

Unity Through Embracing Our Diversity

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What role does fear play in our capacity to embrace difference?



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False Expectations/Evidence that Appear Real
What role does fear play in our capacity to embrace difference?

F.E.A.R.

False Expectations?

- Men
 - Fear woman want to “take over”
 - Fear of losing power
 - Fear things will get out of hand
 - Fear things will become too emotional
 - Fear of being “attracted to” or “tempted by” women
 - Response: must keep women out
- Women
 - Fear of not being seen and heard
 - Fear of not having a place in the body and/or at the table
 - Fear of being seen as not valued or inadequate
 - Fear of men being afraid of her presence
 - Response: Grapple after a place or power to be seen and heard; or tries to demand space and a place



Common FEARS by Men and Women

Top 10 Fears - According to Morin (2020)

- Change
- Loneliness
- Failure
- Rejection
- Uncertainty
- Something Bad Happening
- Getting Hurt
- Being Judged
- Inadequacy
- Loss of Freedom

Morin (2020). Top 10 fears that Hold People Back in Life. *Psychology Today*. What Mentally Strong People Do



Driven by FEAR or by FAITH?

In *Co-Laborers, Co-Heirs: A Family Conversation*, Lauterbach (2019) asks several questions of the leadership and men in the church.

- Do you respect women? *Do you respect those from a different culture?*
- Do you seek to know and nurture women?
- Do you believe the work of the Holy Spirit in women *and minorities?*
- Do you believe the Lord has gifted women *and minorities* to serve in the body in the same capacity as men?
- Are you inviting women *and minorities* to participate in the kingdom purposes of God?
- Have you listened to their stories?

What Gets in the Way?

Galatians 3:28-29

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Joel 2:28-30

“And afterward, I will pour my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heaven, and on the earth.”

What would the church be like without women?

*The distinctiveness of each member does not destroy the unity of the body; the unity of the body does not annul the distinctiveness of each member...The new creation will be beautiful because there will be harmony and right relationship between God and humanity, among humanity, and among all that God has made. **Each thing will be most truly what it is, and _ what is more, and amazing_ the utterly distinct character of each being will contribute to the beauty of the whole. (Meek)***

Not the Way It's Supposed to Be

We need each other to truly function as God ordained; without this we become dysfunctional. (Dysfunctional Team Pyramid)



Gathered Together for the Work of the
Kingdom
We Need Each Other





Seek Fairness and Justice/Build Trust

The vast majority of visible Christian leadership, however, continues to be male; glass walls and ceilings are still firmly in place. These limit women's (*and minorities'*) access and mobility in using all of their gifts for service at all levels of the church. ***These walls and ceilings need to be acknowledged and broken down by patient, deliberate action and advocacy by both men and women*** at local, regional, and national levels. Women should not have to carry this burden alone. Men need to move beyond mere toleration and tokenism, where it exists, and take deliberate affirmative steps to ***seek fairness and justice for women in their circle of influence.*** (Hestenes, 2008)

1 John 4:18

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear because fear involves torment. He who fears is not made perfect in love.

FEAR = Harm to Self/Harm to Others

Fear causes us to do harm to self and others

- Fear is paralyzing
- Causes us to self-protect and thus not love.
- Fear also tells us that something is wrong and this can be a good thing; it tells us to pay attention as something is happening.



FEAR = Harm to Self/Harm to Others

For those in the minority the need for trust remains a challenge, especially if memories are saturated with wounds.

What's Needed?

The Mind of Christ

To Love as He Loves

What does it mean to have the mind of Christ around these issues?

- Jesus sat with the sinner, he sat with the Samaritan woman at the well. He knew her, and yet he listened. He spoke life and peace to her. He must have known she would go and tell. He must have known she would serve Him and proclaim the kingdom of God at hand.

The Mind of Christ

- After her encounter with Jesus, what would you determine as her “calling”.
- Had she been called?
- Did Jesus just want to set her free, but to no end beyond herself.
- For what reason was life spoken into her being?
- We get a story about God, Christ Jesus and the Samaritan women.

Jesus showed up!



The Mind of Christ

Dan Siegel and Tina Bryson in their book, *The Power of Showing Up*, talk about the power and secure attachment created in children when their parents show up. When we show up four things happen and are created.

- *Safe*
- *Seen*
- *Soothed*
- *Secure*

How might this be relevant for how we interact with women and minorities in the church?



The Mind of Christ

- **Safe:** We can't always insulate a child from injury or avoid doing something that leads to hurt feelings. But when we give a child a sense of safe harbor, she will be able to take the needed risks for growth and change. **Do we create safe space in the church?**
- **Seen:** Truly seeing a child means we pay attention to his emotions—both positive and negative—and strive to attune to what's happening in his mind *beneath* his behavior. **Do we see women and those different from us? Do we show them they are seen?**
- **Soothed:** Soothing isn't about providing a life of ease; it's about teaching your child how to cope when life gets hard, and showing him that you'll be there with him along the way. A soothed child knows that he'll never have to suffer alone. **Do we let them know they are not in this alone?**
- **Secure:** When a child (woman or minority) knows she can count on you, time and again, to show **up—when you reliably provide safety, focus on seeing her, and soothe her in times of need, she will trust in a feeling of secure attachment. And thrive!**

The Mind of Christ

*What might be the significance of Christ sitting with the Samaritan woman? **He loved her.***

John 13:35

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

What Is Needed?

*Only the rediscovery of the wholeness of the gospel as given in Scripture and incarnated in Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection takes us forward in our efforts to be faithful disciples. **The power of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to grow in love and humility as we engage in a genuinely respectful dialogue that works to maintain the unity of the faith while acknowledging serious differences.** Differences among Christians over biblical interpretations of the role of women should not be allowed to become destroyers of unity and fellowship in the faith. Knowing that we belong to God our Savior gives us hope and a foundation that can hold us firmly even in the midst of the most painful disagreements with fellow Christians.* (Hestenes, 2008).

What Is Needed?

2 Timothy 1:7

*God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power
and of love and of a sound mind.*

What Is Needed?

Zig Zigler, an American salesman, author and motivational speaker once made a statement about FEAR that I think we can apply to the church around these issues.

***“Fear has 2 meanings You can forget everything
and run or you can face everything and rise.
The choice is yours.”***

What Is Needed?

- Practice Humility with Biblical Faithfulness
- Examine the worship, music and language used to ensure it is inclusive.
- Examine ministries of the church to see if women/minorities are serving and taken seriously in their calling and gifting.
- Be intentional and proactive in encouraging women/minorities to serve in roles that have traditionally been closed.
- Allow the voice of women/minorities to be heard at session and diaconal meetings especially when and where there is an issue with a woman to be addressed.
- Encourage women/minorities to write and publish on related issues in the church.
- Practice advocacy for minorities, girls, women, and young people. Provide scholarships, trainings, to help equip them for the call of God over their lives. (Hestenes, 2008)

What Will You Do?

In light of the God's perfect love, what will you do?

- Will you repent?
- Will you ask forgiveness?
- Will you pray and ask God to deliver you from a spirit of Fear?

Do the thing you fear the most, and the death of fear is certain.~ Mark Twain

Psalm 34:4

I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

