



Do not put out the Spirit's fire

Description

By Elizabeth Devlin

“Do not put out the Spirit's fire. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject whatever is harmful.” 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

Sometimes, the “gender debate” in our churches is viewed as being of lesser importance i.e. not a “salvation issue” and therefore the outcome will not have any serious consequences. And while it's true that the core message of God's gracious gift of salvation transcends all other issues, the gospel shouldn't be used as a trump card to silence or trivialise debate on this or other issues.

Such an attitude can belittle the experiences of women and men who have been hurt by their church's views on gender, but it also makes light of the rules that are designed to restrict and curtail how the Holy Spirit is allowed to work through God's people.

Trivialising the gender debate ignores the aspects of spiritual warfare that undergird the debate.

“God also testified to it [salvation] by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.” Hebrews 2:4

If we restrict the way in which women are allowed to use the spiritual gifts given to them according to God's will, are we working according to God's will or against it? Whose work are we really carrying out if we restrict the voice of the Holy Spirit?

Some Christians genuinely believe that they must convince at least half of other Christians that they shouldn't fully utilise their spiritual gifts, and in fact, *God actually requires them not to fully use their gifts*: humans created in God's image, reflecting God's image, saved through Christ's perfect sacrifice and restored to the position of fellow heirs with Christ, and yet somehow not authorised to act with the agency of such a position!

“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Gal 5:25

I encourage you to prayerfully consider how you can support people in your church to fully utilise their God-given gifts. I encourage you to love, and pray for, your fellow Christians who believe in restricting the use of God's gifts along gender lines.

And finally, I encourage you to seek out fellow believers who can support and pray with you (and you for them).



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