

Can women be pastors? Are there still apostles and prophet today?

We have taken some liberty in separating your request into parts to deal with each one. Your question appeared to center on Paul's statement in Eph 4:11-13:

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Let us examine the question: **Are there apostles and prophets today?** In the New Testament, apostles and prophets were uniquely qualified and appointed. These special qualifications make them impossible to exist in the world today. For example, apostles had to have the qualifications spoken of in Acts 1:21-23 when Matthias replaced Judas:

21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. 23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

An apostle had to be qualified by being with Jesus from the baptism of John to the resurrection. When the Lord appointed Paul as an apostle untimely born, he did so only after the appearing to Paul, thus making him eligible to be witness of the resurrection. In 1 Cor 15:8-10, Paul wrote:

8 **And last of all he was seen of me also**, as of one born out of due time. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Paul testified that he was an apostle and the *last one* to see the Lord. One must conclude that there were no apostles after those in the New Testament. A similar situation occurred with prophets. Prophecy was a spiritual gift that came only by the laying on of the apostles' hands. In Acts 8, the converts could not perform spiritual gifts until an apostle laid hands on them. Please note that Simon the Sorcerer understood this so clearly that he sought to buy the power held only by the apostles. Acts 8:18-19 reads: "And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, 19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost."

In 1 Cor 12:8-10, Paul teaches that prophecy is one of these gifts, "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; . . . to another prophecy. . ." 1 Cor 13:8-10, teaches that prophecy will cease when that which is perfect has come:

8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

James 1:25 teaches that which is perfect is the perfect word of God: "But whoso looketh into

the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Since these gifts (prophecy) came by the laying on of the apostles' hands, when the apostles died, the ability to bestow the gifts died with them. We now have, according to Jude 3, the faith once delivered, "It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

In the Eph 4:11-13 text the apostles and prophets, who existed for a limited duration, appear first. They are followed in the text by those positions that are permanent in the church—pastors, teachers, and evangelists. What all these positions have in common is that they are those that provide the teaching functions in the church: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Elders, bishops (overseers), and pastors refer to those who do the same work in the New Testament church. Although all of these terms refer to men who do the same work, the term most frequently used is *elder*. For example:

- Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. Acts 11:29-30
- And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. Acts 14:23
- For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee. Titus 1:5

Acts 20:17-18 and Acts 20:28-31 show that elders are pastors and overseers (bishops). In verse 17, Paul called the elders of Ephesus to Miletus: "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church." However, in his charge to them, he described them as pastors (shepherds) calling them overseers (bishops) in Acts 20:28-31:

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember. (compare with 1 Peter 5:1-3).

What is true of elders is true of pastor and bishops. In 1 Tim 3:1-2, Paul taught that bishops (hence pastors and elders) must be the husband of one wife, which by definition excludes women: "3:1 This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, **the husband of one wife**, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach. Paul repeats this command to Titus in Titus 1:5-6: "5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: 6 If any be blameless, **the husband of one wife**, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly."

Regarding evangelists, a term which designates those who preach the gospel, Paul said in 2 Tim 4:1-5

4:1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For

the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

That the Bible excludes women from position of authority over men is very clear. 1 Tim 2:11-13 teaches, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." This position on women speaking in the church receives the approval of 1 Cor 14:34-35: "34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. 35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

One must conclude that women cannot be pastors.