

Reasons why sisters should be encouraged to offer the same service as brothers in ecclesial activities

- Believers are “all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). Divisions of gender, race or status should no longer count within the Christian community.
- Women, like men, have a range of talents and abilities, all of which should be offered to Christ in service.
- Jesus brought a new freedom and status to women.
- Jesus encouraged women to learn, unlike teachers in the pagan and Jewish worlds (Luke 10:39-42).
- Jesus used women to spread his message (John 4:27-42, Mark 15:40-41, Luke 23:55).
- On the day of Pentecost both men and women were empowered to preach the Gospel (Acts 2:15-18).
- Paul listed the activities of the church in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:11-16. These lists are not divided into male and female roles, but “according to the grace that is given to us” (Romans 12:6).
- Paul addressed his main letters to *all* members of the church, calling them *adelphoi* “brothers and sisters”.
- Paul approved of sisters praying and prophesying in the assembly (1 Corinthians 11:5-13).
- Paul expressed the wish that *all* should prophesy, which involved addressing the assembly with edifying words (1 Corinthians 14:3-5). Note NRSV and revised GNB which avoid the mistakenly masculine impression conveyed by older translations.

“Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy. ... those who prophesy speak to other people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation ... those who prophesy build up the church... Now I would like all of you to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy.” (NRSV)

- Paul encouraged believers to “teach and admonish one another in all wisdom” (Colossians 3:16).
- Paul showed this in practice, regarding the women with whom he worked as colleagues (Philippians 4:2-3).
- History and church tradition since New Testament times show an anti-women approach based on pagan thinking, mistaken medical understanding and a selectively anti-women reading of the New Testament.
- Christadelphians rejected church tradition when our community began last century. We rejected the clergy/laity distinction, but kept the male/female one.
- It demeans sisters to discourage them from using their God-given abilities (Matthew 7:12).
- Those who prepare addresses benefit others and benefit personally. This applies to both brothers and sisters.
- Sisters can see things from a different point of view. We are all the losers if we cannot benefit from their wisdom, knowledge, learning, insight and experience.
- Now that women are well-educated, capably employed in all sections of society, there is positive harm in refusing to make proper use of their talents in ecclesial activity.
- If we are to be faithful to the teaching of the Bible and to the talents with which God has entrusted us, we should encourage sisters to speak, write, read, pray, teach, and take part in decision-making – just as we do brothers.
- God said: “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18). It was not; it is not.

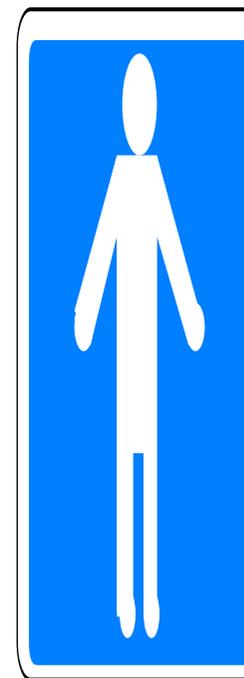
But what about ... ?

- 1 Corinthians 14:34 “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak ...”
The context suggests that this refers to disruptive behaviour by some women, not to the capable behaviour of those sisters who offered prayer and prophesied (chapter 11:2-16) edifying the church by their words (14:3-5, 24, 26), of whom Paul approved.
- 1 Timothy 2:12 “I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”
This is addressed to specific problems in Ephesus. It does not refer to Christian service by sisters who are capable of teaching the message properly – such as Priscilla who (along with her husband Aquila) taught Apollos (Acts 18:26). Paul’s final words on teaching are: “... what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people [i.e. men and women, not men alone] who will be able to teach others as well” (2 Timothy 2:2, NRSV).

This leaflet gives a quick outline of the reasons why sisters and brothers should work together equally in Christ to offer their talents for use in God’s service. For a detailed exposition, with explanation of the Jewish and pagan background, the varied history and teaching within the Christadelphian community, and suggestions for today, please see *All One in Christ Jesus*, in book form £10 (incl. postage) or free download from:

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Note

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