WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

Posted on March 15, 2013 by Eddie

Category: Observations

The question of the role of women in Church leadership is one which gets a lot of airing both in Christian circles and in the wider press. However, it's one that we rarely touch on here at Kouyanet. This is mainly because it isn't an issue which impinges directly onto our areas of interest. However, when I came across this piece by Onesimus, I decided that I had to post a link to it. There are a couple of points of interest: it is written by an Orthodox scholar based in Kenya (though with an evangelical background), but most importantly it takes a slant on the question that I've never seen before.

> *A few thoughts on Church â€˜leadershipâ€™ as we find it in the New Testament.Â First we must understand that â€˜leadershipâ€™ is not a New Testament word; itâ€™s a modern word.Â Leadership implies authority, initiative, direction, management and control.Â In many ways, leadership is aÂ powerÂ word, and assumes a perspective on the world around us and takes on a certain posture and demands a certain course of action.Â Leadership is aÂ manâ€™sÂ word and its context describes aÂ manâ€™sÂ context.Â Today churches of all kinds have seminars on â€˜leadershipâ€™. We give our shepherds three easy steps on being a more effective leader.Â So many of our churches are so large that we need our â€˜leadersâ€™ to become more effective managers.Â All of this is intended to enable our churches to function as effective institutions.Â But none of this is found in our New Testament.Â In fact, the emphasis throughout, indeed the direct teaching of Jesus himself and the apostles takes us in the exactÂ oppositeÂ direction.*
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> *Jesusâ€™ followers were to be different.Â They were not to be like certain Gentiles, who lived to lord it over people.Â Nor were they to be like certain Jews who were keen to maintain the perks of position and power.Â Instead, Jesusâ€™ followers were to be different, known for putting the needs of others before their own, known for being like slaves in their readiness to do whatever for whoever was needy, known for being like Jesus himself.Â Â â€˜If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one anotherâ€™s feet.Â For I have set you an example that you also should do as I have done to you.â€™Â (John 13:14-15)Â In this Jesus leads by example.Â He takes on the posture of a slave, and for those homes too humble for a slave,Â the posture of a woman.*
> *Immediately after Jesus offers the disciples the bread of his body and the cup of his blood, a quarrel breaks out as to which one of them should be the one in charge over the rest of them.Â â€˜Jesus said to them, â€œThe kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors.Â But you are not to be like that.Â Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.Â For who is greater, the one is at the table or the one who serves?Â Is it not the one who is at the table?Â But I am among you as one who serves.â€™Â (Luke 22:25-27)Â This is only one of several examples that I could point to where the disciples import their cultural understanding of leadership into what Jesus is calling them to do and be,*

> *only to have Jesus present them with an alternative vision of what it means to be his people that is so radical and unexpected that his disciples simply cannot fathom it.*
> *I wish to suggest that it isnâ€™t just the disciples who had trouble fathoming Jesusâ€™ vision for discipleship and for the community of disciples that would be known by his name.Â Every generation of Christian church has struggled with the profound temptation to import the surrounding cultureâ€™s understanding of leadership and authority into the church.Â I want to suggest that when one looks at the historical record, one finds that the Church has repeatedly taken the easier road and abandoned Jesusâ€™ blueprint in favor of the way itâ€™s always been done.Â The evidence for this can be seen everywhere throughout the history of the Church to the present day.Â At almost every point, the church and her ministers look nothing like what Jesus was talking about and calling his followers to be and do.Â The discrepancy is simply shocking.*

If you wan't to know how this is applied to the question of women's ministry, read the whole article.