

## **Worship Leadership and Participation, II**

We are now beginning part II of our discussion on leadership and participation in worship. We are moving toward planning a worship service. Let us open in prayer.

*Father, we thank You that the Lord Jesus comes into the midst of His people, delighting to call us brothers and sisters. He is not ashamed of us but is willing to join His voice with ours as we preach, sing, and pray. We thank You for the privilege we have to move in and out of corporate public worship week after week in a way that deepens our relationship with You and impacts our day to day living. We pray that You would do that even in our lives as we continue to search Your Word and our own hearts and understand Your church and the way You have designed it. Help us to see beyond ways we have always done things yet not be carried away with being innovative for its own sake. Lord, help us to be shaped and fashioned with a deep reverence for and awe of You while delighting and being full of joy and celebration that we can draw near to You and come right into Your very presence because of Christ. Guide us now as we continue through this course. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Let me say a couple of things about what I call the art of leading worship. Planning and leading worship is one of the most creative and artistic things that most pastors do. That includes crafting a sermon. It is bigger than that, though. I consider it a privilege now, but at the time it seemed like an awesome responsibility. After my first year of seminary I accepted a position at a small Presbyterian church outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I was called to be the student pastor of a church of about 100 people. I preached every week and planned worship services. I even did the bulletin every week. There was another pastor who came to moderate the session meetings and was present when we did the sacraments. But I did virtually everything else on my own. I did more funerals (eight of them) in the two years I was there than I have since then, in terms of members of a congregation I served. So I got a lot of very hands-on, practical experience. I have come to appreciate more and more over the years what exactly it is that God has designed corporate public worship for. I appreciate His presence, the convergence of the means of grace, and the transforming of people's lives. Christ Himself is with us in every aspect of it. There is a Gospel shaping and Gospel storyline rooted in the Scripture coming into the service and going out into people's lives. I have begun to see that this is a creative, energizing exercise of thinking through, planning, and leading a worship service.

One of my answers to whether or not we should have drama in worship is that worship itself is intended to be dramatic. This is because of the way these different means of grace come together. The sacraments themselves are part of the visible drama of redemption with the baptism of water and the eating of the bread and drinking from the cup. In some ways it is the restoration of all of the elements of a worship service to their rightful places and then weaving them together in a progressive, Gospel-shaped way. That is like creating a painting. It is like writing music. It has an artistic side to it that transcends the logical, check it off the list, and plug in the numbers. To plan a worship service with other people can also be very energizing and part of the way God has designed His church. He has given gifts to all people, and some of the gifts allow people to have some creative, resourcing input to help you do well where your limitations are. We are going to talk later about how pastors and musicians can work together. We need to recognize strengths and weaknesses of each other, and we need to know ourselves. We need to see that something bigger than what one or the other can do can happen when we work together.

Planning a worship service takes a lot of time, prayer, and communication with other lead worshipers. The simple way out in some ways is to do it all, plan it all, and lead it all yourself. But that is probably

not being a wise steward of all the resources God has put in your congregation, on both the planning side and the participating and leading side of worship. If we wanted to think about worship as a dramatic unfolding of the Gospel story of which you are the worship leader, the pastor who is overseeing it but not necessarily doing everything, you are like the drama coach. If it is an athletic analogy, you are a player coach. You are participating in it. Maybe the drama coach has a lead role in the play, but he is also helping others understand. Another analogy might be that you are a narrator of the unfolding drama. As you oversee the whole thing, you call people into worship. You are using connecting words that name things, helping people through, and giving understanding about why we come to the Lord's Table and what is going on while we do it. It is not another lecture or sermon, but strategically placed words. It is the idea of rubrics.

I talked about singing "He is Exalted" after reading a Scripture of exalting God and having people pray prayers of exaltation. You could say before you go into that five- to eight-minute time, "God alone is worthy of being exalted, and we are going to enter into His presence in a way that we will focus on exalting the glorious name of God as we sing, read His Word, and pray." That is all you say—less is more. There are times you have to give a lengthier explanation of things. But let it happen without pointing out how now you are praying prayers of exaltation. You do not need to announce that you are going to sing "He is Exalted" again. You are not a television broadcaster who is over-announcing an athletic event. The viewer can see what is going on. There is an art of a good commentator of a sporting event, saying too much or too little. At the end of some grand events there is no commentary because you can see the celebration or the disappointment. It is one of those moments where words are not needed.

Tiger Woods won the British Open in golf in 2006, and he was thinking about his dad. It was an emotional moment. You do not need to say, "Look, there is Tiger. It looks like he is crying now." They set the dramatic moment. You know as a viewer that this is part of the backdrop. He did not make the cut at the U.S. Open. It was the first major he never made the cut at. So the stage had been set. When that highly emotional moment came as he walked up to the 18th green, it made more sense to say nothing as the commentator in the broadcast and let the moment unfold. Leading worship is like that sometimes. Sometimes you have to give more of the backdrop so that people understand why we are doing what we are doing. But sometimes when you are in the moment, less is more or even not having to say anything is better. Just let the elements unfold without announcement. I get a little frustrated when the hymn is listed in the bulletin with the title and page, and the preacher gets up and says, "Now we are going to sing hymn number 100, *Great is Thy Faithfulness*." The people start to stand up, and the preacher reminds the congregation again of the page number. It detracts from the beginning of the hymn. One announcement is ok, but three times is a little overkill. That is why I said there is an art to leading worship. It is not just a logical checking off of whether or not you did all the ingredients. It is thinking through and praying through it.

I lead worship once a month at my church. There are three singers standing up front, an instrumentalist, and a band. They either have an elder, me, or an assistant pastor who is part of the singing worship team who also leads the elements of worship up until the time of the sermon. There is not much time to say much. I know that on any given Sunday I have maybe 5 minutes to speak in the first 30 minutes of the service. I use it to pray, read Scripture alluding to a song, or say something to introduce something. It forces me to be very strategic about the words that I use. Part of that is because I am not in charge. I am under the oversight of the elders and pastors of that church. They have the larger rest of the service planned out. So in the first 30 minutes, I am going to do a welcome and say a brief prayer. We are singing three or four songs that carry some of the elements, so I also need to decide between which ones I am going to name something, pray again, or say something. It forces me to do what I instruct students

to do all the time. That is, more is less with the rubrics, the connecting words. If someone gives a large introduction to the hymn, that is probably a few too many words at that moment.

For a lot of it, the context is important. It is about knowing what the plan is for this particular Sunday morning. It may be a church that does not have the Lord's Supper every week, and this is a Sunday that you have the Lord's Supper. That means there is less time allotted for other things. If you are so driven by having your 30 minutes to preach, you may rush through the Lord's Supper in a way that is less than fully edifying to the congregation. So you need to realize that on a Sunday that you have this, maybe I should pare back five to seven minutes from my 30-minute sermon. I can let it flow into and continue into the celebration of the Lord's Supper. If you have a baptism in a given service, you may need to adjust. I would like to think that most people will understand if you extend the service a little bit if there are some things added that are not normally there. But some people, in their own understanding of what their Lord's Day should be like, are not very understanding about extending past a deadline. So sometimes you have to make adjustments. You might have thought you could deliver a sermon in 30 minutes, but you are running long. It is not that you should never take the freedom to preach longer, but you need to pace yourself and ask what is most important. Every pastor has to leave some things in the office that do not get into the sermon. Sometimes you have to leave some things in the manuscript or the outline that do not get said. That is why the preacher has to understand, even if you are only preaching and not leading anything else, the rest of the dynamics in the service. You need to interact with it and know how you are serving the other elements with your sermon and how the other elements are serving you. Together you are serving the Gospel purposes of the entire service.

There is an art to this. You learn it. You become a student of how other people do it. One of the things our chapel worship coordinator, Claudia, is doing now is setting up a worship resource center in student services. She asked the Worship Reformation Network for some copies of bulletins, both to see what you can do graphically with the bulletin and to see samples of a lot of different worship services that you can look through and learn from. We urge students to come to chapel regularly partly to observe how you put worship services together. Pay attention to the local church that you are in. Maybe you are at a church that does not have an evening service. Go out to some other churches at their evening services. There are ways to study, learn, observe, listen, and read about this. At churches I pastored, I had people who brought me a bulletin from the church that they visited when they were away. They did this partly because they wanted me to know they actually went to church when they were on vacation! They also did it to tell me what they liked about the church they attended. I would regularly encourage people to give me worship ideas. I told them I would not be able to incorporate all of the ideas, but I would rather them give me the ideas, even if I didn't use them, than miss some gems that may be out there. If you have a time for a testimony, for example, I would encourage people to come talk to me if they would like to do that sometime. We should not assume that the elders know everything that is happening in every person's life and know who would be a good person to give a testimony.

When we are leading a worship service we need to seek to freshly engage the congregation in the next element that is progressing through the service. Part of that is the manner and tone that you set as you lead into that. If you are going into singing a song of lament or praying a prayer of confession, it is appropriate that the tone of your comments is penitent, humble, and reflective. If you are singing the doxology after you have pronounced that in Christ our sins are forgiven, it is fine to say, "Let us stand and from the depths of our hearts give loud praise to God for what He has done for us in Christ as we sing the doxology." That engages them in what could just be a routine singing of the doxology every week. Think through it without saying, "You did not sing that well; we are going to do it again and get it right this time." Be careful that you do not make it feel like boot camp. If you are going to do something like that, you might say, "I just want to let the congregation know that I really did not sing that from my

heart with any conscious thinking about what we just sang. For my sake, could we sing that again?" One time, when it tied in well with the sermon, we were singing "It is Well with My Soul" at the end. I said, "I want the piano player to play through the whole hymn, and I want you to look at the words and meditate on them. If these words express what is in your heart, sing them. If not, continue to meditate and ask God to make these words real to you." There are times you can do things that can be challenging and exhortative. But you need to do it in a way that fits at that point. If your preference is fixed forms, there should be at least some variety. If you always say the Lord's Prayer, maybe occasionally sing it. If you always do the Apostles' Creed, maybe occasionally do the Nicene Creed. There are some things that can be rotated in that fill that slot of a creed or prayer. Break up the potential repetitive routine that can lead to going through it without thinking about what you are doing and saying.

If you are in a church that changes things frequently from week to week, you do not want to have such radical change every week that people are more concerned about what to do next than actively engaged in the element of worship. You can train people to come into God's presence and be led by those who are leading. They should not get too uptight about the fact that the sermon is earlier this week in the service. They can trust that the leadership has a purpose for doing it that way. They are committed to the Gospel shape of the service, which sometimes may mean a sermon earlier for more response time to it afterward. Even occasionally I do not think it is unbiblical or wrong to have the Lord's Supper prior to the sermon. You should still do the words of institution and explain what it means. It may be that there are things flowing out of the Lord's Supper that you want to do in the rest of the service to meet the Gospel purposes of that particular service. A lot of places do not afford that much change from week to week. You need to have some sort of routine that people can settle into and feel comfortable with. Within that you can vary as you go. There are a lot of place-specific issues that will determine that.

Your own personal presentation while leading worship is important. We are whole beings. Let us suppose I am going to be the preacher and my friend Eric is leading the worship service. If, during the singing of a hymn or some comments he is making leading into something, I am scribbling on my sermon notes, that does not invite the rest of the congregation to engage with Eric leading the service at that point. Minimize distractions. I have a red tie that I wear with a blue suit sometimes. It has kangaroos holding tennis rackets. The first Sunday I wore that tie somebody met me at the door and said, "Oh, I see what is on your tie now." It is like they sat through the whole service and could only think about what was on my tie. Every time I have worn that thereafter, which has not been all that often, I have said during the announcement, "By the way, for those who are wondering, these are kangaroos with tennis rackets on my tie. It is probably in honor of the Australian Open in tennis. Now please pay attention to the reading and preaching of the Word." What are the distractions? You should probably pass by a mirror before you go up to lead worship and preach just to make sure you do not have a hair sticking up or a shiny nose. It seems silly, but it is important that you are not a distraction.

What comes through the most in terms of tone, emotion, and attitude is largely through our faces. That is the way God made us. I can reflect joy, sadness, boredom, enthusiasm, or a wide range of emotions through my face. It should match what is appropriate at that point in the service. People say that if you do not have joy in your heart it is hypocritical to smile. And I agree. Would it also be hypocritical if you have joy in your heart and you do not smile? We talk a lot about joy in the heart that sometimes does not get reflected in the face. Try to have integrity in the way you present yourself with attentiveness to what is happening in the service. One time we were trying to help the congregation understand the value of more frequent observance of the Lord's Supper over a several year period of time in a church I served. Every year around Christmas time I get frustrated with the focus in the West on the commercialization of Christmas. I do not quite go the negative route completely, but I tend to lean that way. I decided one Christmas, after running it by the elders, to celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday in Advent and on

Christmas Eve. There were five celebrations of the Lord's Supper in December. I wanted to do this because there is no better way to keep the focus on why God sent His Son into the world to be born in Bethlehem than to keep the cross represented in the Lord's Supper in front of us. In addition, it might give the people an idea of what it would be like to have weekly communion, too. In that context, there are different aspects you can bring out. One time we were about to receive the bread and the cup after properly confessing our sins, reading the words of institution, and having a right reverence before God and coming to His table. I was led in the moment to say, "Is it not interesting that we put here the 'celebration of the Lord's Supper.' Sometimes I feel like it is really somber. It needs to be reverent, but I think it is all right, at this moment, in this service, the third week in Advent, for us to celebrate the Lord's Supper. I would like to encourage you at this moment to smile with me at what a privilege it is to come to the Lord's Supper." So I called for a congregational smile. It was weird at one level, but it was fitting to remember we were celebrating something very serious. It cost God's only Son His life on the cross, taking our sin upon Him. But we are celebrating on the other side of that that He has risen, is with us, and is feeding us. It is a banquet table, or at least the appetizer toward it. We can be joyful in the presence of Christ. He is not on the cross right now. He is enjoying and delighting in us. Let us delight in Him.

When Zack Eswine, a professor here, preaches, and he looks right at you for a moment with an expression on his face, he draws you in. Sometimes the twinkle in the eye is important. There is a manner, a way that you carry yourself, that is important. This is not the heart of worship, but it should be an expression of the heart of worship. I am not talking about gimmicks that will make people become engaged. If you do not have a Gospel message to give, it does not matter how involved and wonderful you look and how hard you are trying to engage people. These are just gimmicks and not true integrity of heart and body.

We are a model of things. Zack Eswine and I had a long discussion on the way back from a presbytery meeting in Indiana one time. We were talking about the appropriateness of kneeling in worship and whether or not we should encourage that sometime in a chapel service. We wondered whether we ourselves should do it to model it. We had a preaching lecture series with a guy from California. We had to have an evening service as part of that because of the schedule. Zack was leading worship, I was helping lead music vocally, and the preacher was preaching. During the prayer of confession, Zack said, "If any of you would like to come down here where there is room and kneel during this prayer, feel free to come." But Zack did not go, and I did not go. So no one else went. We said that maybe the way to do that in the future is for Zack to say, "During this prayer of confession, Mark and I are going to go down and kneel. If any of you want to join us during that time, feel free to. If not, that is fine too." There may still not have been anybody kneeling at the front. But there is a big difference between the leadership actually modeling something that you are encouraging the people to consider and just calling for it. That is something to think about. The authority, oversight, and accountability for worship lies with the elders. They are the spiritual overseers of the church. They may delegate that authority to particular people, but they should not abdicate the overseeing responsibility.

The great Presbyterian verse is 1 Corinthians 14:40, which says, "All things must be done decently and in order." You hear that quoted a lot in our circles. It is a fundamental biblical principle. It is in the context of abuses in the Corinthian church of disorderly worship. That is why Paul says that if people are going to come and give words of prophecy or interpret tongues, it should only be two or three. He is ordering what seems to have gotten to be an out-of-order situation. I read the passage from 1 Corinthians 14:27-30, which invites people to participate. "If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God. Two or three prophets should speak, and the

others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop.” He is ordering what he is calling for. It is interesting to me that he does not fall into the problem that we often fall into. If the inviting of people to participate in worship in this way has led to disorder, then maybe we should stop inviting anybody. That would solve the disorder. Instead he is saying that it is important to invite people to participate. The way we correct disorder is not to deny participation, but it is to bring order to disorder. That is a helpful way to look at it. We overreact sometimes to things that are not done correctly. We want to make sure it would never be done that way again.

Some people would admit they cannot believe I would invite men, women, and children to pray prayers of thanksgiving openly in the congregation. What if somebody prays an unbiblical, theologically heretical prayer? What would I do? What if I invited someone to give a testimony and they say something that is contrary to what the Bible says? That is why we are elders. There are some things you can do in advance for testimonies if you want to be sure. It is appropriate to ask for it to be written out so we can see and help you with it. That does not necessarily have to be done, but it could be done. In order to encourage appropriate edification of the congregation by people in the congregation, it has attached to it a risk that something could happen that would be inappropriate. In the fear of what I would do if something inappropriate happens, I have sometimes squelched the possibility of appropriate things happening. I need to be enough of a leader to be bold enough to risk that. Eric may get up, give a testimony, and say something that seems to imply that Jesus was not fully human. I am sure that it was the nervousness of the moment that made him say something. I might get up and say, “Thank you for sharing what you did, Eric. Just for clarification I am sure what Eric meant when he said this was...” That would need to happen if it is a big enough thing. Most of those things are more a matter of private conversation with Eric afterward for future reference.

I remember at my church we were praying for different unchurched youth who were going on a week-long retreat. We were hoping and praying that they might come to know Christ. Sure enough, God worked and some came to know Christ. They came back to worship the next week, and there was a 16-year-old girl who had become a Christian within the last week. The youth pastor decided that since people had been praying for her, they should report back by letting her tell what God had done in her life. The risk was pretty high that she might say something that is not biblically sound. But there is great blessing in having people pray for this girl to come to Christ and then hearing that she has. So the youth director handled it by interviewing her. He had a microphone, and she had a microphone. He asked her to tell a little bit about who she is and what happened at the retreat that week. If she stumbled a little bit and got nervous, he could ask leading questions that would help her to say what he already knew she wanted to say. If she said something that was not exactly clear, he could clarify for her. I remember she said something about one of the volunteer helpers paying a lot of attention to her. She said it in a way that might have made people think there was a guy leader paying a lot of attention to a teenage girl, which could be seen as a bad thing. But Mark said, “Is it not a blessing to have people who are willing to volunteer with the youth group who can invest one-on-one time with people in the larger context of a retreat?” He headed off at the pass a potential direction that it may have gone. She really thought this guy was cool, and that was probably what God used to bring her to Himself. But it was said in a way that was a little over-the-top of appropriate decorum on Sunday morning that may have made people think things that they should not think. That interview testimony can be a very effective way of allowing someone to share who you are not quite ready to trust but you know that what that person has to say will be a blessing. Think creatively about things that can happen. Be willing to be bold, and say things to teach others as well. Do not say hurtful things, talking about how much someone screwed up in his testimony. Obviously you should not do that. A lot of helping people grow is more a private conversation after something like this. I remember a guy praying one time and thanking God that He

was “omnipresident.” We knew what he meant. We did not have to interrupt and clarify for him up front.

Let us talk about women in worship for a bit. When I first came to Covenant Seminary, Dr. Chapell asked me to work on a policy for what women should be able to do or not do in a chapel service regarding leadership. This is a very controversial subject in this denomination, so as a denominational seminary we need to be careful, thorough, and biblical in what we do. One of the things that we determined was that chapel at Covenant Seminary, though it is analogous to worship services in a local church, it is not the same as that. It is a chapel service; it is not a Sunday morning corporate worship service. In addition to doing other things, this took the first two years I was here to finalize. I tried to get faculty input; we talked about it at a couple of faculty meetings. There are times that chapel services at Covenant Seminary are more like a Wednesday night service or a Sunday school service. We have the archeology chapel, which tends not to be like a Sunday morning worship service but a more informational teaching time. But when chapel services are worship services, we try to format and follow them like we would in a local church.

There are some overarching biblical principles regarding women in worship. The Bible speaks primarily to human persons made in God’s image more than it does to male-specific and female-specific activities. There are some specifics to men and women; they are more to husbands and wives than anything else. But we are created in God’s image, male and female. Usually when God addresses people made in His image, He addresses men and women together made in His image. Sometimes in our desire to have gender-specific ministries in the church, which are appropriate, we have lost sight of the fact that most of the biblical instruction is given to image bearers of God as human persons. They are not separate species called male and female. It is gender within image bearers. Men and women alike are called to holiness, love, and Christ-likeness. The diversity of male and female is placed within the unity of human persons. This is an obvious thing that we tend to forget sometimes when we talk about male and female issues. The biblical structure is to serve the unity and oneness of the body of Christ. In other words, the Bible does affirm gender-based structure and office in the home and the church. But the purpose of those who are put in a position of leadership and authority, like husbands and elders, is to serve the families and the churches.

In the Mark Dalbey family, Beth, Steven, Kristen, and Eric do not exist to keep my headship propped up. That is not the purpose of headship, that the whole family would keep reminding itself every moment of every day that I am the head of the home. The purpose of headship is meant to be a leadership gift to serve the family. It is likewise with elders in the church. The church does not exist to keep male elders feeling good about being in charge. God puts qualified male elders in charge to serve the church well in Gospel-based shepherding ministry. Men and women are equal before God in several ways. They are made in God’s image, fallen, redeemed in Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, adopted as children and joint heirs with Christ, and gifted for the benefit of the church. We need to start there before we distinguish some other things that the Scripture does.

There are two important ways in which men are unique before God. The headship role in marriage is given to the husband, and the office of elder is given to qualified men set apart by ordination. The Scripture bears that out. Not all Bible-believing Christians completely agree with what I have just said. But I think I am right. Part of the reason I am in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) is because I believe that, even though it was a fairly long and painful journey coming out of another Presbyterian body when I was in seminary to come into the PCA. A lot of it had to do with this issue. The deeper-rooted issue at that time was the authority of Scripture to speak to issues like this. God’s design for the church is that the body of Christ is to function in mutual submission to Christ, the head. God has given

order and structure for the smooth functioning of the church. The distinction between office and gifts is essential to understanding the church. There are people who have gifts that can be exercised, but these people may not be permitted to hold an office. We will see some examples of that later. The leadership office of elder is restricted to men, yet women exercise gifts in partnership with men and under the authority of elders.

Let us talk about the participation and leadership of women in worship. Women are not to have teaching authority in church worship. This is based on 1 Timothy 2. Women are to participate and exercise gifts in worship. The 1 Corinthians 11:5 passage essentially says, "When women pray and prophesy, they should have their heads covered." That is a wonderful picture of submission to the authority of those who are in the office of elder while exercising their gifts under that. The call to silence in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 does not mean absolute silence. It is silence in relationship to the speaking and ruling authority of elders. If it meant absolute silence then women could not sing songs, read responsive readings, or pray the Lord's Prayer with the congregation. It is a certain kind of silence. Almost nobody says that women should be absolutely silent. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 11, said that women are to pray and prophesy with covered heads. Now to say that women are to be silent does not mean that he forgot what he said earlier. It is a particular kind of silence needed when the authoritative judgment of these prophecies is being determined by the elders of the church.

Let us discuss what was decided regarding women and chapel involvement at Covenant Seminary. The primary leadership of the worship service should be conducted by those holding the office of elder or those preparing for the office of elder as part of their training as pastors. We basically designate someone who is going to lead worship. Though it may not stand out to the congregation, we know who the worship leader is of any given worship service in chapel. Usually it is me but not always. That is the one who, in a church, would have the delegated authority of the session to be the overseer of that worship service. I think it should be an elder, or in the case of seminary students, one training to be one. It could be someone training to be an elder in a local church, too. The preaching of the Word should be presented by those holding the office of elder or those preparing for the office of elder as part of the training of pastors. When we have a sermon at chapel, which happens in most of them, it is given by an elder. It can be a faculty member who is a teaching elder in the PCA or a guest missionary or pastor who is a teaching elder in the PCA. It could also be a senior student who has been selected by his fellow students to be one of the senior preachers. This is someone training to be an elder.

Since women are instructed regarding the manner of praying and prophesying in 1 Corinthians 11:5, the command to silence cannot mean absolute silence. Female participation in the corporate unison or responsive congregational voice in prayer, song, and Scripture reading should be encouraged and expected. If women are present when we are singing a song, we expect them to sing. They should not be silent. Female participation in a single voice in prayer, song, and Scripture reading, other than the reading directly related to the preaching of the Word, is appropriate under the authoritative leadership of elders. I believe that it is all right if I am the worship leader, Eric is preaching, and Jen Sanders (a friend's wife) has been asked to lead in prayer. It is all right to read a Scripture passage, give a testimony, or sing a solo. She is not usurping his preaching or my overseeing of worship. She is exercising a gift under the oversight of the elders for the edification of the church. Not having females involved in the reading of Scripture directly related to the preaching of the Word is not an absolute mandate of Scripture. It just seems to make sense in the way that we do preaching around here. You give a human-interest account while you are having people look up the Scripture. You have already started into your preaching before you read the Scripture passage, usually. In most people's minds the tying together of the passage being preached on authoritatively by an elder and the reading of that passage is closely linked. As a result it is potentially unnecessarily offensive to some to have a woman read that



passage. You have to realize that different people are going to fall in different places of application here. So that is what we have decided to make our practice. We are not saying this is a hard and fast biblical rule for all time.

Other types of single voice speaking by women or non-elder men beyond song, prayer, and Scripture reading should be limited to the giving of testimony, sharing, encouraging, and occasional presenting of biblical principles for godly living in an area of one's personal expertise when it meets a particular need of the Covenant Seminary community. For example, we may invite a male archaeologist to speak in chapel. He is not an elder, but in the archeology chapel he has something to offer, out of his expertise, to the seminary community. Edith Schaeffer has spoken in chapel before. Susan Hunt, who worked with women's ministries, and Diane Langberg, who has done counseling ministries, have spoken. There have not been a lot of women who have spoken. In the last three years we have probably only had two or three women speak in chapel. Some of those have been interview formats rather than standing in front of the pulpit and speaking. In most local churches that would be something where the women would give a three-minute testimony and lead a combined adult Sunday school class in the same day. Part of it is the chapel dynamic, which is like an all-campus Sunday school class. Ministry lunches have begun to fill some of that role and give other venues than the chapel service for some things we do with that. The type of speaking of women and non-elder men should not be presented with the authority of the office of elder but under the authority of elder leadership. Female participation should be implemented with sensitivity to brothers and sisters who may apply biblical principles differently. As the denominational seminary, we must be sensitive to those who may disagree without stifling the participation of women and non-elder men in chapel worship services. That is a fine line sometimes, knowing what to do. In conclusion, women may individually sing, pray, and read Scripture at Covenant chapel worship services under the official worship leadership. Women may make announcements, give testimonies, and present mission moments at Covenant chapel worship services. On occasion women and non-elder men may be asked to present biblical principles for godly living in an area of one's personal expertise when it meets a particular need of the Covenant Seminary community so long as it is clearly under the authority of the administrative leadership of the seminary with direct oversight exercised through the dean of students.

That is where we come out on that. In my seven years here, we have probably had women students give testimonies 10-15 times, once or twice a year. We have had women pray and give mission moments at times. A few women have been speakers in chapel under this expertise clause. Christine Pole from Asbury Seminary has written a book called *Making Room on Hospitality*. She was a Schaeffer lecturer, and we had her talk in a chapel on hospitality. It is an area of her expertise, and she is an important voice in that that our seminary can benefit from. So we wanted to have her come and do that. She was not preaching; she was giving a talk about that area in which she has invested much of her life in doing study, research, and practice. Her expertise included some time in L'Abri, which was a nice connection to the Schaeffer lectures.

Let us talk about other venues for women to teach in. We had a Schaeffer lecture series where Dan Doriani, a professor here, and some others spoke on the issue of women in the church. The next year we talked about women in society with some other speakers. Dr. Doriani has written a book called *Women in Ministry*, which addresses some of these things. The issue is authoritative teaching from the 1 Timothy 2 passage. That is connected to the office of elder. Primarily women are not to hold the office of elder because inherent in the office is the teaching authority in the church. Under that teaching authority people's gifts can be utilized and exercised for the edification of the church. Preaching in a worship service is so close to *defacto* teaching, with authority's stamp upon it, that a woman ought not to preach in a worship service. Can she teach a Sunday school class with men present? Some people would say no, never. Jerram Barrs, a professor here, actually tells a story of an experience of someone

he knows who was teaching a group of women in a church, and one of the husbands came a little early to pick up his wife and sat in the back row. The up-front woman quit speaking because a man was present. That would be an extreme view on one side. I do not think that is consistent with biblical teaching. If it was all the husbands and wives present, could the woman teach? As long as she is clearly there with the stamp of approval of the elders, she has particular giftedness at teaching, and is theologically sound the same way you would have any non-elder man teach, I think the standards are the same. Dr. Doriani argues that if she teaches an adult Sunday school class year after year for a certain amount of time, it begins to have the stamp of an inherent authority. He would say it should be for a limited time. Whereas another woman on the panel during that lecture series said, "In my church there are elders present, and it is not viewed that I have the authority of the office of elder when I teach." There is a range of views. I tend to lean toward Dr. Doriani's side, but I do not have any legalistic time frame. You almost have to decide on a case-by-case basis regarding the context of the congregation, the attitude of the woman teaching, and the benefit to the congregation. Should an elder teach the class instead of either a woman or a non-elder man? There are a lot of dynamics there. Another way of doing it is husband and wife teaching. You could bring in the expertise and personal life experience of a woman when husband and wife teach as a team.

There is a lot of overlap between preaching and teaching. But they are also distinguishable. The element of the preaching of the Word is a vital part of the corporate worship service. The preacher should be one holding the office of elder almost always. I can envision a rare exception. Sometimes those exceptions are in a place where there is no one present who is able, gifted, or ordained. For example, in a missions setting it may be that the only person who has a Bible, understands, and is able to teach in a worship setting is a theologically trained Covenant Seminary grad with a Master's degree. Ordinarily a pastor should be present for the administration of the Lord's Supper, but I can envision times during which it would be better to have the Lord's Supper even though a pastor is not present. Ordinarily it should be an elder, but at times there may be a non-elder man or woman who is the only one present with the ability, gifts, and knowledge to be able to teach and instruct. In those extra-ordinary cases, the edification from the Word would be more important than having someone who holds the office of elder. But you do not make a rule from the exception. You note it as an exception. I can envision places in the advancing of the Gospel where it may be necessary, right, and good. Praise God there is somebody there who can open the Word and proclaim the Gospel to a people who desperately need it. I see women and non-elder men in the same category in that regard. They could meet a need in the moment where there is no elder present.