

SHOULD WOMEN BE USED IN SERVING COMMUNION TO THE ASSEMBLY?

Dear Bro. John: Should ladies be used to serve the Lord's Supper to the congregation? Our elders say the Bible does not mention serving communion so they can do this without violating any command. They insist that they will not allow ladies to lead prayer, lead singing or teach the assembly, only serve communion. Neville

Dear Neville: I personally think it is a mistake to have women serve the communion in the assembly of the church. I am aware that proponents argue that serving food is a servant's job, not that of a leader. In a home or church fellowship meal such would be true, but in the worship assembly of the church it would be different in my estimation. This is a wedge for a greater goal. While your elders may sincerely plan to limit the ladies to this one extension of service, others will not be satisfied with the accomplishment. If they can get the ladies into this public role, they will then push for additional opportunities for them to fill. In other areas we describe such actions as stepping onto the slippery slope.

It is true that the Bible says nothing about serving the communion. This is the case because our method of having it served to the seated congregation is a relatively modern way of doing things. A couple of hundred years ago folks walked up to the table to be served. You still see this in the Catholic Church. When Jesus instituted the supper the participants were seated around a table. Our method is scriptural since God has not told us just how it is to be served.

The larger question is that of the relation of ladies to the men of the church in the assembly. They are to be in subjection to the men (I Tim. 2:11-12). Since in our society and age, to help at the Lord's table is viewed by our people as a leadership opportunity, it seems to me our ladies should not strive to fill that position. The question is more than what it *might* lead to.

In our culture and society and in the long tradition of our brotherhood men have filled this position and it has been viewed as a leadership role. Culture and tradition do play a role in helping us decide the way some things are done. For example in the first century a man dressed in a robe. In our culture we dress in pants. If I decided to attend worship dressed in a robe, it would not violate a scriptural prohibition, but it would likely be a distraction to other worshippers. In some tropical societies, for a man to appear shirtless is of no import. But to attend worship here shirtless would definitely leave a bad impression and should not be done. In Africa most Christians observe the custom of women worshiping with their heads covered with a scarf or some other kind of head covering. If we went there to worship and our ladies were uncovered it would be viewed as a shameful thing to them. There was a time when our missionaries in Mexico requested that U.S. ladies visiting their church services not wear sleeveless blouses as the locals viewed such as the dress of immoral women. Christian women visiting should respect this cultural viewpoint. So should we respect the cultural and traditional view of those who are to serve the communion in our assemblies.

Are you aware that some of those promoting the agenda of change among our churches are already using women to lead public prayers, read Scripture, teach mixed adult classes, lead singing, help serve communion and even preach. Their highest authority for these changes is the theology of the Feminist Movement. When Jeremiah pled with his neighbors to "see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein...they said, We will not walk therein" (Jer. 6:16). JHW

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