

# HEARING WOMEN'S VOICES IN COMPLEMENTARIAN CHURCHES

## WHY should male church leaders hear women's voices?

- Women have an exalted helper design.
- Women are indispensable to God's good purposes.

Jen Wilkin *In the un-haunted church where love trumps fear, women are viewed (and view themselves) as allies rather than antagonists, sisters rather than seductresses, co-labourers rather than children.*<sup>1</sup>

### Scenario 1

Sophie feels frustrated with the male elders at Anytown Church. She is a partner in a law firm and used to expressing her views in partners meetings. She serves faithfully in Sunday school and makes sacrifices to attend her life group mid week. She's been involved in church life for over 10 years and during that time her personal circumstances have changed, and she is single and feels this keenly and supports her aging mother who lives a distance away. On a Sunday evening she shares a pew with one of the elders. At the end of the service he greets her briefly and starts to chat about his work and family life. Sophie is waiting for him to ask questions about her upcoming work responsibilities as she is dreading going into the office on Monday morning and has a difficult partners meeting that week. But he doesn't. She thinks he may ask how did Sunday school go that morning but he doesn't. She is aware that the elders are discussing a possible church plant her side of town but before she can ask questions he excuses himself and five minutes later she sees him deep in animated conversation with one of the younger men who attends a preaching class.

- *What opportunities to hear Sophie's voice does the elder in this scenario miss?*
- *How could this elder have shown value to this woman, heard her concerns and benefitted from her perspective?*

### Scenario 2

The elders at Neighbourhood Community Church have recently decided that they should appoint their first women's worker. They haven't written a job description or thought how a female staff member would relate to them as trustees/ employers/ elders but they know they need to. They decide to consult a number of women who serve sacrificially in a voluntary capacity in different ministries in church life. So they set up a "working group" and ask one of the women to chair it and an elder will attend. They particularly want to hear the concerns and perspectives of women. They ask the woman chairperson to come up with the agenda and questions to be discussed and after the meeting invite her and one of the participants to meet the elders to give feedback. They listen well, and ask them to help in drafting a job description and proposal to be jointly communicated to the next church members meeting.

- *How do the women feel valued and reflect God's good design in this scenario?*
- *What impact will this approach have on the church family?*

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<sup>1</sup> [3 Female Ghosts that Haunt the Church \(thegospelcoalition.org\)](https://thegospelcoalition.org) accessed 15.7.24

## HOW can male elders hear women's voices/ perspectives on church life.

- **Hearing women in your decision making**
- **Hearing women on your staff team**
- **Hearing women who teach/ exercise word gifts.**
- **Hearing women who serve**
- **Hearing women in church services**
- **Hearing women praying publicly**

### A word to women

“Brothers and sisters, your joint participation and unique design is necessary to the mission of the church. We cannot have one without the other. So pastors, (church leaders) invite women in. **Women, heed the call seriously.** May our churches reflect God's image more clearly in the days ahead.”<sup>2</sup>

### DISCUSSION

“Annabel comes to speak to you as an elder and says that she feels women's voices are overlooked and not heard in your church. She serves in various ministries, is passionate about sharing the gospel with her friends and work colleagues and is a keen and enthusiastic Christian.

*How legitimate do you think her perspective is and what would you say to encourage her and to show that you value her insights and views on all that is happening in church life?”*

### PERSONAL REFLECTION

- Something to explore further
- Something I've learnt
- Something to change...

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<sup>2</sup> [Don't Sideline the Women in Your Church Plant \(thegospelcoalition.org\)](http://thegospelcoalition.org) Accessed 15.7.24.