

# Women's Role in the Church

# Introduction

- Why:
  - The Elders were recently asked to clarify our views on the role of women in worship
  - We realized we needed to study & document it
- How:
  - Personal time
    - Prayer
    - Scripture reading/study
    - Books
    - Internet searching
    - Sermons
  - Group study
    - The elders and Russell
    - Full agreement

# Introduction

## Study Approach

- Context, context, context
- When was it written?
- To whom was it written?
- Why was it written?
- Consistency in how we treat things in a list
- Harmony of Scripture
- Themes & Principles

# Scripture

We are going to review three passages:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11: 3-16
- 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14: 26 – 35
- 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2: 8-15

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# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11: 3-16

- <sup>3</sup> But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. <sup>4</sup> Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. <sup>5</sup> But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. <sup>6</sup> For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.
- <sup>7</sup> A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. <sup>8</sup> For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; <sup>9</sup> neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. <sup>10</sup> It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels. <sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. <sup>12</sup> For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.
- <sup>13</sup> Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? <sup>14</sup> Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, <sup>15</sup> but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. <sup>16</sup> If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11: 3-16

## Conclusions

- Context: Assembly of the saints
- Head:
  - Verse 3 tells us:
    - God is the head of Jesus
    - Jesus is the head of man
    - Man is the head of woman
  - Why?
    - Authority, or submission
    - Doing what is proper. Not sin, but what is fitting.
    - In Corinth, and actually much of the world then, a woman with her head not covered showed disrespect. It wasn't fitting.
- Women: Were praying and prophesying in the assembly, with Paul's approval

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# 1st Corinthians 14:26-35

- <sup>26</sup> What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up. <sup>27</sup> If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. <sup>28</sup> If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God.
- <sup>29</sup> Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. <sup>30</sup> And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. <sup>31</sup> For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. <sup>32</sup> The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. <sup>33</sup> For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people.
- <sup>34</sup> Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. <sup>35</sup> If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

# 1st Corinthians 14:26-35

## To Whom?

- There is no reference to elders or even leadership of any kind in the letter
- Paul typically wrote to the elders or the evangelist, such as Timothy or Titus
- The lack of that suggests that there were no leaders, or at least no effective leaders, in Corinth
- That is significant due to the way that Greco-Roman women operated – they took over

# 1st Corinthians 14:26-35

## Why Written? Disorder!

- Ch 11 tells us the Lord's Supper was a drunken feast for some & others went hungry
- This chapter tells us that several were speaking in tongues at the same time, sometimes with no one interpreting
- Several people were praying, singing, and prophesying at the same time. No one was listening and all were trying to get attention.
- Paul tells them that God is the God of peace, not disorder, and lays down the principle that things are to be done in an orderly fashion, one at a time.

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14: 26-35

## Silence?

<sup>34</sup> Women should remain **silent** in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. <sup>35</sup> If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

- The word for “silence” is sigao
  - Essentially means to say nothing. Be so quiet no one knows you are there.
  - This would be in complete contradiction to Ch 11 if applied to women in the assembly
- By saying it is “disgraceful” for a woman to speak in church he’s back to the “honor” issue discussed in Ch 11.

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14: 26-35

## Churches?

<sup>34</sup> Women should remain silent in the **churches**. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. <sup>35</sup> If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

The word “church” is ekklesia in Greek

- Used 3 times in the New Testament to describe the assembly of Christians, what we would call “worship”. All three of those uses are in Acts, not 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians.
- Used 115 times in the New Testament to describe the body of Christians, sometimes globally and sometimes locally. That is how it is used here. Not the assembly.

# 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14: 26-35

## Women?

<sup>34</sup> **Women** should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. <sup>35</sup> If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

- The word for “woman” also means wife
- Paul says they are to ask their own husbands, but what if they aren’t married, their husband isn’t a Christian, or he is deceased?
- We aren’t given any wiggle room – and Paul says we aren’t to add to his teaching, so we can’t tell them to go to another leader.
- Apparently these women were the wives of men who should have been leaders of the congregation. Paul set up leaders, such as elders, as having a wife so that fits.

# 1st Corinthians 14:26-35

## Conclusion

- Men:
  - Supposed to be leaders of the congregation
  - Responsible to manage things in an orderly fashion
- Women:
  - Are **not** told to be silent in the assemblies
  - Instead, wives of leaders are to let their husbands lead
    - Input their wishes regarding management of the congregation via their husbands – at home
    - Honor
      - God
      - Christ
      - Their husband

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# 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:8-15

- <sup>8</sup> Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. <sup>9</sup> I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, <sup>10</sup> but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.
- <sup>11</sup> A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. <sup>12</sup> I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. <sup>13</sup> For Adam was formed first, then Eve. <sup>14</sup> And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. <sup>15</sup> But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

# 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:8-15

## Context, Hand, & Adornment

- Context:
  - Assembly because it matters what the women wear
  - And, there is public prayer
- Holy hands: Men to demonstrate holiness and humility in their daily lives by not lifting up hands in anger at others
- Adornment: Women to shine from within via attitude rather than the glitz of gold, jewelry, or braided hair.

# 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:8-15

## Authority

<sup>11</sup> A woman should learn in **quietness** and full submission. <sup>12</sup> I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be **quiet**.

A woman is not to have authority over a man, but is to have a heart of submission and a demeanor of quietness.

– Where did we get that?

- The word translated “quiet” actually means “stillness, desistance from bustle”. It does not mean absolute silence as in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14
- Paul is stressing the principle that women are to portray Christ in their actions and attitudes towards men, which is a continuing thread in his teaching.

# Conclusions

# Conclusion - Assemblies

- No scriptural basis for a difference between class time, worship time, small group time, or even Thursday night meetings.
- Matthew records Jesus as saying “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I with them.”
- So, where 2 or more meet for the purpose of worshiping, teaching, or edifying, the meetings will be treated the same way, meaning that whatever goes in one goes in all.

# Conclusion - Leadership

- We are not told any place in the New Testament that women are to be Elders, Deacons, or Evangelists.
- There are passages that say certain women, like Phoebe, were deacons. But that means servant and is not the same as the office of Deacon.
- Given that, we are not going to have women in the role of Elder, Deacon, or Evangelist.

# Conclusion - Prophecy

- We see in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11 that women witnessed, meaning that they told others what God had done for them.
- We will do that, as appropriate, and we will do that in what we consider worship or class settings
- One near-term plan is for the ladies who are currently in India to provide us with a first-hand view to their trip and how God used them to touch the lives of others.

# Conclusion - Teaching

- Paul said he doesn't "... permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet."
- However, he also told us that Priscilla and Aquila took Appollos aside in Ephesus and explained the Gospel to him more fully. They taught him.
- In fact, if we men are honest we are frequently taught by women. I know I am.
- Having said that, we are not going to have women as active, up front teachers in our classes that include adult men.



# Parting Words

- This is the position of the elders after considerable study and prayer.
- However, if you have questions or comments, or want to study it with us, please contact us.

End