
ROLES OF MEN & WOMEN



IMMANUEL BIBLE CHURCH

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WE, THE ELDERS OF IMMANUEL BIBLE CHURCH, BELIEVE THAT THE SCRIPTURES ADDRESS EVERY AREA OF OUR LIVES, INCLUDING THE ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN. ALTHOUGH GOD HAS MADE THESE ISSUES CLEAR IN HIS WORD, OUR CULTURE HAS REJECTED THE BIBLICAL VIEW, CAUSING MUCH CONFUSION.

OUR PURPOSE IS TO UNDERSTAND GOD'S DESIGN AND RESIST THE PRESSURE TO CONFORM TO THE STANDARDS AND STRUCTURES OF OUR CULTURE. WHAT FOLLOWS IS A SUMMARY OF THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES RELATING TO THIS ISSUE AND THE PRACTICE OF IMMANUEL BIBLE CHURCH.



IMMANUEL BIBLE CHURCH

OUR BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

GOD'S CREATION DESIGN

We believe that God created both man and woman in His image with equal value yet with distinct roles.

God created both man and woman in His own image, equal before Him as persons and in the value of their divinely assigned functions. Yet they are distinct in their manhood and womanhood and in their roles. This distinction reflects His purpose and is an essential part of the creation. His design is for them to complement and support each other in harmony, fulfilling His will for human companionship, reproduction, social organization, and joy. (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18; 5:1-2; 9:6; Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 11:11-12; Colossians 3:10; James 3:9)



IMPACT OF THE FALL

We believe that the fall introduced distortions in the relationships and roles of men and women.

The decision of Adam and Eve to disobey God caused men and women to be separated from God and, in so doing, often to misunderstand, reject, and corrupt distinctions between the roles of men and women. Misunderstandings of headship and submission have resulted in a struggle, often leading to harmful extremes. Redemption in Christ gives believers the power to resolve this struggle through loving leadership and willing submission. (Genesis 3:16-19; Ephesians 5:21-33)

LEADERSHIP

We believe that God has a specific design for leadership in the local church.

Leadership in the local church is the God-given role of serving, guiding, and directing the church and its members. Where appropriate, both men and women may occupy positions of leadership as they serve the church. The Scriptures teach that ultimate responsibility for leadership in the church should be conferred upon qualified men, selected as elders, under the headship of Christ. The Scriptures teach believers to respond and submit to this leadership with a willing heart, desiring harmony in the church. (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 2:3; 1 Peter 5:5)

SUBMISSION

We believe that each person — man, woman, child, single or married — is responsible to yield (submit) to legitimate authorities.

The essence of submission is an attitude of respect toward legitimate authority in our lives. For the believer, it is expressed first by choosing God's will over our own, then similarly yielding our will to other authorities that He has placed in our lives. The submission to God's authority is absolute. The submission to human authorities should only be to the extent that they do not require disobedience to the revealed will of God. (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29; Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17)

Both men and women are responsible to God in fulfilling their roles. That responsibility includes the submission of the congregation to the elders in the church, of wives to their husbands in marriage, and of children to their parents in the home. The Scriptures encourage single adults to serve the Lord with unhindered devotion. Persons in authority are to be humble, accountable to God for the loving care of those submitting to their leadership. Persons submitting to those in authority are to do so “as unto the Lord,” appropriately responsive to the direction they have received. (1 Corinthians 7:32-35; Ephesians 5:21-6:9; Philippians 2:5-11; Titus 2:2-8; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5)

We interpret Ephesians 5:21 to be an introduction to the relationships described in Ephesians 5:22-6:3 and not an affirmation of “mutual submission.” Submission requires the willing obedience of one under authority to another in the role of the head.

THE ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN IN MEETINGS OF THE CHURCH

The Scriptures teach that in meetings of the church all things must be done in a proper and orderly manner. (1 Corinthians 14:40) We consider meetings of the church to be any gathering that is under the auspices of Immanuel Bible Church.ⁱ

TEACHING THE SCRIPTURES

We believe the authority to instruct others is governed by the elders.

Those who teach at Immanuel Bible Church do so under the authority of the elders. Men are to teach the Scriptures in meetings of the church where men are included in the intended audience. Men or women may teach the Scriptures in meetings of the church where women, teenagers, and/or

children are the intended audience. At all times, men and women are to have a spirit of submission toward the leader of the meeting. (1 Timothy 2:12; 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:5)

PARTICIPATION

We believe that all believers in Christ share in the privilege and responsibility to participate in the life of the church.

At the invitation of the leader or teacher, men and women may give testimonies, read the Scriptures, and pray in meetings of the church, adult Bible fellowships, Bible studies, and small groups that are under the auspices of Immanuel Bible Church. Men and women may also share comments and insights concerning the Scriptures during discussion in any of these groups. (Acts 18:24-26; 1 Corinthians 14; Ephesians 5:18-21; Colossians 3:14-17)



ASSEMBLING FOR WORSHIP

We believe that our attitude in worship should bring glory to God.

As men and women gather for worship, they should evidence a spirit of humility, reverence, and sincerity of heart; emphasize godliness and good works; and in everything bring glory to God. In their attire, both men and women should reflect the dignity of God's creation design, and demonstrate modesty and discretion.ⁱⁱ (Colossians 3:17; 1 Timothy 2:8-10)

BIBLE STUDIES AND SPONSORED GROUPS

We believe in the orderly participation of men and women in Bible studies and sponsored groups of the church.

Bible studies and sponsored groups under the auspices of Immanuel Bible Church are to be taught by individuals approved by the elders. Men are to teach any Bible study in which men are included in the intended audience; women may teach subjects other than the Scriptures in such groups. Men or women may teach the Scriptures to groups consisting of women, teenagers, and children. Teachers are to follow these principles in selecting instructional materials (books, audio tapes, and video tapes) that serve as the main source of interpretation for presentation.



THE ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN IN MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

MINISTRY AND SERVICE

We believe that the elders should select men and women to provide direction for the ministries of the church.

The Scriptures teach that the elders are responsible for overseeing ministries in the local church. Elders may select qualified men and women to serve in ministry for the building up of the body of Christ through the exercising of their spiritual gifts. Elders may appoint biblically qualified men and women to serve the church.ⁱⁱⁱ (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:16; 1 Timothy 3:8-13; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

MINISTRY COUNCILS

We believe that the elders lead more effectively when they seek counsel from both men and women.

Ministry councils are led by elders and may include other church members. Decisions of councils will be the responsibility of the elders on the councils under the leadership of the council chairman.

DISCIPLESHIP

We believe that both men and women should disciple others.

The Scriptures teach that discipleship plays a critical role in the spiritual development of believers and the church. An effective biblical model for making disciples encourages the older men to train younger men, and older women are to train younger women. (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 2:3-5)

COUNSELING

We believe that both men and women may serve as counselors.

The counseling ministry of Immanuel Bible Church is a lay ministry and provides compassion and care to those who are seeking assistance in their lives. Normally, same-gender counseling will be practiced. Under the supervision of the Pastor of Congregational Care, qualified men and/or women counselors may counsel couples and families.

MISSIONARIES

We believe that men and women in missionary service should follow the mandates of the Scriptures as churches are established.

Missionaries receiving support from Immanuel Bible Church shall be guided by the Scriptures concerning the roles of men and women in the church as they respond to diverse cultural and ethnic differences.

Women in missionary service may find themselves in situations requiring them to assume teaching and leadership roles normally reserved for men. This typically occurs where no qualified men are available. Once a church has been established and qualified men become available, they shall assume leadership roles.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Ministries that are under the auspices of Immanuel Bible Church submit to the authority of the elders.

ⁱⁱ We interpret the instruction in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 concerning women wearing head coverings as an application of these principles to the culture of that time. We affirm the principles, but do not require head coverings given the absence of their cultural significance today.

iii We wholeheartedly affirm that the basic meaning of “servant” (diakonos) applies to all in the church. Men and women are exhorted by our Lord to prove themselves great by serving others (Matthew 20:26). Serving others is a privilege and responsibility of all Christians, and those who do “obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith.”

(1 Timothy 3:13) 1 Timothy 3: 8-13, the key passage on qualifications for deacons (diakonos - one who serves), is cast in masculine terms (men of dignity, v8; husband of one wife, managing household well, v12). In verse 11, gynaikas can be translated as either “wives” (of the deacons) or “women” (women who serve the church).

Contextually, the inclusion of this verse in the middle of qualifications for male deacons, the similarity of the qualifications listed for the deacon with those that are given to the women, and the subsequent transition to family qualifications of the deacon in verse 12 seems to indicate that verse 11 is referring to qualities that are required of a deacon’s wife. However, the grammatical structure of the passage seems to indicate a separate category of serving women. Regardless of the translation of gynaikas, it is clear that the elders may appoint spiritually qualified men and women to be responsible for specific areas of service.

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