

Troubling Trends Amongst Brethren

Godly Decision-Making in an Ungodly Culture

Troubling Trends



In 1999 the church began to study “scripture pertaining to women’s roles. The elders at the time concluded that ‘the Lord has granted us more freedom than our brotherhood and congregational attitudes and relationships will allow at present.’”

Troubling Trends



“Fast forward to November 2017, when a letter was sent to the congregation from the elders, detailing the outcome of discussions and preparation. The consensus was that the eldership and the pulpit should be open to any godly, wise leader, regardless of gender.”

Troubling Trends



“Since then, [three] women have preached at Minter Lane, [Candace] Nicolds and Amanda Pittman, an assistant professor in ACU’s College of Biblical Studies... [and Karen] Cooke...”

Troubling Trends



“Highland Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, one of the largest Churches of Christ congregations in the United States, announced this month [September 2019] that both women and men will preach in its worship services.”

Troubling Trends



“The decision to open more roles to women at Highland was a long time coming. Bill Fowler, chairman of the elders at Highland, made the announcement and read from a letter sent to the congregation Sept. 4. He noted Highland engaged in a lengthy congregational study and discernment process in 2000-2001.”

Troubling Trends



“After that study, the Highland elders concluded that Scripture supported increased roles for women in our worship.”

Troubling Trends



“Since then, women have been allowed to read scripture in worship services, lead prayers and participate in other worship activities. However, women still were not allowed to preach at Highland, though the elders decided, based on findings of the study, that “scripture supported a woman preaching in our assembly.”

Troubling Trends

Not the issue

The issue

“Scripture supports a woman preaching in our assembly”?

1 Corinthians 11.1-9; 14.34

1 Timothy 2.11-14

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“After several months of careful study, discussion and prayer, members of Downtown Church of Christ are focused on maintaining unity as the church moves in a new direction, specifically regarding women’s roles.

On Nov. 3, shepherds announced in the worship assembly that women would now be welcome to participate in new ways, through acts such as serving communion, teaching adult Bible classes alone, reading scripture from the pulpit...”

Troubling Trends



“Early this year, the shepherds of the church began a conversation of re-examining women’s roles. In February, the eldership, ministerial staff and their spouses had a retreat, during which they focused on women’s roles. The congregation participated in a study over the summer to determine how the congregation should move forward. The study was led by the eldership and included all adult classes meeting together.”

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“[The elders] reminded members of their greater exercise of freedom to make their own decisions regarding roles in small groups and Bible classes. [They] also re-emphasized that by over a two-thirds consensus within the eldership, Downtown would not have female shepherds or preachers.”

Troubling Trends

Part of the issue

Why Not?

Why reject female preachers/elders?

"An overseer, then, must be... the husband **ANER** of one wife **GUNE**"

(1 Timothy 3:2)

"But I do not allow a woman **GUNE** to teach or exercise authority over a man **ANER**"

(1 Timothy 2:12)

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[They] also re-emphasized that by over a two-thirds consensus within the eldership, Downtown would not have female shepherds or preachers."

The Real Troubling Trend



“We live in the midst of both great and rapid socio-cultural change,” Dr. Pat Garner, Downtown shepherd, said. “These changes tear at the fabric of our culture, polarizing and fragmenting community. How does the community of the church respond to this rending of unity? Is it even possible to maintain a body with a transcendent unity in the midst of divergent opinions? This was the question that the elders at the Downtown Church of Christ faced when they began to grapple with issues surrounding the role of women within the body of Christ.”

The Real Troubling Trend

THE BIG ISSUE

When, in Scripture, does culture ever determine truth?

It is!

This is the focus of much of the NT!

Acts 10.34-35; 11.3-4,17-18

It is possible to maintain unity when individuals resolve to submit themselves to Jesus and His Gospel - John 17.17-21

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What Am I To Do?

- ❖ **I must not allow modern culture to determine my behavior, either individually or collectively.**
 - ❖ **The early church had to overcome cultural prejudice.**
 - ❖ **The church is itself a culture and is counter-cultural by nature.**
 - ❖ **The Thessalonian church had to overcome a sex-saturated cultural (1 Thess. 4.3).**
- ❖ **I must allow Jesus to be the Lord of my life.**
 - ❖ **It is His gospel which we must obey (Romans 1.5,16; 16.26).**
 - ❖ **We must line up with the Spirit (Galatians 5.25).**