

ARTICLE REVIEW

Article Review

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The writer's assignment was to review an article entitled, *Caroline Phebe Tenney Keith—Episcopal Church Missionary and Letter Writer in Shanghai* by Ian Welch. Professor Fee's instructions for this paper are clear and as follows: share one concept that stood out in the article, explain the implications that concept has for me leading in a church context, and explain what needs to change in my life as a result? Now that we know the assignment, let's jump right in.

**What is one concept that stood out to you in this article?**

One concept that stood out to me as I read the article was the notion of gender-appropriate limitations put in the 1800s. The article, written by Ian Welch, discussed the broad capabilities of a woman named Caroline Tenney. Caroline was a missionary who was skilled in other crafts and was most known for her writing ability. She wrote beautiful, captivating letters both before and during missionary work in China. In the article, she professes her love of writing by comparing her need to write as a similar need humans have to interact with others. She self-reports that in three years, she both wrote over 325 letters and received 200 in return. After having the pleasure of reading some of her vernacular, it is evident that she had a God-given gift and purpose for it.

However, during that time, women were not seen as equals to men and did not have the same rights. After reading the article, it became clear that the concept of women not being able to do something because they are a woman is folly. Yet, over 200 years later, the idea is alive and well right here in the United States of America. Why is this important? Well, because, at some point, I will be leading a church with lots of women in it and will have to make a decision. What decision do you ask? Well, I will be responsible for deciding the roles women play within that church, and this article has helped me conclude that women should be judged based on the merit of their skills and not their gender in the church that I pastor.

What implications does this concept have for me leading a church?

As you can see, this article has had quite an impact on my ministerial concept. How? Well, if I was running a church and saw the gifting Caroline Tenney brought to the table. My leadership style would get me to the point of realizing she can help with the mission, vision, and completion of those missions. Therefore, I would empower her to carry out the completion of tasks to bridge gaps and complete our quarterly and yearly tasks. Additionally, her ability to write creates an ability to influence. As long as she desires to use it to help others ministerially in a Godly way, I would feel comfortable empowering her to have a leadership role in the church and preach, teach, and have a title that suits her gifting.

So the concept of gender limitations in the church context does not make sense to me even though I have heard, seen, and read the context biblically that women should not be allowed to be pastors. Next, I will list two perfect examples of biblical instruction that explicitly say women should not teach men. In 1 Timothy 2:12, it says, “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” (KJV). Now, if that were not enough, here another! 1 Corinthians 14, 32-35 says, “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”

Now, the message could not be more clear about women's position in the church regarding their teaching status. Nonetheless, that does not dissuade my position on women preachers and basing their teaching access based on their capability. The only thing that has happened from reading this article is I have learned that women who have impacted history are present today and can

historically affect ministry today if allowed to do so. My job as a pastor would be to step aside and empower them to do so.

Additionally, I must provide some background context here so that my comment does not appear as a blanket statement or heresy. Some women did have leadership roles! For example, Deborah Judges 4:8, Huldah, 2Kings 22:14-20, and Rahab Exodus 3:14 all demonstrate their influence in these passages. My point is, there are churches today that believe women should not be leaders, and I am demonstrating my stance on the conversation.

### **What needs to change in your life as a result?**

What needs to change in my life is to allow women to pastor in my church. Well, that is a good question, and the truth is I do not know. However, I would venture to guess that disassociating myself from any organization that does not believe in allowing women to pastor a church would be a good idea to not be guilty by association when I become pastor of a church. So when I join a religious organization being careful enough to know their beliefs and doctrine to make sure they are in alignment with mine, i.e., making sure they believe women can preach.

Another guess could be that I married a woman who is already a preacher. That way, when a church approaches me to become their pastor, I can share with them my wife is also a preacher, and we need to come as a package deal. At the end of the day, since we are discussing my future in conjunction with a concept I believe firmly in, I cannot speak with certainty about my future because it has not happened yet. However, I can talk about how I feel today and what I believe in. Allowing the path and journey I am embarking on to unfold as I prepare for it to occur.

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**References:**

Welch, Ian, (2019). *Caroline Phebe Tenney Keith—Episcopal Church Missionary and Letter Writer in Shanghai*. International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Vol.38, Number 3.