

## Women's Roles

Generally speaking, concerning the positive aspect of women's roles, I assume these kinds of passages would come to mind:

- A. **Genesis 1:27** So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
- B. **Galatians 3:28-29** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.
- C. **1 Peter 3:7** Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.
  - 1. There is no contradiction when one teaches that while there are differences between men and women (traits, abilities, and roles), there is no less value in one over the other.
  - 2. **Proverbs 31** paints a picture, I believe, of the ideal Jewish woman. She's competent. This passage portrays her as a precious jewel.
- D. **Titus 2:3-5** "Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled."
- E. **2 Timothy 1:5** I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.
- F. **2 Timothy 3:14-15** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
- G. **Acts 18:26** He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

One of you requested a sermon on women's roles in the kingdom. It began with a question regarding joint prayer at home with one's spouse (is it acceptable for a woman and husband to take turns praying together). Other good questions were considered as well. I'll be transparent - some of these questions are difficult for me to answer. Each person must study and act by faith. For example, my wife and I do not pray out loud together (I lead all the prayers), yet I'm not totally consistent in that my daughters pray around the table. So does my son, though I do not think it would be proper for him to lead us in prayer. However, I try my best and would hope we all do. I try to be consistent and lean towards interpretations with the least amount of problems.

There's one more thing I'd like to address before considering the following three passages. I imagine that Paul's instructions would have been difficult for Jewish men because, at that time, women weren't always treated as precious jewels. If you read any history (or Malachi as one example), you'll learn they weren't always treated well. However, if you were a gentile

woman, Paul's instruction could be challenging because you came from a background where women were given different roles in their worship. Even some of their gods were females. God's word challenges every culture. In our culture, though it's not as intense as Corinth, we lean more towards women attempting to take the roles of men in the church, the family, and everywhere else. This is because men have abandoned their roles (a different lesson), but we also have women who make no apologies: they want to share the same roles as men. Sisters in Christ, I hope I will encourage you in the beautiful roles God gives. I pray you appreciate your role, find joy in your role, see the value in your role, and play your role unapologetically!

We're now highlighting key passages that will help answer the questions about women's roles in the kingdom:

I. **1 Corinthians 11:1-12** "Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you. But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head. But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head. For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.

A. First of all, anyone who has studied this passage knows there is much debate surrounding the background:

1. An assembly of the church which allowed women to address the body as long as they wore the correct attire?
2. Addressing her attire in worship (with wider application), but more specifically in ch. 14, she is told to remain silent.
3. A public assembly, but not a mixed (men and women) assembly.
4. A mixed public assembly, but not on Sunday.

B. I lean towards this being an assembly, but not mixed. Positions 1 & 2 are not strong arguments in my opinion. My position is challenged, and understandably so, but to me, it seems to have the least difficulties.

1. I think women were together (not an odd idea - **Acts 16:13-14**), and some women were leading in either prayer or prophesy. However, perhaps because they had learned how men and women were joint heirs, they believed they had the right to be seen as authoritative figures (or at least struggled with their roles). Therefore, they removed their head coverings which stood as a symbol of submission to men.
2. It's worth taking note: they were praying and prophesying. Both actions seem to be "taking lead," if you will.

C. What's Paul's argument?

1. The head of man is Jesus.
2. The head of woman is man.
3. The head of Christ is God.

- If a man prays/prophecies with a covering, he dishonors his head.
- If a woman prays/prophesies without a covering, she dishonors her head. It would be the same as if her head was shaved. This reminds me of the principle in **Deuteronomy 22:5** "*A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God.*"

II. **1 Corinthians 14:26-35** "What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret; but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church."

A. Context: Paul is dealing with issues within their worship (vs. 19-23 alone, make it abundantly clear). He's commanding order during their worship. He gave instructions about tongue speaking and prophets. Do it in turn if there are interpreters or remain silent. Let two or three prophets speak. Be quiet until it's your turn. Then Paul addressed the women. Many believe they are the prophets' wives, but I tend to think they may be women with the gift of prophecy.

1. Paul commands submission. The Law reiterated this point as well. Right at the beginning of the Law, we read about the roles of Adam and Eve along with the curses in Genesis 3.
2. I believe Paul is taking issue with these women addressing the assembly in a manner that did not show her submission. We're not talking about their attire now. We're in (I believe) a different setting. This was when the brethren came together on the first day of the week for worship - a mixed assembly. There was a time for those who could prophesy or speak in tongues to address the body, but there was no exception for the woman in this context. Then can a woman sing? She's teaching and admonishing! Yes, because she's not seen as taking the lead. Can she confess her faith in Christ? Yes, because that's not understood as addressing the assembly in a way that communicates rebellion. Context helps us understand how Paul used the idea of keeping silent and not speaking. This was true in all the churches of the saints.
3. I don't believe it's wrong for a woman to whisper something to her husband during services. I don't think it's terrible for a woman to discipline her child. It's also why I don't take issue with a sister commenting in class because I believe the fundamental concern is her behavior when men are present. I think it's important

how we understand "silence." I remember teaching an adult class for the first time. There was an older sister in Christ who would not just ask a question or make a comment during class. She would take over. It was clear to see and inappropriate. I had other sisters who even complained. We don't like this answer, but I believe you know it when you see it. We don't have to spell it out. I'm not sure exactly what was happening, but I believe it was clear: whatever they were doing, they were disturbing in a way that showed a lack of submission.

III. **1 Timothy 2:8-15** Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension. Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

A. Context: Paul instructs Timothy so that "you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God." I acknowledge that the text doesn't talk about the church coming together. However, to say it has no application to the assembly is going too far. When would men pray? Only at home? When would a woman need to learn quietly and not teach over a man? Only at home? Having said that, I think the principle still applies in general because it has to do with the roles of male and female, which the text bears out. There is a distinction between men and women.

1. God is concerned with our hearts and attitudes. He wants to see holy hands from men and godliness from women.
2. Paul is again instructing women to learn quietly with all submission. Sound familiar? Now he offers clear statements: He does not permit a woman to teach OR exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. Again I ask - is this only to be understood outside of the assembly? I'm not convinced of that, but regardless, we need to understand the why behind his command.
  - Adam was created first.
  - Adam was not deceived, but the woman was and became a transgressor.
  - Brethren, this is going back to the Law. The same principle is implied in 1 Corinthians 11 & 14. This passage is also parallel to 1 Peter 3:1-6.

I realize this may not answer all questions or scenarios, but my prayer is that these passages and principles will help you in your decision making. We want to be thankful for the roles given to us by God. We need to see their value. Most importantly, we seek to give God the glory that is due Him!