

WHY WOMEN SHOULD NOT PREACH OR LEAD IN WORSHIP ASSEMBLIES¹

Introduction:

1. For some time now, many denominations have used women to lead in various phases of worship within their congregations. They perform such leadership roles as organists, leaders in prayer, song leading, and even preaching.
2. In these times of “women’s liberation movements” more and more women are moving into what has formerly been considered all male vocations – e.g. military positions, politics, etc. They are also pressing for leading roles in religious life of the churches.
3. The Bible teaches that women are not to assume leadership roles in preaching, teaching, or praying, whenever such constitutes authority over a man, or whenever such would have dominion over a man.
4. This lesson will observe leading women in the New Testament, significant scriptures regarding women’s role in the church, and the reason why women are subordinate to men.

DISCUSSION:

I. Leading Women in the New Testament

A. In the Gospels (prior to the beginning of the church)

1. Anna, the prophetess (Luke 2:36-38)
2. Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42; John 11:1-46; 12:2-8)
3. Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:26-56; 2:5-19; 48-51; John 2:1-10; 19:25-27; Acts 2:14)
4. Others:
 - a. Mary Magdalene (Matthew 27:56, 61; 28:1-10)
 - b. Susanna (Luke 8:3)
 - c. Joanna (Luke 8:3; 24:10)

B. In Acts of Apostles

1. Mary, the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12)
2. Dorcas (Acts 9:36-42)
3. Lydia (Acts 16:14, 15, 40)
4. Priscilla (Acts 18:2, 26; Romans 16:3)
5. Four daughters of Philip, all prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9)

C. In the Epistles

1. Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2)
2. Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2-3)
3. Lois and Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5)
4. Aged women, commanded to teach younger women (Titus 2:3-5)

II. Significant Passages in New Testament Discussing Woman’s Role

A. Scriptural texts:

1. **1 Corinthians 11:8-9**, “For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.”

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2. **1 Corinthians 14:34-36**, “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. What? Came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?”
3. **1 Timothy 2:8-15**, “I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression. Notwithstanding, she shall be saved in child bearing if she continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.”

B. Exposition of texts:

1. **1 Timothy 2:8-15**

- a. 1 Timothy 2:8-15 is not limited to the saints assembled together
 - 1) Nothing is in the context to suggest it.
 - 2) Epistle written that Christians might know how “to behave in the house of God” (1 Timothy 3:15), but that is not limited to the assembly.
 - 3) Context requires more than just at assembly.
 - 4) Men are to pray “in every place.” (v. 8)
- b. “*aner*” men (male) are to pray (v. 8). “*aner*” sometimes may include females (as in James 1:8, 12; Romans 4:8; 1 Corinthians 11), however it usually means males.
 - 1) Had Paul intended both male and female, he would have used the word “*anthropos*.”
 - 2) Nearly all uses of “*aner*” refer to male (e.g. Matthew 14:21; 15:38; Luke 1:34; Acts 8:3, 12; 17:12; 1 Corinthians 11:3, 7).
 - 3) Whenever “*aner*” is used opposite to “*guno*” (female) it always means male (e.g. Acts 5:14; 8:3, 12; 9:2; 22:4; Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:1-3; 11:3-5; Ephesians 5:28).
 - 4) A form of “*aner*” used in 1 Timothy 3:2, 12, means husband, thus male.
 - 5) Context of 1 Timothy 2 demonstrates that “*aner*” applies only to male in this passage.
 - 6) In 1 Timothy 2:12 “*aner*” refers to male, as opposed to female.
- c. “learn in silence” (KJV) “quietness” (ASV) v. 11.
 - 1) Absolute silence is not required, but rather “quietness.”
 - a) The Greek word is “*hesuchia*” and is used in Acts 22:2 and 2 Thessalonians 3:12 also.
 - b) The idea is that the woman is to lead a quiet life.
 - 2). The passage in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 does require absolute silence
 - a) The Greek word there is “*sigao*”
 - b) The context there does have reference to the assembly only!

- d. “with all subjection” (v. 11)
 - 1) That man is to have dominion over woman is indicated in two passages: 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 and 1 Timothy 2:12.
 - 2) That woman is not to have dominion over man is indicated in 1 Timothy 2:12.
- e. “have dominion over” (ASV - v. 12)
 - 1) KJV has an unwarranted translation “usurp authority”
 - 2) “*authentein*” means to “have dominion over.”
 - 3) Women may not teach a man (she may teach other women or children) nor otherwise dominate him.

2. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

- a. Relates to disorderly worship in Corinthian church due to abuse of spiritual gifts.
- b. Relates only to the worship assembly.
- c. Absolutely forbids women to speak at all.
 - 1) “silence” is from the Greek word “*sigao*,” which means, “say nothing, keep silent . . . stop speaking, become silent.” (Arndt and Gingrich. p. 757). “Noun form means silence, quiet in the sense of the absence of all noise, whether made by speaking or by anything else” (same source).
 - 2) This prohibition seems to have been limited to Corinth, as a one time only commandment.
- d. Passage may well refer to women prophetesses or to the wives of prophets, who were endowed with a miraculous gift of prophecy from the Holy Spirit.

III. Reason Why Women Are Subordinate to Men

- A. Not for cultural reasons, although women were culturally deprived in apostolic times.
 - 1. Note cultural conditions of women as described by William Barclay’s *Daily Study Bible Commentary*, 1 Timothy 2:8-15, pp. 76-79; 1 Peter 3:1-6, pp. 258-263.
 - 2. Christianity elevated womanhood, especially for Christian women.
 - a. Note social conditions wherever Christianity has gone, as compared to wherever Christianity has not gone.
 - b. Spiritually, women have equal access with men to salvation (Galatians 3:28).
- B. Because of the order of creation – men were created first (1 Corinthians 11:8-9 and 1 Timothy 2:13)
- C. Because woman was deceived into transgression (1 Timothy 2:14).

Conclusion:

- 1. While women should not be restricted from God-given privileges and responsibilities, women should not assume responsible positions that God has not authorized for them.
- 2. Women are less likely to assert themselves into positions that God has not sanctioned if men will be faithful to perform their God-given responsibilities.
- 3. Women can have fruitful and meaningful influence in the church without being in a public leadership role, as is demonstrated by several women in the New Testament.
- 4. Women are not to have dominion over men and are not to teach men publicly, but are to learn in quietness with all subjection.