

Stone Ridge Church

Debatable Matters & the Middle Ground

Stone Ridge has long been a place where people come from a variety of spiritual backgrounds. We have people with no previous spiritual history, as well as Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, Catholics, Pentecostals and a host of other traditions.

Embracing the diversity of our body means being comfortable with the fact that we don't all see things the same way. While there is diversity of perspectives at Stone Ridge, we do think it is important to agree on some fundamental truths. And we believe that its important to articulate what perspectives have room for debate, and what perspectives we can't embrace.

The beliefs and practices subject to this kind of evaluation are far too wide and varied to cover in a single statement. So, in the pages that follow, we take them one at a time - as they seem relevant to the life of our church. This document develops over time as we have opportunity to address the issues and articulate middle ground that we have found at Stone Ridge.

You'll see a graphic like this on each page to help make our position clear on the issue being discussed...



Our goal in these evaluations is to provide clarity regarding the beliefs found at Stone Ridge, and to respect each other when our own study has led us to different conclusions. When these issues are raised in church life, we encourage leaders to freely share their own conclusions while acknowledging that it is a debatable matter (even among the Stone Ridge family).

Stone Ridge Perspective: Spiritual Gifts

In 1 Corinthians 12, the Bible describes the church as a body where everyone has a function - a role to play. In order to fulfill our purpose in the body, God gives “gifts” to his people. These gifts are a God-given ability, which is for the benefit of the body.

These gifts are discussed in 1 Corinthians 12-14, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4 (along with a few other scattered references). There are a variety of perspectives concerning spiritual gifts (summarized in the diagram below).



At Stone Ridge, we do not believe that spiritual gifts have ended. We believe that all the gifts in scripture are still given to the church today. We also do not believe that spiritual gifts are the same as natural talents.

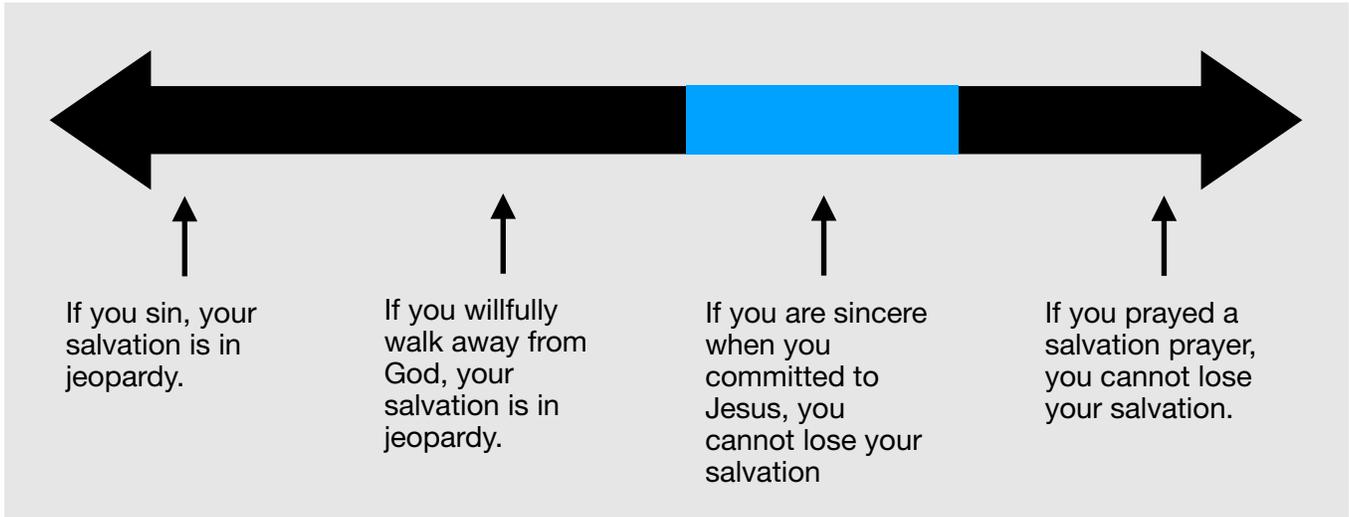
There are, however, a variety of perspectives regarding spiritual gifts that are debatable, and that we are comfortable teaching. These are 2 of the most common...

- **Spiritual gifts are limited to those in the scripture.** This comes from a desire to avoid speculating on the intended application of scripture.
- **The lists of gifts in scripture are representative.** This springs from the observation that the lists are all different.

Both perspectives have merit, and both are likely to be taught at Stone Ridge. We encourage anyone teaching on spiritual gifts to include both perspectives, but also to feel free to explain which perspective they find most compelling.

Stone Ridge Perspective: Eternal Security

This hotly debated issue can argued from a variety of scriptures: Jude 24, John 6 & 10, Romans 8 & 11, 2 Timothy 2, Hebrews 6 & 10, Matthew 7, Ezekiel 17 and a host of other passages.



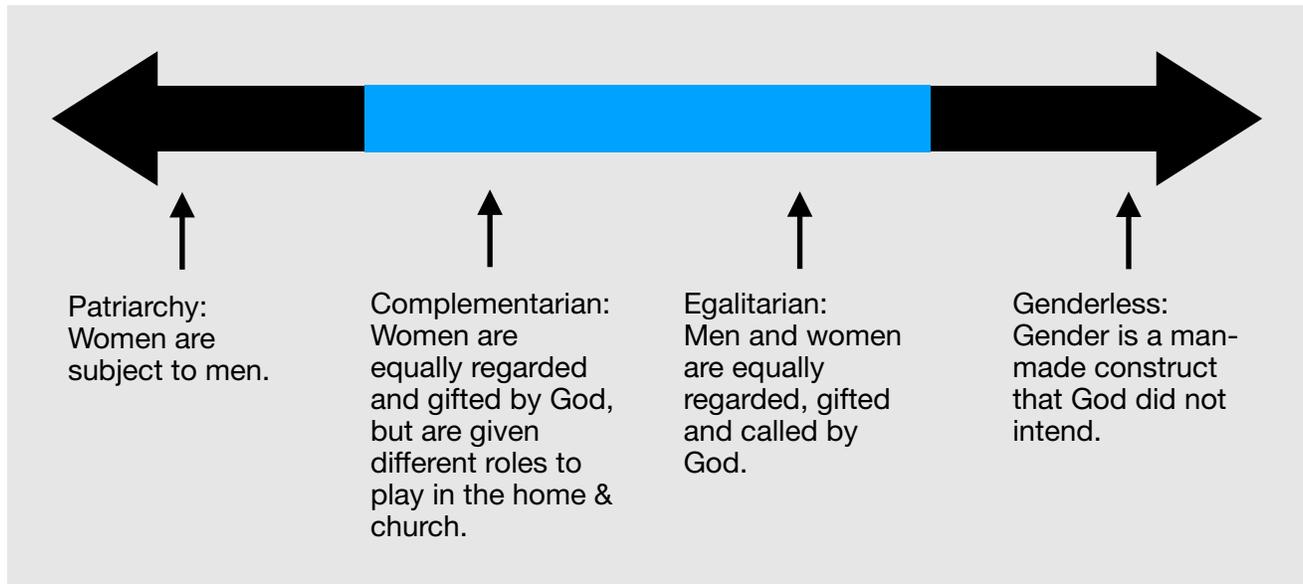
At Stone Ridge, we believe that sincere faith leads to an irrevocable union with God. We believe the sacrifice of Jesus was sufficient for all sin, even the tragic sin of losing your way. We are passionate about the sufficiency of Jesus and the forgiveness and grace he offers us. We will not teach another perspective of this debate.

We do understand that not all church's agree on this issue. And while we are firm in our conviction, we love and respect our brothers and sisters who disagree. This issue would not prevent us from cooperating in projects with churches who see this differently.

In the end, only this matters...if you are far from God, turn and seek him, and you will find grace and mercy in your time of need.

Stone Ridge Perspective: Roles of Men and Women in the Church

Complementarian and Egalitarian are the two primary views that frame the debate about gender and leadership in God's kingdom.



Complementarians, what many refer to as the “traditional” view of gender roles, believe that God calls men to lead in their homes and in the church. Men’s leadership should reflect the love and sacrifice that Jesus demonstrates for the church. Women are called to willingly submit to and complement that leadership with their God-given gifts and abilities.

Egalitarians believe that men and women are called to mutual submission in their relationships. Leadership roles are not predetermined by gender, but should be given to those called and gifted to lead. Leadership should always reflect kingdom values of love and respect.

Both these views are supportable with Biblical arguments and both have passages that are difficult to reconcile with their position. It is clearly a debatable matter. A deeper look at the Biblical debate is available upon request. You will find both perspectives among the people of Stone Ridge, and we respectfully worship and serve together.

The common ground that we observe at Stone Ridge was developed by learning from the example of the early church as they wrestled with integrating Jewish and Gentile believers. There were two opposing viewpoints in the church. Church leaders asked proponents of each viewpoint to make some concessions to respect each other. Jewish believers were asked to consider the Gentiles free from the requirements of the law. Gentile believers were asked to observe a few restrictions that would be most challenging to their Jewish counterparts.

- **At Stone Ridge, we ask Egalitarians to observe two restrictions that would be most challenging to Complementarians: Elders & Lead Pastor as male roles in the church.**
- **We ask Complementarians to consider women free to engage in all other capacities (under the authority of the Lead Pastor and the Elders).**