**Preaching to Women**

**Questions for women in churches**

1. Teaching on what issues would better equip you to face the challenges of living as a Christian woman in today’s culture?

How to support Christian women with broken relationships

Responded to those with mental health challenges in a helpful and supportive way

How to respond well to questions about same sex relationships from Christians

Time management – priorities

2. What do you appreciate in a sermon preached by a man when it comes to illustrations used?

That the man accepts that women think differently about some subjects

That they aren’t biased just to his experiences

That he has spoken to women and asked their thoughts not just decided he knows how they think

Well-read on women’s issues/needs

Biblically accurate

3. Do you find Bible translations that use the words ‘men’ and ‘brothers’ when referring to men and woman off-putting?

Depends on how I’m feeling – mostly I just tell myself its referring to everyone and is just a generic term and historical /cultural for Bible times.

4. How can preachers use application that connects with women?

Spend time with women really listening to them

Read Christian books written by women

5. In the public prayer of the church, how aware are those praying of issues or struggles of particular relevance to women?

In our church it is addressed well, there is a balance in prayers for all situations

6. What, as a woman, do you appreciate most about the way your pastor preaches?

Caring

Considerate

Thoughtful

Not undervaluing the role of women

7. Are there any barriers to you hearing God’s word explained and applied that you would like to share with the men who preach in your church?

No, but if I did have an issue I would feel happy to speak to them.

**Preaching to Women**

1. Teaching on what issues would better equip you to face the challenges of living as a Christian woman in today’s culture?

* I don't think there's anything specific to being a woman here, to be honest. I think it is helpful, generally, to break the silence around issues like miscarriage, infertility, pornography etc., but I also think it's quite important that they **aren't**seen as single-gender issues.
* Singleness, biblical principles of the different roles of men and women

2. What do you appreciate in a sermon preached by a man when it comes to illustrations used?

* Aptness - and reflecting congregation's knowledge experience rather than just their own.
* As with most illustrations, I find them most useful when they are funny, interesting and related to the topic. I am not put off by a male-centric illustration, unless the preacher seems to be assuming that everyone shares the same life experience. Illustration related to men (friendships between men/brothers, male bathrooms, being a husband) are fine as long as the preacher knows its a specific experience not everyone will relate directly to.
* I appreciate when a man refers to things women might struggle with e.g. childbirth, relational struggles with friendships etc. things that refer to things men and women both might struggle with.

3. Do you find Bible translations that use the words ‘men’ and ‘brothers’ when referring to men and woman off-putting?

* No, not personally, and actually it actively frustrates me sometimes when gender neutralising makes a connection less obvious (an example from this week was the NIV changing 'son of man that you care for him' in Ps 8 to 'human beings'). I kind of wish 'siblings' was a standard enough word in English for us to use that for adelphoi, but think the expansion to 'brothers and sisters' or the footnote explanations get the same message across. What I actually find much harder than men/brothers language is the way that the OT law often seems to assume a male audience!
* No, I feel included in those statements.
* Not particularly.

4. How can preachers use application that connects with women?

* Hopefully the same way they apply to all demographics beyond their own! - i.e. by knowing well and engaging deeply with the life experiences of people across the congregation. But perhaps specifically to catch blind spots about women's experiences, some practical steps could be discussing with women while preparing, and asking a woman to proof-read/feed into the sermon.
* I think most categories will cover both genders because age and stage of life is more significant than gender (children, uni students, young professionals, retirees, parents, etc), except for the split between working Dads and stay-at-home Mums. So being aware of those who aren't in full-time education or employment.
* Similar to question 2. things that might generally apply to both genders? Not necessarily singling out men or women?

5. In the public prayer of the church, how aware are those praying of issues or struggles of particular relevance to women?

* We actually tend to have more women praying from the front in a Sunday service than men, and these prayers tend to stay on a fairly high level (i.e. not particularly delving into specific situations to the point that male/female difference comes into play). However, there is pretty regular feedback from people in the church (mostly from other women, to be fair) who appreciate something about hearing women praying - usually along the lines of something being phrased in a helpful or insightful way. One specific thing we did when we covered Judges 19 (and this was years ago now, before it was so normal for women to be doing the main prayer in a service) was shake up the service order to have the sermon earlier, then have a woman come to pray at greater length than usual, in line with the issues of sexual abuse, and then have some lamenting songs of response.
* In my experience, the prayers don't tend to be gender-specific. Do sometimes refer to new mothers or new widows (more often than their male counterparts).
* Haven't considered that one before!

6. What, as a woman, do you appreciate most about the way your pastor preaches?

* I appreciate a *lot*about the way he preaches just as ... you know, a Christian! I do think that one of his strengths is on-point application - he is careful to cover lots of different experiences and situations. More specifically, it is really obvious from the way he handles and applies passages that he sees and values women - I particularly remember a staff meeting where he got choked up over the language of Judges 5:30 about Sisera's army having 'a womb or two for each man.' So there's a real sense that he recognises and grieves over the pain and abuse that women are at greater risk of.
* Our pastor takes the emotional impact of his sermons very seriously, thinking carefully about application for the whole church and can often become emotional. I appreciate that he is emotionally affected by the passage.
* I think looking at the context of a passage then directly applying it to specific circumstances that, as I have pointed out before, can connect to men and women not just men!

7. Are there any barriers to you hearing God’s word explained and applied that you would like to share with the men who preach in your church?

* Well, now, that's a potential can of worms! This is not specific to my church (I feel very privileged to regularly hear preachers who do this already, or at least intend to!), but more widely, I'd want to let men who preach know that I do not want (only!) to be informed or educated, I want to be *changed*. In fact, I *need* to be changed! So please, please, please, do not explain and unpack what the passage means, and leave me (only) with a better understanding of what the writer was saying - *please*address the heart. Please go deep. Please make it personal. Please show me that God is worthy of worship, that my sin is ugly, that the Spirit is at work, that Jesus is beyond compare, and that glory is coming.
* Not particularly (I'd probably have to think on this more).

**Preaching to Women**

**Questions for women in churches**

1.Teaching on what issues would better equip you to face the challenges of living as a Christian woman in today’s culture?

- Avoiding covetousness /comparison with others.

- Complementarianism in practice - Biblical basis, what does it look like in the church, in marriage, how do we confidently affirm it to the next generation? I feel the tension between this biblical position and our society very frequently, and really want to be equipped to celebrate it and show its beauty to my daughter and younger women in the church, rather than it feeling like an embarrassing add-on to the requirements of following Jesus (not that my church presents it that way).

- Singleness. How to faithfully follow Jesus when it is painful to be growing older without a prospect of marriage and children (and how the church can be a place of welcome and family for those in this situation, overwhelmingly women in my experience).

2. What do you appreciate in a sermon preached by a man when it comes to illustrations used?

- Personal: It feels as though the preacher is inviting us in to his own journey of faith and sanctification when he is prepared to share illustrations from his own life. This also helps to create a culture of openness and honesty in the wider church.

3. Do you find Bible translations that use the words ‘men’ and ‘brothers’ when referring to men and woman off-putting?

- Yes. If the integrity of the translation is not affected by using 'men and women' then I believe this should be used to remove any unnecessary stumbling blocks to the accessibility of God's word.

4.How can preachers use application that connects with with women?

- Running content by women in advance would really help, whether that is a formal group of women that is consulted on preaching content, female staff members who help to refine content, or reading sermons to their wives (if applicable) in advance.

5.In the public prayer of the church, how aware are those praying of issues or struggles of particular relevance to women?

- In my church, I wouldn't say there is particular emphasis in public prayer on the struggles of women, but then neither would I say that any of the content is exclusively about the struggles of men either. Perhaps it is sometimes helpful to have segregated times of prayer where women could feel more able to share prayer requests without the presence of men.

- I know our church leadership will often approach women to ask them to contribute to public prayer meetings (as in, ask them to try to be one of the first people to pray when there is a time for spontaneous prayer) as this has been proven to then encourage other women to join in.

6.What, as a woman, do you appreciate most about the way your pastor preaches?

- Unapologetically finding the way to Jesus in every passage.

7.Are there any barriers to you hearing God’s word explained and applied that you would like to share with the men who preach in your church?

- It would be really encouraging to have some contexts in which women can teach the Bible, to gain another perspective, to highlight that the Bible is there for all of us to study and use to encourage others. I think there needs to be such care to not limit the roles and opportunities open to women within the church one tiny bit more than obedience to God's word requires.

*Questions for women in churches*

*1. Teaching on what issues would better equip you to face the challenges of living as a Christian woman in today’s culture?*

I can't think any specific issues I'd specifically want to be taught on. However, I think our preaching is most useful when it connects to how we live every day and the application is rooted in specifics. This will mean thinking carefully about the different circumstances of the women in a church family. How would this passage help them?

*2. What do you appreciate in a sermon preached by a man when it comes to illustrations used?*

A variety of illustrations that aren't just sport related. Also a understanding that there aren't necessarily women-specific illustrations. Don't assuming baking or crafts are suitable illustrations.

Use illustrations from your own life. But also talk to women in your church and find out what they are interested and how you might connect to them.

*3. Do you find Bible translations that use the words ‘men’ and ‘brothers’ when referring to men and woman off-putting?*

I don't think so. I am happy with a translation that uses either men or people. I think what I find more off-putting is the preacher using terms which only address the men in the room and forgets to address the women e.g. 'guys' or 'pastors'.

*4. How can preachers use application that connects with women?*

I think by remembering the different situations women find themselves in. What does this passage say to the woman with small children, the woman who is nearing retirement, the woman who hasn't had children/marriage, the woman who is a leader in their work.

*5. In the public prayer of the church, how aware are those praying of issues or struggles of particular relevance to women?*

I don't know if we regularly pray about issues which are particularly relevant to women. I'm not sure if I know what they could look like other than as above remembering women occupy a variety of situations in life so trying to be aware of those. When praying about mothers, remember not all women are mothers or can be so how can you include them in your prayers.

*6. What, as a woman, do you appreciate most about the way your pastor preaches?*

That they teach the whole church family as Christians equal in the sight of God. They faithfully communicate the meaning of the text and working hard to make it relevant to the different people in out church family.

*7. Are there any barriers to you hearing God’s word explained and applied that you would like to share with the men who preach in your church?*

I don't think so.

**Preaching to Women**

2. Illustrations around family life.

3. Not at all although they may need explaining to someone who has no Bible knowledge.

4. Be aware of pressures that women today are under ie

working mums, trying to be all things to everyone!

Women who are “in between”.... Looking after elderly parents and grandchildren.

Families with step parents

The workplace

Single women

In order to apply in a relevant way, preachers need to be aware of the pressures on women and spend time with them (in appropriate settings of course!) to get to know what life is like for them…. And/or listen to a women's worker (if there is one).

5. I think some are aware, but how that comes over in public prayer on a Sunday will vary. I can't make much comment on this to be honest.

6. It is applied/relevant and passionate. From his own experience

**Preaching to Women**

1. Lots of Biblical challenges would apply to men too, but contentment, friendship, family responsibilities and the role of women in the church seem like key topics.

2. Brief, relevant, amusing.

3. No

4. Maybe by avoiding having too many traditionally male topic based illustrations, e.g. sport.

5. We often pray about health matters or work place settings, but perhaps remembering relationships and family life.

6. Exposition, structure, application. But also real emotion and passion for God displayed as well as love for the congregation.

7. Sensitivity when talking about issues like abortion, abuse etc.

**Questions for women in churches**

1. Teaching on what issues would better equip you to face the challenges of living as a Christian woman in today’s culture?

One area I’m often struck by a need for teaching in is how to relate to one another as brothers and sisters in the church. Our culture has very few categories for friendships between the sexes as nearly all male/female relationships we see on screen or in wider culture are sexualised to some extent. The unique sibling, familial relationship we’re called to display in the church is powerful but it’s rarely something I hear teaching on. I think it’s a weak spot for us. I think its an area where there is a lot of fear, and therefore the sexes tend to pull away from one another in the church rather than come together in brotherly/sisterly love and I can’t help but feel the church is much weaker for that. The book ‘why cant we be friends’ by Aimee Byrd is really helpful on this.

I think we need to think about what our culture is teaching our women, they’re told from the world that mindfulness, self-care and self-promotion are essential to be a healthy strong woman. We’re told an overwhelming number of messages to the extent that we struggle to orientate ourselves. We need biblical teaching on anthropology, and help to see how the gospel both frees us and equips us to navigate the noise of the world.

2. What do you appreciate in a sermon preached by a man when it comes to illustrations used?

I think often the most helpful illustrations are when preachers connect with things that drive us, things we recognise as wanting or needing in life. Felt needs are very powerful to connect with here if we can then show how they find their fulfilment in Christ alone. Its sounds a cliché but thinking more wholly to the breadth of human experience rather than just defaulting to sporting illustrations. Good story telling is so helpful here and sometimes case study type illustrations can be really useful when it comes to fleshing out application. Also simply using women in the illustrations rather than subconsciously defaulting to famous men, male authors for quotes etc is helpful. Its so refreshing for example when a female theologian or matriarch is quoted rather than it always being men. Women aspire to what they’re shown, if we want more female theologians we need to show them those who have gone before to let them know this is an area where they too can flourish.

3. Do you find Bible translations that use the words ‘men’ and ‘brothers’ when referring to men and woman off-putting?

In short yes. Personally, I think the more we can have translations that include both ‘brothers and sisters’ and ‘men and women’ where that is the meaning of the original - the better. The absence of the word ‘women’ when it is implied in the original means that it will land differently to how the author intended. I think just because many of us know it means ‘brothers and sisters’ doesn’t mean we don’t need it to say brothers and sisters in our translations. We need to be mindful of non-believers, new Christians and also the way that God intends his word to connect with us when we read it. I can’t help but wonder if it was the other way round and if it consistently said ‘sisters’ rather than ‘brothers’ if there would be a wider call for a more accurate translations to be more mainstream.

4. How can preachers use application that connects with women?

I think considering the range of seasons women often go through in their lives and having applications into each of them over time is helpful. For example (not only relevant to women) but if all applications are to do with family or kids, this can be really hard for single or widowed women. Considering how something may apply to a women going through seasons of change, mentioning struggling with changes in your body, changes in your mental or physical agility, changes in your routine or capacity due to increasing age etc are helpful to have named by preachers as it helps people feel seen and connected with.

5. In the public prayer of the church, how aware are those praying of issues or struggles of particular relevance to women?

I have to admit I’m struggling to think of many examples of when uniquely female issues are prayed for publicly. Perhaps we hear prayer for ‘young mums’ or ‘widows’ prayed for but that I would say is rare and always very general.

6. What, as a woman, do you appreciate most about the way your pastor preaches?

I want a preacher to show me Christ in his word. Good preaching will highlight my ever-present need for Jesus, make me feel that, and then show me how he meets me, and how I can grow in loving and glorifying him more and more.

When big truths are connected to little moments of life is often when I feel most helped and equipped. It’s working the big truths into tiny moments, decisions, choices that leads to growth for me.

7. Are there any barriers to you hearing God’s word explained and applied that you would like to share with the men who preach in your church?

When the work has not gone in to edit and clarify a point that can be a real barrier. We’re not called to teach simplistically but we are called to teach clearly and if a sermon has got too much background or ‘working out’ still evident then that can cloud the point and be fatiguing for the listener.

**Preaching to Women**

1. Women faced with lots of different roles and society puts pressure on them
Mother
Wife
Daughter of elderly parents
Member of workforce
Pressure to do with appearance, fertlity, being super mum, bringing in a wage.
Stuff about women’s role in the Bible but what is historical context and what can be applied today.

2.Need a preacher who is respectful of women and the above pressures.
Non judgemental
Evidence that he understands and has experience of the above and doesn’t just leave the domestic stuff to the wife. He knows how to support her.

3.yes
4-
5 in women’s prayer groups yes.
In mixed groups -no
6. If pastor applies it to women’s situations
Zoom and livestream helpful.
7. Barriers would be where preacher has a lack of understanding of roles and pressures in Q1 and does not understand that women may be torn trying to deal with domestic issues /problems take care of elderly, infirm and get to church.

As I’m married to an extremely supportive non - Christian - respect and friendship towards my husband is important to me. People taking time out to get to know him.

**Preaching to Women**

1. Teaching on these issues would help me:
- The difference between anxiety and anxiety disorders, and  how faith links with them both
- How to help neurodivergent people come to church and fit in
- How to encourage parents who have children struggling with mental illness
- How Christians can cope with PTSD without feeling like imposters when they are with other Christians
- How to cope with family estrangement and still honour God through it all

2. I appreciate every single one of the sermons preached and all the illustrations used - including football and sports! I appreciate the time given to make the Word of God interesting and relevant, and it is the highlight of my week.

3. It depends on the context and what was written in the original. The NIV uses “brothers and sisters” in several places where the ESV only uses “brothers”. If you understand the meaning behind being called a “son” of God, you understand that in New Testament times, daughters rarely inherited and, if unmarried, were the responsibility of their husbands or brothers. So the Lord did something radical in giving women an inheritance of their own (“Be Thou My Vision” is a perfect example of this).

4, Women don’t need to be taught separate applications I don’t believe, they just need to be included and valued as part of the Body of Christ as much as the men.

5. In public prayer or during a church service, I don’t think I’ve ever heard anything especially for women apart from thanking God for them on Mothering Sunday. It has been confined to women’s days/groups/ministries.

6. As a woman, I appreciate the way my pastor expositionally preaches the Word of God - unwatered down, and richly exegeted. The Gospel is for everyone.

7. Not every woman has a husband, a boyfriend, a brother, a father or a son. For ten years I had none of these, and the godly men who were prepared to hug me in church ministered to me so much, as were the couple of guys who would do practical jobs for me if I really needed help. Mostly though, I felt unnoticed and invisible. Men rarely gave me more than a cursory greeting. My only meaningful interactions were with women, and this hurt me. I just wanted to feel I belonged as an equal member of the church family. In the church I was in, no attention was paid to single women, and there was no ministry for them.

*Questions for women in churches*

1. *Teaching on what issues would better equip you to face the challenges of living as a Christian woman in today’s culture?*

This is a personal one to me but clear teaching on issues women face such as a choice around working outside the home. Today I get a number of women in particular – in church - criticising me for working and the amount of hours I work. I am not sure I have ever heard a sermon around this in my 25+ years of being a believer. In essence thriving in church and outside of church.

How to be a ‘wonder-woman’ in a society where kids need enough sleep, to drink 2 litres of water a day, play sports, play instruments, pass exams, be kind, eat 5 fruit and veg a day, time to play, have a phone but not too much time on their phone, be independent but not too independent…. alongside a healthy marriage, and service in church, and investing in friendships old and new, and other family members, and work (whether inside or outside the home), and pets and running a household. It can feel overwhelming.

How to practically evangelise quickly to friends as often you my only have a few minutes when grabbing a coffee between conversations with children or running on an errand. Very practical starters in terms of how to open a conversation about Jesus when someone says they’re tired or anxious or fed up etc.

Teaching for young women around how to manage what the Bible says about womanhood and what society says about feminism. Are they opposed? How does God design us to live alongside one another. Society tells us women can do everything, the Church often tells us more what we cannot or should not do I feel. Let’s re-frame the message.

1. *What do you appreciate in a sermon preached by a man when it comes to illustrations used?*

Not all the illustrations being “traditional” e.g. “men you may find this when playing golf, or ladies when you go to the supermarket…”

Equally, not assuming all women have children. A recognition of diversity – we are not one and the same – and therefore this adds a further dimension of challenge. Perhaps life stage has more unity than being men and women.

1. *Do you find Bible translations that use the words ‘men’ and ‘brothers’ when referring to men and woman off-putting?*

It depends on context – elders should be men; the disciples were men.

If it is in a passage that means “brothers and sisters” then personally, I would prefer a different translation to ensure that this minimises confusion and demonstrates clearly who the message is for. It is also helpful when opening the Bible with others o there is clarity.

I don’t find translations as frustrating as when people do it verbally though e.g. “brothers, let’s join together to pray” and I’m sat there thinking “what about me?!”

1. *How can preachers use application that connects with women?*

Ask them. Perhaps ask a woman to read through the sermon before it is preached on a Sunday, what resonates and personally what was difficult there and why. Women may also know more intimately what other challenges women in the church face so will be thinking of their friends and family when they read through what you have written.  Forgetting women in preaching does not embrace complementarianism in its truest form – it forgets a huge part of God’s family. Men and Women were designed to rule together in God’s kingdom so what does this look like in the church? Get women involved in the message even if they give the sermon.

1. *In the public prayer of the church, how aware are those praying of issues or struggles of particular relevance to women?*

We all face issues and struggles and public prayer of the church is not the place for airing these.

Pray for women at different ages and stages of life as public prayer. Encourage struggles / these issues to be shared in smaller groups.

1. *What, as a woman, do you appreciate most about the way your pastor preaches?*

My pastor is great. He finds a number of examples often around music or running or movies which can resonate with a huge proportion of the congregation regardless of sex. He speaks clearly around what the Bible teaches and I think it doesn’t matter whether you are male or female if the word is being taught faithfully and clearly.

As a woman I have only ever once sat down and had a 121 with my pastor. It was in a busy coffee shop in Liverpool and I massively appreciated him asking me what I thought of church, how things were going and how church could be improved.

Women often get “handed over” to the womens’ worker.

1. *Are there any barriers to you hearing God’s word explained and applied that you would like to share with the men who preach in your church?*

One of the barriers is that women are often serving in ways that means they leave the service e.g. Sunday school, creche etc. This involves them missing the message so please make sure it is recorded and sent out easily.

I value teaching from men and I think we are quick to separate women sometimes from men with bespoke teaching for them e.g. ladies Bible study groups.

Think about church weekend away plans and involve women in these to maximise their chance to hear God’s word explained.

Teach women how to teach. Give them a mentor or a coach. Put on seminars around how to run small groups so they can understand how to both teach God’s word which in turn will support them in hearing God’s word.