

Does it matter that only two passages in the New Testament forbid the ordination of women?

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One of the repeated objections to the traditional teaching that women are not to serve as pastors is that only two passages in the New Testament directly forbid this practice. That is true! They are 1 Corinthians 14:33^b-38 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14. Yet those two passages are backed up by Christ's choice of men as apostles, the nomination of two 'men' by the church in Jerusalem in Acts 1:21 as candidates to replace Judas, and tradition of the Early Church.

The argument from frequency of testimony itself is weak, for the truth of God's teaching does not depend on how frequently that matter is mentioned in the New Testament. What matters is that an article of faith or a practice is taught by Christ and his apostles, not how often it is taught. It must also be consistent with what else is taught and not contradict any other clear article of faith.

If the church would refuse to accept a doctrine or practice that was not mentioned more than two times, it would have to call into question the following teachings and practices.

1. The following articles of faith from the Apostles Creed and Nicene Creed would not pass the test.

- Christ's conception by the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20; Luke 1:35)
- Christ as one substance/one being with God the Father (Hebrews 1:3; John 10:30?)
- Christ's descent into hell (1 Peter 3:19; Eph 4:7-10?)
- Christ as the Judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4:1)
- The Holy Spirit as Lord (1 Cor 3:18)
- The Holy Spirit as the Life Giver (John 6:63)
- The procession of the Holy Spirit from God the Father (John 15:26)
- Baptism for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16)

2. The following liturgical practices could also be dismissed.

- The teaching of one baptism rather than repeated washings in Ephesians 4:5
- Christ's command to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in Matthew 28:19
- Christ's command for the ongoing celebration of Holy Communion (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24-25)
- Christ's instruction to pray the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4)

While it is argued that only two NT passages forbid the ordination of women, there is not even one passage in the NT that actually authorises women to be pastors. Galatians 3:28 is

the only text that has been used to support the case. Yet that verse does not speak about the ordained ministry but only about the unity of baptised women and men as co-heirs with Jesus in the family of God.

The ordination of women is part of the doctrine of the apostolic ministry of Christ, the ministry of word and sacrament. It is in itself not an article of faith but a practice that has been instituted by Christ and his apostles. As a practical matter it is remarkable that it is mentioned at all, let alone twice in two completely different contexts. Nevertheless the weight of these passages does not depend on their repetition but on the reasons given for their prohibition of women as pastors, the chief of which is that this is a command of Christ.