divorce even though God hates divorce and doesn't want it to happen? How could that same principle apply to other laws in the Old Testament that seem biased against women?
- (4) Read Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:18-24. How does the Creation account show the equal value of men and women and God's ideal for their relationships? Why is it significant that woman was made from the side ("rib") of man? Why is calling woman a "helper" *not* a put down?
- (5) Read Genesis 3:16. How does this verse explain the broken relationship between men and women and the development of misogyny?
- (6) There are many positive portrayals of women disciples in the New Testament. Take turns reading and explaining why these passages are significant for the role of women in the body of Christ.
 - Luke 8:1-3 and 10:38-42
 - Acts 2:17-18 and Galatians 3:28
 - Acts 18:19-28 and Romans 16:1-7.
- (7) Read Point 3. Which of the five hard passages has been most confusing to you in your Christian life? Did the sermon help you to understand it better?