**“Gender Dynamics in Church Leadership”**

**Classis GR East Leadership Development Team**

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Summary of 4 podcasts by Jim Herrington and Trisha Taylor (Houston TX; Ridder Renewal)   ​<http://www.jimtherrington.com/mfjp-09/>

1. What is God's Design for Men and Women as They Work Together?

* (5:45) God created male and female in His image as equal partners in kingdom living
* (7:00) God’s design in creation was that men & women share the work of stewarding
* (12:00) Jesus redefined power and authority in a way that makes room for everybody
* (13:00) Jesus related to women in ways that scandalized contemporaries
* (14:30) Jesus challenged patriarchal authority patterns & promoted partnership
* (17:45) we all tend to read the Bible with our own assumptions, until we’re challenged
* (19:00) our challenge is to interpret Scripture for our time & place, our context
* (22:00) we aren’t arguing about scriptural authority, but the interpretation of scripture
* (24:00) no one takes all of scripture literally; inconsistency stalks our interpretations
* (28:30) God’s design is sacrificial mutual support in using our gifts as fully as possible
* (31:30) because men do have more power in the church, we will not make progress until men take this issue seriously & empower women in leadership
* (35:45) the stakes are high: this involves doing justice and pursing God’s mission together

1. What About the Billy Graham Rule?

 (7:00) Billy Graham’s rule: that he wouldn’t be alone with a woman under any circumstances

 (11:15) we have to acknowledge the risks of men & women working together, but not act as if all women are temptresses and all men are predators

* (13:30) there is also a risk in **not** working together; our mission is much bigger than the risk

 (15:00) our choice is not between the “rules” and no boundaries; we need more mature discussion

* (17:00) the “rules” aren’t working; we need an honest conversation about healthy relationships

 (18:00) the impact on Trisha: she feels she often doesn’t get invited to the table, or has to work under insulting circumstances (like being treated as a chaperone or a dangerous presence)

* (22:15) the impact of gender assumptions on Jim: they either let him off the hook for misbehavior, or treat him as a helpless victim of passion, not someone working to overcome the risks

 (24:00) Jim & Trisha address the risks by nurturing their own marriages, sharing everything with their spouses, maintaining openness about any embarrassment or discomfort the other person may cause, and never meeting privately when traveling

* (31:30) what about the appearance of evil? both of them pay attention to appearances and use common sense about the circumstances when they meet together

 (33:45) it’s important for them to develop clear boundaries with each other & their spouses

* (34:00) the risks of **not** working together: if we aren’t all at the table, the church isn’t getting what it needs and we’re not using all the gifts God has given us; women can be treated as second-class citizens in the church, and they might not get the mentoring they need; single men & women can also be marginalized, with the result that Christian community is not what it should be
* (38:00) – if men in the church were treated the way women often are, they would be furious, and they would never tolerate it as long as women have

1. Can You Hear What I'm Saying?

* (3:30) summary of the previous two podcasts
* (6:00) good relationships are maintained by courageous conversations about our differences
* (6:30) men & women have been socialized to communicate differently: not only in style, but also in how we share power, how we give feedback, how we assert our opinions, how we yield or lead
* (9:00) Trisha remembers being conditioned from early in life not to be “bossy,” but to hold back, and to make a man think an idea was his instead of taking credit for it herself
* (10:00) Jim remembers it took Trisha a long time to tell him of an offense he had committed (unintentionally), and at the time she thought she just had to take it
* (11:45) Jim was oblivious to the hurt he had caused her; Trisha finally realized that she had to be more assertive, even though assertive women are often regarded as unpleasant
* (13:30) once Trisha decided she needed to have a courageous conversation, Jim’s calm acceptance of her concern gave her affirmation of her right to speak out
* (15:30) Jim appreciates how Trisha raised the issue not by attacking, but by saying “this is how I experienced that.” She appealed to his empathy rather than arousing defensiveness.
* (17:00) it’s important to give each other the benefit of the doubt: men “made the rules” for professional communication & invited women to fit in; now men need to be open to new rules
* (18:00) improving communication is an ongoing process of giving each other real-time feedback
* (19:30) when men give feedback to women, they sometimes use gendered language (you’re too emotional, pushy, etc.), which is language women hear as silencing their views
* (20:15) men -- especially strong leaders -- need women who give them truthful feedback
* (22:00) complete agreement is not necessary, but we need mutuality in communication
* (23:00) emotional maturity involves being able to speak & listen with respect for each other
* (24:00) our culture presumes that men have the standard view of reality and women have their own distinctive perspective; in fact, both men & women see reality through a filter, and we get closer to the truth when we share our views
* (26:00) if male leaders don’t listen deeply, the morale of others & their own success will suffer
* (30:00) interrupting can be offensive & needs to be challenged, but not taken personally
* (32:45) “mansplaining” happens (men posing as experts to explain something to a woman); but if a man is honestly presenting his perspective, he should not be shut down as “mansplaining”

4. How Can Men and Women Support Each Other in This Journey?

* (2:30) summary of the previous three podcasts
* (7:00) it’s risky, but necessary, for leaders in the church to take an egalitarian position
* (8:00) women can help men by giving them healthy feedback: by graciously alerting them to offenses they may unintentionally commit, or to ways that a man’s language may hurt
* (10:30) we need to choose discomfort over resentment in confronting offenses, while also hearing the other person’s heart and remembering the big picture of that relationship
* (15:45) men need to accept hard feedback by being safe listeners, not becoming defensive
* (16:45) Sheila thinks the greatest current need for women in the church is to be invited to the table -- respectfully, for their gifts, and not as token females
* (23:30) leaders need to give women the same mentoring as men in the church
* (24:30) women in a system must be paid equally with men who have similar duties
* (26:30) men & women leaders can alert each other to unintended mistakes
* (27:45) affirmation and public recognition are as crucial for woman as for men
* (29:45) we need to create some anxiety in our systems when an injustice is identified
* (30:45) to sensitize themselves, men should intentionally read female authors and listen to female voices, especially in areas of ministry and spiritual life
* (33:30) the bottom line: men & women both need mutual respect and appreciation; these are basic human needs & aspects of the mature love that our congregations need to foster