

Does Christianity Denigrate Women? - part 2

1. Women in the teaching and ministry of Paul

Romans

Romans 16: Paul lists **9 women** as ministry partners

Junia - Romans 16:7: may have been a man; best translated 'well known to the apostles'; if she was a woman and an apostle it is not clear she was an apostle like the 12 (apostle = messenger: 2 Cor 8:23 and Phil 2:25)

(M. H. Burer and D. B. Wallace, "Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Re-examination of Rom 16.7," NTS 47 (2001): 76-91.)

1 Corinthians

7:3-4: The woman's sexual needs must be met by her husband. There is an equality.

Chapter 7 and singleness: Paul gives women a value equal to men apart from men; she doesn't need to marry to be complete.

11:3: 'head' implies some sort of authority/hierarchy (see also Eph 1:20-22, and Eph 5). So while husbands and wives are equal there are differences in how they relate/function in their relationship.

11:5: Paul assumes that women can pray or prophesy in church

11:7: Woman is the glory of man: she comes from him (v8); her helping him is an honour for him.

14:33-35: Possible meanings of being silent: A. 1 Cor 11 is about more informal gatherings where women can prophesy/pray, while chapter 14 is more formal church services. B. He's had enough of chattering Corinthian women and he's trying to restore order. C. This is about the public weighing of prophecy - which should be the responsibility of men.

Galatians

3:28: the church cuts across all social hierarchies. While the NT teaches men and women having different roles and differences in the way they relate to one another, there is no inferiority or second class status.

Ephesians

5:22-33: Paul does not root the submission of wives to husbands in culture, but in Christ and the gospel. Wives should submit to their husbands as we do Christ, and husbands should sacrificially love and cherish their wives. This is not a charter for abuse.

1 Timothy

2:11-15: the instruction that women not teach or have authority over men is rooted in creation, not culture. Saved through childbearing could mean 'through the virgin birth'; more likely, salvation has a broader sense: that one way God works out salvation in the lives of women, and the turning back of the Fall, is through having and raising children.

Summary

Paul teaches a radical equality of value/worth/dignity but difference in role. In Roman times people would have been shocked by the equality (not the difference). Today, we are shocked by the difference, not the equality. The gospel affirms and critiques every culture.

2. Women and Peter

1 Peter

3:1-7 Wives are to submit to their husbands, but husbands are to take time to understand their wives, and pay her honour. She is a fellow heir! And if a man does not listen to his wife, he should not think that God will listen to him.

3. Women and John - Revelation

Revelation

21:2: The ultimate description of the church/people of God, the goal = feminine. It's a woman.

So, Christianity does **not** denigrate women (Roman writers criticised it for being far too pro women!) **but it does teach difference.**

Where churches or men have denigrated women ask the question...

4. Is the problem too much or too little Christianity?

Think of the millions of girls missing as a result of female infanticide or sex-linked abortions; bride burning; female genital mutilation; men objectifying women; use of power to pressurise into sex; the impact on women's sport/single sex-spaces of transgender men; husbands failing to cherish or abusing their wives.

Is the problem too much or too little Christianity?

5. Jesus the Perfect Man

In the Bible, the Lord Jesus is *the* perfect man. The man all other men are to emulate. Not Moses, David or Solomon is not. Not a MMA fighter, an SAS/Navy seal soldier, or an in-touch with his feminine side artist, musician or pastor. Christ is the perfect man and he came to serve not to be served and to lay down his life. Does Christianity denigrate women? Only if it fails to follow Christ.

Some resources...

Men and Women in the Church - Kevin Deyoung
Five Lies of our Anti Christian Age— Rosaria Butterfield
Priscilla Talk - podcasts