

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Women And Business Meetings

By Connie W. Adams

There is a growing agitation in some quarters to have the women present in business meetings both in places with and without elders. Some insist that they be silent observers while others argue that they may speak in the decision-making process. One brother has argued that the women not only may be present and participate, but that they must or else the deliberations are unscriptural. Articles have appeared in some periodicals over the last few years advocating these views.

It is God's plan that elders be ordained in every church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The qualifications indicate men for this work. They are to be husbands and rule well their own houses (1 Tim. 3:2, 4). That precludes women. Deacons likewise are to be men, husbands, with wives who are faithful (1 Tim. 3:11-12). Elders have the oversight and deacons function as special servants of the congregation.

But congregations can scripturally exist and function before elders and deacons are appointed. The divine qualifications must be met. The churches in Asia Minor which were established by Paul and Barnabas functioned without elders until they came back through that region and appointed elders in every church (Acts 24:23). When a body of people meet together for worship and undertake the work God has assigned a local body of his people, some decisions have to be made. At what hour on the Lord's Day shall the congregation come together? Who will see that the Lord's table is ready? What place shall be secured and prepared for the purpose? Who shall teach? Who will lead singing? How many songs? Who will lead the assembly in prayers? How many? How shall the congregation proceed in relieving saints in need, or in choosing and supporting those to preach the gospel at home and abroad? Any congregation which functions scripturally, has business with which to deal.

A scripturally unorganized congregation, as well as one scripturally organized must work within certain divine precepts. ***“Let all things be done unto edifying”*** (1 Cor. 14:26). ***“Let all things be done decently and in order”*** (1 Cor. 14:40).

Limitations

Women were taught to ***“keep silence”*** in the assemblies and if they wanted to learn of things said by the prophets, they were to ***“ask their husbands at home”*** (1 Cor. 14:34-35). This was considered part of being ***“under obedience”*** and was consistent with what the law had said (***“as also saith the law”***). It was ***“a shame”*** to do otherwise (verse 35). Inspiration also taught, ***“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence”*** (1 Tim. 2:11-12). He gave two reasons for this: (1) seniority rights (***“Adam was first formed”***), and (2) Eve was deceived in the transgression. Her judgment was flawed. She ran ahead of her husband and yielded to emotion and not reason.

Any argument from other passages which ignores these divine truths is misplaced from the outset. Men do not have infallible judgment, but there is a divine order which must be respected.

I am convinced that many are now feeling the pressure of society which has witnessed a great change in the roles of women and men. Confusing these roles has resulted in great damage to the family structure. Evidence of this is seen in the terrible divorce rate, in unhappy men, women, and children. In many congregations many of the women work outside the home. This may be from economic necessity or else from choice to have more, to justify education, or to attempt to feel fulfilled. With this has come a changed attitude among some sisters in the Lord. Some are much more outspoken, some are used to giving orders, and some have a chip on the shoulder. Many are the product of the modern educational establishment. The entertainment media continually preaches along these lines. As we reach out and bring to Christ younger people whose minds have been saturated with these views, it is to be expected that there will be some tensions along these lines.

These tensions have been augmented by well-intentioned brethren who have encouraged a changed role for women in business decisions in congregations. Modern women (and men) do not like to hear about obedience, subjection, submission. After all, this is the age of “rights.” We must not be judged to be chauvinistic.

Acts 6 and 15

Those who contend that women should participate in business meetings hang their hats on Acts 6 and Acts 15. It is argued that in both cases the multitude of the disciples came together to consider the matters at hand. Let's consider each passage.

In Acts 6 a problem surfaced having to do with benevolent distribution among some of the Grecian widows. This was a matter which had to be resolved. Divine revelation resolved it. Holy Spirit guided apostles called the church together and presented the will of God. It was first of all, a teaching situation, parallel to preaching and teaching on the work and qualifications of elders and deacons. The whole church needs to hear that instruction. Priorities had to be established. The apostles could not neglect their work of teaching the word of God (verse 2) to serve tables. Since they could not do that, then divine wisdom decreed that seven men (enough to handle the problem) be chosen who met the standards laid down. The apostles would then **"appoint"** them over **"this business"** (verse 3). The church gladly received this instruction and seven men were chosen. **"They"** (the church) made the choice. Right here it is assumed by some that there must have been some sort of business meeting which the women attended and had input in order for this to be done. Exactly how they arrived at the seven men is not spelled out. I have been involved various times in my life in the selecting of elders and deacons without ever having women present in a business meeting. Yet, we were always able to set forth a plan by which names could be submitted and time allowed to compare these men with the divine qualifications. Both men and women were permitted to submit names or submit objections to any whose names were set forth. Information must always be supplied in any congregation which works in harmony. But whatever process prudence may decide must not violate the limitations we have seen which must preserve the principle of obedience, submission, and subjection. Who is prepared to take this passage and tell us the procedure followed including the role women played in a business meeting? Which sister spoke up? What did she say? Was this not a case of the church **"continuing ... in the apostles' doctrine"** (Acts 2:42)? Advocates of women in present day business meetings must have a good imagination to find any justification for the practice from Acts 6. The church, in harmony with divine instruction, chose special servants, as churches down through the years since have chosen deacons (as well as elders) in harmony with the divine guidelines. Who is willing to contend that the limitations of 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 were set aside?

Acts 15 is another case where a problem was resolved by divine revelation. The issue of whether or not Gentiles converts to Christ had to be circumcised and keep the law had to be settled. Some had gone to Antioch and undermined the work of Paul and Barnabas by insisting that they were teaching contrary to the apostles at Jerusalem. It was a matter of concern to the whole church. Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem and they were all called together. Some spoke and defended the misguided Jewish position. Which of them were women? What did they say? Did a single sister there violate the limitations of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12? Yes, they all came together to consider the matter. It was a serious doctrinal matter. We have had many others to surface through the years when we had to call whole congregations together to be taught the word of God on premillennialism, instrumental music, the nature, work and organization of the church, and a number of other issues. All, men and women alike, needed to hear the teaching. Every one needed to make choices involving action consistent with the truth. When the debating was over, the apostles, with consent and approval of the elders, handed down an apostolic decision which they put in writing and sent to brethren elsewhere which showed that all the apostles, including Paul, were teaching the same thing. Did the women vote? Did anyone vote? This action **"pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church"** (verse 22). They were united.

I have seen a number of occasions when congregations were taught the truth of God and they were pleased with it and acted in harmony with it. I have seen other times when the saying did not please the multitude and they did not receive it or amend their practice.

The fact that the whole church came together to consider the matter in both Acts 6 and Acts 15 says nothing about business meetings in which judgments must be made touching the business aspects of a congregation. In both instances divine revelation resolved the problem at hand. All, men and women, were pleased with what the Lord revealed through his apostles and put into action what they taught.

Why would any sister possessed of a meek and quiet spirit, who honors what the Lord said about being subject and obedient, want to place herself in a situation where there is a great danger of violating 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12? Why would any brother want to encourage her to do so? God placed men in leadership roles in the family and in the church. Let there be communication, and understanding. Let the decisions be made in consideration of all involved, but let the scriptural limitations be respected. — **Guardian of Truth**, March 3, 1994. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250