

**“I Permit Not A Woman...”  
To Remain Shackled**

by

***Robert H. Rowland***  
3619 Larchwood Drive  
Corona, CA 92881-8784  
951-898-1947

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Unless I am convicted either by Scripture or right reason, my conscience is a captive to the word of God. I neither can nor will recant anything, since it is neither right nor safe to act against conscience. I can do neither. God help me. Amen.

*Martin Luther*

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To a large degree, we are all prisoners of our genes, family beliefs, mentors, experiences, traditions, and culture. Each represents a bar on the window of our prison cell. Our perception of what is true and eternal is colored by each bar. To deny this truth is not just to add another bar, but to add one which is stronger than the rest combined. Our only escape is through a never-ending quest for truth. Christian integrity in a setting of intellectual freedom demands that we never stop searching. The world and the church are better because men and women dare question that which has already been settled, if for no other reason than the personal confirmation of one's belief, rather than having one's faith simply passed on from generation to generation.

Error can be passed on as easily as truth. It can be defended with equal vigor. But when error is passed on and defended as truth, succeeding generations are imprisoned, and the church suffers.

Tragically, many prisoners grow accustomed to their prison cells, and need the security and safety they offer.

*Robert H. Rowland*

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I cannot list the numerous Christian leaders and scholars who have listened to the arguments in this book. Some could not emotionally accept its conclusions, but most admitted my two theses were sustained by sound, logical and Biblical arguments.

# Dedication

To Minnie Northcutt Houston, my maternal grandmother, who taught school, reared six children, and was the spiritual leader in her home. Most of her children, to the fifth generation, are and have been faithful Christians, and many are church leaders.

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To Danielle Rowland, my granddaughter who, at age eight, recognized the unfairness of how boys and girls are treated in church, and who will be the first woman in five generations of my family to contribute publicly her talents to the church of Jesus Christ, if she so chooses.

To the millions of Christian women who have had their talents arbitrarily buried, but who were still "teachers of what is good" to all men, women and children in spite of the constraints of tradition, status and empowerment.

To millions of Christian women now living, and those yet unborn, whose "God-given" talents, intelligence, and leadership abilities will be recognized and used by thoughtful church leaders to God's honor and glory.

To Christian men who want to know and do God's will, regardless of where that will take them or what they have to give up in order to honestly please Him, men whose honesty will lead them to acknowledge the inconsistencies in our teachings and our practices and who have the will, courage and wisdom to work for constructive Biblical changes in the church of our Lord.

# Introduction

After nearly fifty years of preaching, teaching, serving as an administrator in Christian colleges and universities, and serving as an elder in one of Oklahoma's largest congregations, I have had to admit that I have been guilty of using traditional and terribly inconsistent arguments to justify my positions and the church's positions on the roles women could play in the life of the church.

On a trip to the Republic of China in the early '80s, I found long term missionaries being confronted by newcomers for allowing wives and daughters to pray at their tables or in family devotionals. The newcomers also demanded that English-speaking missionaries dismiss or silence female translators in classes and in the assemblies.

I spent most of one night in a Holiday Inn at Kaohsiung, in Southern Taiwan, studying this issue with two concerned missionaries. The next day, I had a long train ride back to Taipei alone. I wrestled with the woman's role all that day. I wrestled with it back across the Pacific on my long flight home. I knew something was wrong with our traditional arguments, and I knew I must find out what it was.

After returning to the States, I made an intense year-long study of this issue. I concluded that many of my long-held arguments were specious and inconsistent with clear Biblical teachings and records.

I decided that I would pursue an independent route of study, freeing myself of the emotional, traditional and intellectual attachments which had, in the past, skewed my arguments and allowed me to follow the path of security, safety, least resistance, and even intellectual dishonesty.

In 1985 I taught a course titled, "Old Truths Re-Examined," in a large adult class at the Quail Springs Church of Christ, in Oklahoma City, where I have served as an elder for eighteen years. The first six weeks dealt with the woman's role in the church. I was shocked at how inconsistent I, as well as the church, had been in what we taught and what we actually practiced. This class studied my new positions and arguments with some of the emotional and traditional barriers expected. Most class members accepted the force of the logic and scriptural arguments, but found it hard to overcome years of conditioning.

Later, the subject was taught to the college class, then to the elders, staff, and adult teachers. Finally, it was taught in the combined Sunday morning adult classes in the auditorium, numbering about 700.

The fact that I taught these classes does not suggest that there was unanimity of thought in the eldership and membership on this subject. Some could not overcome the natural responses brought on by years of traditional practices. Others could not accept either of my theses. No one has challenged my arguments, except two ladies who came to teach me that women could not teach men.

I later received a letter from a lady in Texas who, after listening to my tapes, not only taught me that I was wrong, but asked that I leave the church, since I did not teach "Church of Christ" doctrine.

After these studies, I have discussed the subject with some of our most distinguished scholars and church leaders. Preachers, elders, and Bible professors weighed my positions.

I then recorded all my arguments and had them reviewed by a number of well-known men in our brotherhood. Some could not agree with my conclusions or arguments. None, however, was able to reconcile what we traditionally claim the Bible teaches and what we actually practice in our churches, missions, homes and institutions of higher education. Moreover, the fact that our accepted hermeneutic was violated consistently in its application of related scriptures did not bother some. But, maintaining brotherhood-approved and safe traditions seemed paramount in most arguments. I did drop a couple of my original arguments, due to their critiques.

In my search for truth on this subject, I found that we do not practice what we claim the Bible teaches with any consistency and, most shocking, I concluded that the Bible does not really teach what we claim it does. These are the two theses of this book.

It is only through selective reading of the Bible that we are able to keep women out of the public life and ministries of the church.

Nothing could indicate how little we know about the subject and how poorly we practice what we think we know than positions taken by the eldership of one congregation and passed out as a guideline and a policy for the church to follow.

It is typical of the thinking and actions of many churches and church leaders. It is, in fact, a creedal statement of the elders and has nothing, whatsoever, to do with Biblical truth.

Part of the creedal statement is as follows:

The policy of the (BLANK) Congregation, as approved by the elders, is that in formal, officially scheduled and congregationally sponsored classes and worship services, women can teach all ages and pray in the presence of both boys and girls who are less than 14 years of age, but it would not be expedient, and is not acceptable conduct at the (BLANK) Avenue Church of Christ for the women of this congregation to lead in prayer in the presence of, or teach males 14 years or older, especially if those males are baptized believers. This policy includes the understanding that it is not scriptural for a woman to preach or teach during formal worship. This policy does not extend to informal, unofficial, and unscheduled situations where the elders have no objections to women leading in prayer in the presence of men or teaching men, as long as none present are offended.

It is written in the name of expediency, but is contrary to what their entire statement says about the Bible's teaching on women. These elders admitted in this policy statement that women did scripturally pray and prophesy in the presence of men.

They state that in all likelihood Priscilla was the chief speaker in the teaching of Apollos. It would have been better to both teach and practice what they believe the Bible teaches than to have written a creed to keep from doing what they claimed the Bible allowed. Preaching on giving, missions, reconciliation, baptism, marriage and divorce, or immorality might not seem to be expedient, due to the fact that some stubborn members might object. But wise and honorable men would both teach and find ways to practice what God requires and allows his people to do.

This eldership went beyond what most elderships and preachers believe and allow. Many would make the cut at age 12 or at baptism, without one Biblical verse or sentence of scripture to support such a doctrine. Most would not allow women to pray or teach in Bible classes or devotionals, whether formal or informal.

This church's use of formal worship and informal, unscheduled, unofficial situations, should be noted. One would have to conclude that God, in His word, makes a distinction between various worship situations. In other words, at a prayer meeting at the church on Wednesday night, women can't teach men and boys or lead them in prayer if they are 14 years of age. But, on Friday night, at an unofficial gathering of the elders, deacons, preachers and their wives, women would be allowed to both teach and pray, according to this policy. On Friday night, women could do what the church has decreed could not be done at official meetings on Sunday and Wednesday.

This church is to be commended for accepting some truth about what God will allow. But, we would conclude that this church, in the name of expediency, refuses to follow what they believe the Bible teaches. These elders' policy becomes the standard and establishes a tradition (law) contrary to what they believe the Bible teaches.

Why would they allow a few objectors (instead of the Bible) to establish the policy? And, instead of shackling those who wish to follow the Bible, why not set a policy which teaches their concept of truth to those who do not understand it and allow women to participate in "official" worship services, classes and prayer meetings? Expediency cannot be a substitute for truth. Paul would have none of it in dealing with Peter and others who were law keepers in Galatians 2.

Is it less offensive and less expedient to impose an unbiblical rule on those who wish to exercise their freedom to scripturally participate, than to impose one on the objectors to freedoms which the elders state the Bible allows?

It would seem much wiser and fairer, not to mention more scriptural, to teach the objectors and demand that they line up with what the Bible teaches, than to prohibit others who wish to follow what the Bible teaches in these matters. Why must the pace of growth and scriptural reform be set by those least informed?

Some would appeal to the rule of expediency (in Romans 14) regarding offending weaker and younger Christians. The truth usually is that weaker and younger Christians are not the ones who object to scriptural change. It is the older, long-time member who usually objects to accepting and practicing new-found truth.

This issue is not simple and is a long way from being settled. However, objecting to studying, learning and then practicing what God's word teaches and allows is not the way of truth or righteousness.

This book will deal frankly and openly with the inconsistencies in the teachings and practices of the church. It will also deal with and shed new light for most people on what the Bible really says about women's role in God's kingdom.

The Biblical interpretation and application will apply to the Churches of Christ, Southern Baptist, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, Missouri Synod, and others who yet shackle their women. These are the last bastions of male supremacy in the Christian world. Truth will eventually rip the bars away and beat the walls down around these churches, like it has hundreds of others.

Contrary to what many church leaders and women in the Christian world believe about Paul being a male chauvinist, this book will reveal him as a promoter of women's right to participate in the public life of the church.

A doctrine on women has been built on three short passages in I Corinthians 11 and 14 and I Timothy 2. From this doctrine, a variety of traditions have been established. Then, using these varying traditions as scriptural mandates, the leaders of the churches have developed a smorgasbord of practices which attempt to explain away other clear Bible teachings and Bible history. At the same time, both logic and consistency have been skewed and warped to accommodate the misinterpretation of scripture and to attempt to be consistent on flawed Biblical understanding.

Nothing is more basic to our understanding of this subject or any other than the way we have been trained to feel about church authority and the authorities who believe they have a right to do the thinking for the church.

Therefore, before we address the theses of this book, Chapter One will deal with this very real mine field.

# Chapter 1

## ***Mind Control - Male and Female***

“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” John 8:52.

Before we can even discuss the subject of this book, it is essential that we first understand and acknowledge how the church and her institutions function. We must understand the power structures and centers of influence in the church. Without understanding and acknowledging these, we cannot appreciate the difficulties of accepting, even exploring, an expansion of women’s role in the church.

It takes courage to set out on a course to find truth and practice the truth found. The leadership of churches will gladly do our thinking for us and set the perimeters of truth for us, if we allow it. Too few are open and courageous enough to break new ground. But, honest inquiry leads men and women to do so.

Most Bible students start out with the purest motives and the highest intentions in their search for truth. Often, along that path of learning, political - rather than religious - considerations tend to cloud our thinking and lead us off the straight and narrow.

Truth can be found, believed and practiced, but scholars of the highest ranks in the same religious fellowships often reach different conclusions on important religious issues.

Ordinary Christians tend to let the scholars of their choice do their study and thinking for them. The individual search for truth gets swallowed up in loyalty to our preferred scholar, preacher, teacher or party. Since scholars, preachers and teachers usually enjoy the praises of their followers, it is easy for them to encourage the party or denominational spirit where their positions on issues will be accepted and followed.

No matter how pure we believe our motives are, we are still subject to the same political pressures to conform, once we become a part of a particular religious community or fellowship. If we deny this, we have already violated truth.

Dominant personalities tend to move into positions of leadership and influence in any organization - religious, social, political or business. They can perpetuate error as easily as they foster truth. They rise up and take over pulpits, elderships, institutions of learning and benevolence, and editorships and writers’ positions of journals. They serve on boards of trustees. They publish class materials for churches. They speak on lectureships and hold meetings and revivals.

Some dominant personalities are not spiritually or academically qualified to lead. However, money, position, power and circumstances open the door for them to control and direct the affairs of churches, institutions and even individual lives.

Once in positions of power in the church, dominant personalities tend to exert much of their influence and energy in maintaining the status quo and making sure no one “rocks their boat.”

The quest for truth and understanding is gradually subordinated to staying on course and keeping peace, as they view the course and peace.

The average Christian, in fact, most Christians (in my experience), accept the Biblical positions of these dominant personalities because they have neither the interest, scholarship ability, spirit of inquiry, nor the courage to challenge dominant leaders. Most will not even question those in positions of power, even when doubts surface.

Most churches spend much of their time promoting the doctrines which separate them from their religious neighbors. They put out so much effort in making sure the faithful remain faithful to their peculiar doctrinal positions and long-held traditions, that they spend little time asking the questions which lead to a new and broader understanding of truth. Their time is devoted to building walls around their special doctrines and communions. Because of their need to be accepted, feel secure, maintain positions of power and influence, keep funds flowing, maintain cooperation in mission efforts, support institutions, and keep subscriptions coming, dominant personalities in the church are inclined to cease asking questions and searching for truth. And, if new truths are discovered or questioning arises, they are often not allowed to be expressed, due to the political consideration involved in the motives listed above.

Sadly, in Christian institutions of higher learning, where open and honest inquiry should dominate the intellectual process, maintenance of traditional beliefs and practices is usually the rule. If one reads college catalogs and pamphlets and listens to the speeches of their administrators, fund raisers and student recruiters, one quickly understands that maintaining the doctrinal status quo is what they are committed to. “Support us, send your children to us, and we’ll protect them from error and the world.” There is nothing wrong with protecting young students from the world and from error, unless we really mean protecting them from ideas, honest inquiry, and true intellectual freedom and growth.

The voices of most of our institutions cry with one loud dominant sound: “We are building and maintaining an institution where our concepts of truth and purity will be passed on to future generations. Furthermore, no administrator, faculty member, or even a student shall veer far off the accepted path, no matter how compelling their argument for change might be.”

This “fortress” mentality is too often designed to control our youth, rather than to allow both teachers and students to enjoy a true university atmosphere, where truth is sought, controversy permitted, and honest differences tolerated.

On one university campus, the president told his faculty and staff at the opening meeting of the school year that he wanted them to emphasize six things in the

educational process; one of them was openness. While he was making this statement, his board and his administration were engaged in the long-standing process of threatening and making attempts at and even firing employees who dared to exercise openness.

Faculty members who know better cower before the dominant personalities of the administration. And administrators cower before those above them in the hierarchy. Why? These men and women have mortgages to pay off, children to feed, and cars to run. They know their future is in the hands of those dominant personalities who decide promotions, tenure, faculty rank, chairmanships, and administrative positions.

I have known some faculty members who have been brought up through and protected by the parochial system but have not even learned that there are questions to be asked or that there are religious issues yet to be resolved. They join their alma mater to protect and promote the "fortress." They have been assured that the board of trustees, the administration and Bible faculty have the truth on all subjects and that they are fully capable of protecting the institution, its students, and the brotherhood from religious error.

One faculty member of one of our institutions of higher learning was asked by his president to speak on a particular subject at the university's annual Lectureship. The president told him to make it interesting, but "not too interesting." In other words, "Don't challenge the brotherhood to think; keep them satisfied as if what they know and do in worship were God's final and absolute plan. Please don't scare any supporters or prospective donors off and, especially, parents of prospective students." This faculty member knew what he was to say and what he was not to say, regardless of how much new truth and insight he could have imparted.

I bought the tape and listened to the lecture. He had heeded his president's warning. Why? He needed to curry the favor of the dominant personality on campus. He needed his job. He wanted the chance to speak again on future lectureships.

Experience has taught faculty members and administrators that "real" or "would be" dominant personalities on the boards, administration above them, or in the broader brotherhood can leverage their influence in such ways as to make life most miserable if they exercise their academic and intellectual freedom. It would mean misery at best, the loss of a job next, and being blackballed at worst.

If any of these "real" or "would be" dominant personalities have deep pockets (full of money), the road to exercising academic freedom by faculty members is a very dangerous course to pursue.

Thus, the traditional doctrines and religious practices are perpetuated on the campus. At the same time, honest inquiry and open dialogue are stifled by these dominant personalities. They get their power and way by contributing funds or withholding funds and by exerting or not exerting influence. The usurpers and "would be" dominant personalities get their way by raising loud and long objections to people

and policies. I have seen them make administrators and board members jump and “heel to”, even though the cause was but a “mouse that roared.”

Whether on the campus or in the local church, the pressure is always on for the rank and file to submit to the dominant personalities and even compromise integrity in the name of harmony.

No reader will challenge the statement, “Honesty is a cornerstone of Christian character.” Yet, honest inquiry and differences are too often subordinated to public and private pressure, fear, and the need to be fully accepted in the community of our choice.

Our inconsistencies should not be equated with dishonesty. The most honest people I know have their inconsistencies. But, when one’s inconsistencies are clearly pointed out and he or she refuses to acknowledge those inconsistencies, they become hypocrisies. Hypocrisies, then, become issues of Christian character. It is at this point that we deliberately reject a cornerstone of Christian character, and our basic integrity becomes flawed and is compromised.

Then, we chart a course of denial, in which the line between truth and error becomes so blurred that we cease using logic in our search for truth.

Administrators and faculty members can, by their position and power, determine which of their graduates are recommended for pulpits and various ministries.

I sat in a forum at a well-known Christian university in which a young Christian man asked a question of a panel of aged and learned men - men whom I love. The question was about the “power structure in the church.” The brother who answered the question is a dear personal friend. But he was in denial. He rudely accused the younger brother of using words put in his mouth by others. Then, he hastened to assure his audience that there was no “power structure” in the church - and that every church was autonomous.

Every well-informed person in that audience knew a power structure existed in the church. This brother was on the forum, instead of others, because of a power structure. The boards and administrators exert great power over the affairs of institutions of learning and the church. They determine what courses will be taught in our institutions, how they will be taught, and by whom. They determine who speaks at chapel services and at the annual lectureships, and on what subjects.

Power structures exist in our publications. The editors determine whose writings and what subjects the church members at large will read. They also have the power to blackball people, churches, institutions and movements among their readers, for good or bad reasons.

The editor of the *Firm Foundation* wrote an editorial on August 12, 1986, soliciting submissions from readers. He said, “We also welcome articles written by faithful Christian ladies, but do ask that the articles be directed to the needs and interest of Christian women.”

The conclusion: Christian women should not, can not, and will not address issues in this journal which meet the “needs and interests” of men. Summed up, women, no matter how well informed, have nothing to say to men, and subtly, God wouldn’t approve of it anyway. How bitter is the fruit of error. How far from the straight and narrow our warped thinking leads us. It cries, “Priscilla, you must not really have had anything of value to say to Apollos.”

In the church, preachers with dominant personalities intimidate those with lesser strength, and thus control the churches in a given geographical area. Usurpers, as preachers, have appeared in cities and have built or have attempted to build a power structure around themselves to dictate what all congregations in the city must teach and practice.

Pulpit preachers must believe they have important and eternal things to say, or they would not be in the pulpit. Those who stay in the pulpit for a lifetime tend to dominate the minds in the churches they serve. When other more dominant personalities in the pew refuse to accept the preacher’s position, the preacher usually moves on, or the church splits.

The preacher is usually the most influential and dominating force in the local church. He is the only one who has the undivided attention of the members for one hour or two each week. He also works full time ministering to the local flock during the week. In addition, he teaches public Bible classes. He is usually the most eloquent and articulate person in the local church. It is assumed that he is also the most informed Bible student in the church. So, why shouldn’t he dominate the thinking in the average church and set its doctrinal standards? By and large, he does. He may too often see himself as a keeper of the orthodoxy, and not as a man with a passion for seeking truth.

The church submits to the teaching and preaching of this pulpit minister because few, if any, believe they have equal knowledge. And if they did, they would be powerless to challenge him because of position and training.

Therefore, the church and its leadership usually defer to the preacher’s knowledge and accept it as final eternal truth. The attitude mentioned by Shakespeare, “I am Sir Oracle, and when I speak, let no dog bark,” has found its way into the personalities of some preachers.

Next in line are the elders. Even though elders have the God-given charge to feed and protect the flock, they usually do most of it through hirelings and volunteers. They enjoy the power to hire and fire, set and approve budgets, determine discipline, and plan the work of the church.

The church is taught to respect and submit to the elders. The members are warned not to bring a charge against any of them “without two or three witnesses.” The church members are taught that elders are their shepherds, looking out and responsible for their souls. So, most church members, out of trained consciences, submit to the

decisions of the elders, even though they know that some decisions are unprincipled, unjust, ignorant and even destructive of truth, peace and spiritual growth.

One local eldership, twenty years ago, passed a rule on women's dress. They issued a policy forbidding the wearing of slacks, pant suits, and jeans to church. They claimed this was Biblically wrong. It was immodest dress. My guess is that some elder's wife or some other woman with a dominant personality didn't like it. Today, slacks, pant suits, and jeans are both Biblical and modest in that same church.

The dominant personalities in the eldership rule the church and the weaker elders as well. In the end, preachers and elders do most of our thinking for us, while making decisions which determine the spiritual growth, quality of worship, standards of Christian living, and our ultimate destiny for good or bad.

To those who would like to see what extremes dominant personalities will go to control the lives, minds, and souls of church membership, I recommend Robert Lindsey's book, *A Gathering of the Saints*, published by Dell. It will force one to take a critical look at those who would control their eternal destiny, and that of others, at any cost.

In this maze of local and brotherhood power structures, we may use fear, insecurity, ignorance, tradition, and basic human weakness to keep the ship of Zion on a predetermined course. Woe unto the men and women who warn of dangerous shoals or point out ports-of-call where spiritual nourishment and the fresh waters of freedom exist. Some are so harbor bound that they do not know that a whole ocean of truth lies yet ahead of us. We sail on, submitting to the officers, even though suspecting or even knowing that some courses we take are filled with doubt, or are even wrong. We submit to the dominant personalities as well as the usurpers out of fear, for conscience's sake, in order to curry favor, escape wrath, keep the peace and maintain the association.

So it is with our study of the women's role in the church. Young girls, from early childhood, are taught that from the beginning God planned forever that women are to be in submission to men. We assert this as truth, in spite of what I have come to believe has no Biblical teaching to support it but with clear teaching to the contrary.

In fact, one of our brothers recently published a book on the subject. He asserted in his opening chapter that God, from creation, had put women in a submissive role to men - as if it were proven. He claimed God had made men women's spiritual leaders. He then proceeded to build an entire book of argument on this unproven assumption.

In fact, most people make such an assertion when they attempt a study of this subject. It is usually stated this way, "Since we know that God planned, from the Garden of Eden, that men should rule over women, we must not violate God's plan." They then attempt to make all scripture in both the Old and New Testaments, to the contrary, fit into an interpretation based on traditions built around this assertion and the three short passages in I Corinthians 11 and 14 and I Timothy 2. Lacking knowledge,

no one in the church is able or willing to challenge this false assumption. Therefore, the traditional teaching and practices continue, such as “drawing a line at age 14.”

Since the leadership of the church dominates our thinking, these traditional assumptions and assertions become rooted in our concept of Biblical truth.

Women have been conditioned since childhood, to be in subjection to male leadership in the home, church, and world. They cannot speak up without violating the “rules of God” and their well-trained consciences. In fact, for women to even question assumptions and assertions is a violation of their God-given submissive role, so they dare not question or think, lest they sin. After all, God planned from the beginning for men to be their spiritual heads and to dominate their lives, didn't He?

One well-known scholar, in reviewing this manuscript, asserted, “Every right-thinking woman is pleased to say that in order and arrangement, ‘Man is greater than I, just as Jesus said, ‘My Father is greater than I.’” Here we clearly see how mistaken even scholars can be. I know of thousands of women who are greater than thousands of men. I know of no man who is greater than a woman simply because he is a man.

Men, on the other hand, enjoy the right to dominate women and other men. If a weaker man dares to think for himself, some dominant personality will call him off and silence him.

Little boys, like little girls, are conditioned in their pre-school years with the concept that they are ordained by God to rule women. In some homes, only dads and brothers lead the prayers in family devotionals and at meal times. In most Sunday Schools, little boys can lead prayer; usually little girls can't. Boys can collect attendance cards and pass out bulletins in church, but girls can't. So, we develop a mindset in boys that they, somehow, have a preference over girls, mandated by God.

Divisions in churches usually occur over the clash of dominant personalities, rather than over what is right or wrong. Seldom, if ever, are churches split over doctrine. I know one church which split over feathers and flowers on a woman's hat. Back in the days when “head coverings were scripturally required,” women wore hats to church. In this farm community, the hats were plain, without adornment, and usually black. On one Sunday morning, one sister showed up to worship with a new hat with bright feathers and flowers adorning it. The leaders met, no doubt because some sister with a dominant personality (and perhaps the owner of just a plain hat) demanded it. They told the lady her hat was both vain and immodest. Moreover, it attracted undue attention to her and attention away from God, whom they gathered to worship. The male leaders mandated, “Take the feathers and flowers off your hat.”

Her family refused to buckle under to such arrogance and ignorance. The church split because one woman with a dominant personality and influence had her way. I'm sure there have been thousands of other church splits in Christendom because domineering men and women determined to have their way and found a Biblical (?) doctrine to support it.

So it is in the study of women's role in the church. Traditional male preachers, elders, teachers and scholars have concluded what is the final truth on the subject. Being trained to be subservient to men and having consciences trained by men, women seldom get to make suggestions, object to decisions, or involve themselves in the decision making process of the church in any way. Neither do men who take on the submissive role. Some women and weaker men do get power by objecting to or rebelling against the decisions of the leadership.

We sometimes give greater consideration to what is safe, traditional, and acceptable to those who fill pulpits, serve as elders, administer institutions, or publish, than we give to what is true or right.

All too often, those in power have assumed that present positions on issues are as final as if someone spoke ex-cathedra about them. Most often the rule is, don't point out our inconsistencies, ask hard questions, create doubts, or challenge our authority. On the question of women's role in the church, the domineering personalities will be glad to do our thinking for us if we let them. Many of them will use their positions of power, even their money, to keep us from studying the subject or teaching anything new on it. They will condemn us without a trial. The Catholic Church at least held inquisitions.

To overlook the evangelistic power of sixty percent of church membership, to bury their talents, and to not use their skills and strengths, is tragic. But, it is done at the congregational level with casual dismissal. It is done with the claim, "The issue of women's role in the church is forever settled." This is flippant at best and closed-minded at its worst.

I include a questionnaire which I have given to hundreds of inquiring Christians. By the time you answer the questions in it, I am sure you will realize that the question of women deserves much greater attention than we have dared give it in the past.

One reviewer challenged my use of questions, stating that it is a debate tactic used to embarrass those who disagree and who find their practices inconsistent with what they think the Bible teaches. I confess to using questions in my desire that readers confront their positions, inconsistencies and explore what the Bible teaches on this subject. I confess that I hope men and women would be open and honest enough to laugh at themselves in the confrontation they have with what they think they believe and practice and what they really believe and practice.

As to using questions to disarm others, I have a pretty fine "approved example" to follow, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We do not always understand how much "baggage" we bring into the study of any subject, especially this subject. The questions that follow should alert the reader as to how many answers are unclear and how much non-Biblical baggage we are carrying around with us.

Each of us is responsible to God to find, preach and live by His truth. We cannot allow dominant personalities, male or female, to stifle or threaten or do our thinking for us. Men shackle us and do not set us free; truth sets us free.

# Chapter 2

## ***Self-Examination***

The following questions should be answered prayerfully, thoughtfully, and carefully. The answers to these and other questions will be addressed in further text of this book.

1. A woman may preach in a public assembly in the church. Yes ( ) No ( )
2. A woman may lead singing in the public assembly of the church. Yes ( ) No ( )
3. A woman may read aloud the scriptures in the assembly. Yes ( ) No ( )  
\*Can she, if it is in unison with men? Yes ( ) No ( )
4. A woman may pass the communion in the assembly. Yes ( ) No ( )
5. A woman may officiate at the Lord's table on the Lord's day. Yes ( ) No ( )
6. A woman may make announcements in the public assembly. Yes ( ) No ( )
7. A woman may lead prayer in the public assembly. Yes ( ) No ( )
8. A woman may lead prayer in a mixed adult Bible class. Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* May a woman pray aloud in a unison prayer with men? Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* A woman may be allowed to pray in unison with a man only if it is in music form. Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* Which scripture makes the difference clear?
9. A woman may teach a mixed adult Bible class. Yes ( ) No ( )
10. A woman may teach a mixed adult class of unbelievers. Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* If you answered No, would God be happier to see such a class remain untaught and unbelievers lost than to have a woman teach them about Christ? Yes ( ) No ( )
11. A woman may read the scripture aloud in a mixed adult Bible class. Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* A woman may comment on scripture in a mixed adult Bible class. Yes ( ) No ( )
12. A woman may teach a class of 12-year-old boys and girls. Yes ( ) No ( )
13. A woman may teach a mixed class of 12-year-olds if two of the boys are baptized believers. Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* Where does the Bible teach that something changes at baptism regarding male-female roles?
14. A woman may argue for a point of view in a mixed adult class of baptized believers. Yes ( ) No ( )
15. A woman may lead prayer in a family devotional. Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* If yes, where does the Bible give her that authority?  
\* If no, where does the Bible say she may not?

16. A woman may lead a prayer at a Bible study of unbelievers conducted inside the walls of a male prison. Yes ( ) No ( )  
 \* If one is baptized, she must stop teaching. Yes ( ) No ( )
17. A woman may prophesy. Yes ( ) No ( )  
 \* What did women do in I Corinthians 11:5?  
 \* What is the difference in prophesying and preaching?
18. A woman may serve as an evangelist. Yes ( ) No ( )  
 \* Do you believe Christ was displeased because the woman at the well went into Sychar evangelizing and making disciples for Him? John 4:28, 39. Yes ( ) No ( )
19. A woman may serve as a deaconess. Yes ( ) No ( )
20. A woman may serve as an elder. Yes ( ) No ( )
21. A woman may teach men by letter but teaching them in a class is unscriptural. Yes ( ) No ( )  
 \* What scripture says there is a difference?
22. A woman may sing a solo in:  
 The public assembly. Yes ( ) No ( )  
 A public Bible class. Yes ( ) No ( )  
 A chapel program at a Christian college. Yes ( ) No ( )  
 A worship service at summer camp. Yes ( ) No ( )  
 A gathering of Christian women. Yes ( ) No ( )  
 \* If you answered yes on c, d, or e, and no on a and b, what scripture makes a differentiation?
23. Women may sing the lyrics of a song alone in a public assembly if joined in the chorus by male voices. Yes ( ) No ( )
24. Women may sing an entire song alone without male participation in a public assembly. Yes ( ) No ( )  
 \* Where does the Bible teach women may sing the lyrics alone?
25. A woman may read the entire 23rd Psalm in a mixed adult Bible class. Yes ( ) No ( )
26. A woman may sing the 23rd Psalm in a mixed adult Bible class. Yes ( ) No ( )
27. If no qualified man is present in a mixed adult Bible class, a qualified woman may teach it. Yes ( ) No ( )
28. If you answered yes on question 24, what scriptures would you use to justify the practice?
29. If you answered no, what scriptures would you use?
30. At which gathering of Christians were men instructed to remove their head covering to give honor to their head, Christ, in I

- Corinthians 11:1-16?
1. All Lord's Day assemblies. Yes ( ) No ( )
  2. All Bible classes. Yes ( ) No ( )
  3. All family or private devotionals. Yes ( ) No ( )
  4. All religious services. Yes ( ) No ( )
31. At which gathering of Christians did Paul instruct women to wear coverings to show honor to their heads, their husbands, in I Corinthians 11:1-16?
1. All Lord's Day assemblies. Yes ( ) No ( )
  2. All Bible classes. Yes ( ) No ( )
  3. All family or private devotionals. Yes ( ) No ( )
  4. All religious services. Yes ( ) No ( )
32. Since Paul continued Chapter 11 with instructions about how to observe the Lord's Supper, the instruction in verses 1-16 applies to the Lord's Day service. Yes ( ) No ( )
33. The wearing of coverings or the removal of coverings did not apply to other events or activities such as work, play, travel, reading, writing, etc. Yes ( ) No ( )
34. At which services were these uncovered men praying and prophesying in I Corinthians 11:1-16?
1. Lord's Day services. Yes ( ) No ( )
  2. Prayer meetings. Yes ( ) No ( )
  3. Bible classes. Yes ( ) No ( )
  4. Home devotionals. Yes ( ) No ( )
  5. Only at services attended by women, unbelieving and unbaptized children. Yes ( ) No ( )
35. If you circled only e on the last question, give scriptural references which make your answer absolutely clear.
36. If you answered yes on all questions in 31, were not men and women both praying and prophesying in the same services? Yes ( ) No ( )
37. If your answers were no on question 31, which verse in the entire chapter would suggest that women were praying or prophesying in a different assembly than men?
38. A woman may express her faith in Jesus Christ as Lord from the pulpit on the Lord's Day. Yes ( ) No ( )
- \* Only once and just before baptism. Yes ( ) No ( )
  - \* Any time that it will bless hearers. Yes ( ) No ( )
39. A woman may express her faith in God's providence from the pulpit on the Lord's Day. Yes ( ) No ( )
40. Men and women usually confess their faith before Baptism.
- \* Do you think God set the limit of one time only for women or men to confess their faith publicly?

\* Where does the Bible make an exception to the silence rule in the assembly to enable a woman to make her confession there?

41. A woman may confess her faults audibly from the pulpit area in the Lord's Day assembly. Yes ( ) No ( )
42. A woman may only whisper or write her faults for the preacher on the Lord's Day and he may then repeat her confession to the entire church. Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* Scripture: \_\_\_\_\_
43. Where does the Bible make a distinction between whispering or writing a confession of fault, and confessing it in a way that the whole assembly can hear?
44. A woman may baptize anyone in a public assembly. Yes ( ) No ( )
45. A woman may baptize only women and children at the Lord's Day service. Yes ( ) No ( )
46. Where does the Bible instruct either sex to do the baptizing? .
47. If a mother chooses to take her child's confession and administer baptism to her daughter in a public assembly, is it scriptural? Yes ( ) No ( )
48. If you answered yes to the above question, what scripture would allow her in doing so to make an exception to the Silence Rule of I Cor. 14:34?
49. Have women, where you attend church, ever made announcements from their pew when the male announcer asked, Are there any other announcements? Yes ( ) No ( )
50. Does the scripture make it clear that a woman may make announcements from her pew while in a seated position, but that she would sin if she made the same announcement from the pulpit?  
\* Where does the New Testament mention a pulpit area?  
\* Where does the Bible allow this exception to the silent rule?
51. Have you heard women make announcements from their pew and is it scriptural? Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* If yes, where does God approve of a woman making announcements only while sitting down and yet approves a man to do so standing up or sitting down?
52. Do you think God is concerned about whether a woman is sitting and facing the pulpit when making her announcement, or standing in front of the congregation making it? Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* If yes, what scripture directs it?
53. If you said no on question #4, where in the Bible does God give women the right to pass the communion left to right, but prohibit

them from passing it from front to back?

54. If a woman can come to the front to confess her faith, what scripture would prohibit her from coming to the front to pass communion?
55. In I Tim. 2:12, Paul says, But I permit not a woman to teach nor to have dominion over man, but to be in quietness. Circle the following ways in which she violates this command, not to teach.
1. Teach from the pulpit in a public assembly.
  2. Read a scripture in a public assembly.
  3. Read aloud in a mixed adult Bible class.
  4. Lead prayer at prayer meeting.
  5. Teach mixed classes at a college lectureship.
  6. Teach mixed classes in a college classroom.
  7. Teach home Bible studies.
  8. Teach through books.
  9. Teach through articles.
  10. Teach through poems.
  11. Teach through songs.
  12. Teach through Godly living.
- \* Where does God set out the distinctions among these types of teaching? If women can't teach men, why do we send women to mission fields, or allow them to write books and articles which men read?
56. If you did not circle all of the above, which Bible passage makes a clear distinction among them?
57. Is a letter a form of teaching? Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* May a believing woman teach a believing man by letter?
58. Paul's teachings by letter had less authority than his teaching in sermons. Yes ( ) No ( )
59. Would God allow a woman to teach a believing man by letter (in violation of I Tim. 2:12) but not allow her to teach him in a private Bible class? Yes ( ) No ( )
60. Where does the Bible make a distinction between teaching by voice and by letter?
61. Have you ever sat in a Bible class where women read verses of scripture and then taught both men and women what it meant? Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* Did they violate I Corinthians 14:34? Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* Did these women violate I Tim. 2:12? Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* If a woman makes an informed statement in Bible class which instructs men, is she violating I Tim. 2:12? I Corinthians 14:34? Yes ( ) No ( )
62. May a woman ask the song leader to repeat the number selected? Yes ( ) No ( )
63. May she ask a male reader to repeat the location of the scripture Yes ( ) No ( )

he is reading from?

64. May she ask him to repeat an announcement? Yes ( ) No ( )
65. Do such questions violate Paul's instruction in I Cor. 14:34-35, "Let women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted for them to speak.... If they would learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home."?  
\* If no, who did God give the authority to make these exceptions? Yes ( ) No ( )
66. What scripture differentiates between the kinds of questions women are permitted to ask and not ask?
67. May a grandmother teach her 12-year-old baptized grandson? Yes ( ) No ( )
68. Could she if he were 30 years old? Yes ( ) No ( )
69. What scripture differentiate between a private class at home, where a grandmother is permitted to teach one or a dozen grandsons, and teaching a private class at church?
70. If a Christian woman is not to teach a man, then God made an exception to the rule when he allowed Priscilla to teach Apollos, in Acts 18:26. Yes ( ) No ( )
71. The Bible makes it clear that a woman may break the silence rule when she reads responsively in unison with the men in public worship. Yes ( ) No ( )
72. If a man is asked to make the announcements, does that give him dominion over the elders in so doing? Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* Scripture: \_\_\_\_\_
73. If a woman is asked to make the announcements, does that give her dominion over the elders in so doing? Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* If a 12-year-old boy makes the announcements, does that give him dominion over men and women? Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* Does a woman have dominion over the men of the church if she makes an announcement from her pew? Yes ( ) No ( )  
\* What scriptures say so? \_\_\_\_\_
74. Which of the following are grounds for disciplining or eventually disfellowshipping brethren who practice or allow women to participate in religious activities? Please check all that apply.  
\_\_\_ Reading in a Bible class.  
\_\_\_ Reading in an assembly.  
\_\_\_ Leading a song in an assembly.  
\_\_\_ Leading a prayer in an assembly.  
\_\_\_ Reading in unison in an assembly.

- \_\_\_ Praying in unison in an assembly.
  - \_\_\_ Leading prayer in a mixed Bible class.
  - \_\_\_ Reading aloud in a mixed Bible class.
  - \_\_\_ Making instructive comments to men in a mixed Bible class.
  - \_\_\_ Arguing for a point of view in a mixed Bible class.
  - \_\_\_ Appointing deaconesses in the church.
  - \_\_\_ Sending single women out as missionaries.
  - \_\_\_ Co-teaching with her husband in a mixed adult Bible class.
  - \_\_\_ Teaching young men Christian principles in a college classroom in every discipline.
  - \_\_\_ Teaching New Testament Greek in a Christian school.
  - \_\_\_ Teaching New Testament Greek in a mixed class at church.
  - \_\_\_ Co-teaching a class on Christian counseling with a man at a Christian college lectureship.
  - \_\_\_ Co-teaching a mixed class on Christian counseling at a Christian college.
  - \_\_\_ Teaching a mixed class on Christian counseling at a local church.
  - \_\_\_ Speaking in chapel at a Christian college and mentioning her faith and other religious convictions.
  - \_\_\_ Preaching in a mixed assembly at church.
  - \_\_\_ Being appointed to the eldership.
  - \_\_\_ Becoming an evangelist.
  - \_\_\_ Passing communion right to left and left to right.
  - \_\_\_ Passing communion from front to back.
  - \_\_\_ Picking up attendance cards.
  - \_\_\_ Passing out song books and Bibles.
  - \_\_\_ Officiating at communion.
  - \_\_\_ Testifying how she came to Christ.
  - \_\_\_ Testifying to the congregation how she brought a neighbor to Christ.
  - \_\_\_ Singing a solo in a public worship.
75. Where does God make a distinction between a woman making comments in a Bible class and commentary at any other assembly?
76. Where does God call one assembly a worship service and another one where songs are sung, prayers offered, and the Bible studied

a Bible class?

\* Can worship service be found in the New Testament?

77. Do men or God set the rules and make the distinctions among the various ways women may participate in the life of the church? Does the Bible say anything about these distinctions? Yes ( ) No ( )
78. If you disagreed with the church leadership on some of the distinctions made for the church, how would you decide what was right and biblical?  
\_\_\_ Ask an elder?  
\_\_\_ Ask a preacher?  
\_\_\_ Study it thoroughly and reach your own conclusion?
79. Are the dominating personalities in positions of power and influence always right? Yes ( ) No ( )
80. If a woman felt those in authority were wrong, could she teach them what was right? Yes ( ) No ( )
81. Do you believe it would be better for an articulate, informed Christian woman to be a teacher and preacher of God's word, or for an uninformed, stammering Christian man to do so?  
\_\_\_ Which would reach more lost souls?
82. Do you believe you need to rethink your reasons for believing what you do on this subject? Yes ( ) No ( )
83. Are you willing to change your views in the face of compelling arguments? Yes ( ) No ( )
84. If souls were at stake based upon what you know and understand on this subject, would you give them assurance that what you now believe and practice is God's final and absolute will on the subject? Yes ( ) No ( )
85. Can you find the word worship, Bible class, or devotional, in the entire context of I Timothy 2? Yes ( ) No ( )
86. I Corinthians 11:3 says, But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of woman is man; and the head of Christ is God.
1. Is a man the head of:  
\_\_\_ All women?  
\_\_\_ Each woman?  
\_\_\_ Just Christian women?
2. Are all men heads of:  
\_\_\_ All Women?

- Each Woman?
- Just Christian Women?

3. Are only Christian men the heads of:

- All Women?
- Each Woman?
- Just Christian Women?

4. Must all women submit to:

- All men?
- Each man?
- Just Christian men?

5. Is a 12-year-old baptized boy a man and the head of:

- All Women?
- Each Woman?
- Just Christian Women?
- His sisters?
- His mother?

# Chapter 3

## ***“I Suffer Not a Woman...” To Remain Shackled?***

The Roman Catholic Church, Greek Orthodox, many mainline Protestant Churches, and the Churches of Christ have historically and traditionally kept women out of their pulpits. Many have not allowed women to hold any offices in the church. Participation by women in public services has been limited. The subject of women's role in the church is a complex one, due to a lack of Biblical clarity and a variety of church laws, interpretations, traditions, and social customs.

But things have changed. In 1956 the United Presbyterian Church voted to ordain women as ministers. Since that year, National Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, and Episcopalians have opened their doors to the ordination of women. Now, over eighty Protestant bodies officially approve the ordaining of women for the ministry. There has definitely been a dramatic change in the past thirty years. Roman Catholic churches stayed a move to ordain women in a decision by Pope Paul VI in 1977. Southern Baptists debate the issue at annual conventions, but to date have not generally ordained women as ministers. The Churches of Christ have hardly allowed the subject to surface in their congregational activities, lectureships, or in their publications, except for the traditional positions.

In this chapter, the study will reflect the present and past teachings and practices of the Church of Christ communion. However, it will also reflect on the role in which women have been historically placed and allowed to serve in most branches of Protestantism and Catholicism. Our reasons for limiting women in official church leadership roles have many of the same historical and Biblical roots. Different communions will have slightly different practices. Some will even argue for their practices from slightly different points of view; however, most still keep women in their “place,” as they view their “place” for the same or similar reasons.

The coming of Jesus into the world and the establishment of the early church were sandwiched between male-dominated religious institutions. Jewish traditionalists placed women in a subservient role to men in a patriarchal society. Under Jewish law, husbands could divorce their wives for any cause (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Wives could not divorce their husbands. Wives were chattel. Polygamy was tolerated (Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 21:15-17). Women were considered inferior to men in every way, and less intelligent. They were also considered spiritually inferior. They had no rights of inheritance if there were male heirs (Numbers 27:1-11;36). They were subject to trial and stoning if their husbands suspected them of unfaithfulness (Numbers 5:11-20). In spite of the same teaching on men in Leviticus 20:10, the Jews brought only the woman taken in adultery to Jesus for stoning (John 8:3-11). Women were not treated as equals of men.

Women were not allowed in the Temple and were not counted among the ten Jews necessary to start a synagogue.

However, there is evidence that women served in places of leadership in some synagogues during the Roman and Byzantine periods. Bernadette J. Brooten, in her book, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue*, gives evidence of nineteen Greek and Latin inscriptions in which women bear the titles of "Head of Synagogue," "Leader," "Elder," "Mother of the Synagogue," and "Priestess." Some even had roles of "Archisynagogos," the very highest office. But, certainly this was not the rule for women in Jewish culture. However, this evidence proves that women were not totally excluded from public roles in all Jewish communities. Women were prophetesses in the New Testament church (Acts 21:9). Pliny, Governor of Bithynia, wrote of women deacons in the church in 112 A.D. Women who ministered to the needs of the early church are referred to often until 500 A.D. The first hospital was founded by Faviola, a Christian woman.

Even into the Middle Ages, women appeared to have no less opportunity to serve than men. The fact that they are mentioned less may stem from their duties as homemakers more than from any Biblical or church prohibition. They served as abbesses, deaconesses, and prophetesses. Hildegard of Bingen was both a prophetess and a deaconess.

Women under the law were considered unclean during menstrual periods and at childbirth. Orthodox Jews still segregate women. Many thanked God that they were not born a woman. Today, some conservative Jewish synagogues allow women to express themselves in worship and even appoint some to be rabbis. In reformed synagogues, there is no problem at all in allowing women equal access to leadership roles in worship or to rabbinical service.

At the coming of Christ, rabbinical schools were still debating whether or not women actually had souls. Under Moses, a woman was stoned if she were caught in adultery, but under Christ she was forgiven. Also, under Christ, there was neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female. They were all one in Christ Jesus. They received spiritual gifts, prayed, prophesied, spoke in tongues, interpreted tongues, and sang Psalms in worship according to I Corinthians 11 and 14.

Shortly after the Apostolic Church period, a new male-dominated church hierarchy began to rise up. Women's names were mentioned less and less in church writings. It culminated in the Ecclesiastic male orders of the Catholic Church both east and west.

Women were excluded from clergy roles, and a bold line was drawn not only between men and women in the church, but also between the clergy and the laity. Even today, in the Catholic churches, and in some Protestant churches, only the clergy can officiate at the communion table and in public worship. Until the last decade, the Catholic Church had only altar boys and no altar girls. Some heretical (?) priests now allow altar girls to serve. But the Church, officially, does not.

Most cultures of the world have placed women in a second-class status (and many still do). Under English law, barely a century ago, it was practically impossible for a woman to earn money. It was not until 1880 that the law allowed her to keep monies she earned. Modern Christianity often reflects the culture of our society as much or even more than it reflects Biblical truth.

Even in the United States, women have enjoyed suffrage only since 1920. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 granted them further rights. Some states, up until a decade ago, had laws on the books limiting a woman's right to a full inheritance which her husband had. In some states she received only a child's share or one-half of her husband's estate. Yet, he could inherit one hundred percent of her estate.

What role does the New Testament allow women to play in the life of the church? It is this question that we will be attempting to answer in this book.

Christ's view of women and the view of Paul were quite different from the Jewish view and the view of much of Christendom today.

The treatment of women by Jesus is in sharp contrast to that of Judaism. While Judaism required the stoning of a woman guilty of adultery, Jesus said to the one taken in the very act, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more." In Samaria, Jesus conversed with the woman at Jacob's well. She was surprised that he would even talk to her. Other Jews would not have. Jews would not even talk to Samaritan men, let alone a Samaritan woman. But Jesus did.

Women were close to Jesus, and they were close to Paul. They were following Christ to Galilee and went with him to Jerusalem. They stood at the foot of his cross and were the first at his tomb. They were the first witnesses of his resurrection. They declared his resurrection to the apostles.

It was Paul who declared that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female when it came to having access to God's grace. Today some church leaders in almost every branch of Christendom still hold traditional positions on men's and women's roles for reasons that are often contradictory to what they practice. They use arguments that are often specious.

Feminists condemn both the traditions practiced in the modern church and the Apostle Paul for what they perceive as his male chauvinism. Happily, a careful study of the New Testament shows that these feminists are as guilty of misinterpreting Paul as are many of the "traditionalists" in the church. For Paul was, indeed, a champion of women's rights to roles in the life of the church.

The role of women in the modern church is due to development of the male-dominated clergy in Catholicism and the gradual transference of that concept of male clergy roles and male laity leadership roles to Protestantism.

The Biblical justification for our establishing the traditional place for women in the church is found basically in three scriptures: The first deals with headship and head coverings (I Corinthians 11:2-16)

Now I praise you that ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions, even as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoreth her head; for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven. For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn: but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled. For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man: for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man: for this cause ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God. Judge ye in yourselves; is it seemly that a woman pray unto God unveiled? Does not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

The second is I Corinthians 14:34-35:

Let the women keep silence in the churches. For it is not permitted for them to speak. But let them be in subjection as also sayeth the Law. If they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church.

And the third scripture is I Timothy 2:8-15:

I desire, therefore, that men pray in every place lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting. In like manner, that women adorn themselves with modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety; not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly raiment; but which becometh woman professing godliness through good works. Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness. For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression; but she shall be saved through her child bearing, if they continue in faith and love and sanctification and sobriety.

In this study, we will specifically state how the Churches of Christ and other bodies apply or misapply these scriptures. We will study the context of these scriptures and the King James version's use or misuse of the words, "silent" and "silence." The Greek words for woman and man or wife and husband are equally important. The Church's attitude toward women, due in part to the earlier translators' use of these words, will be studied along with authority, submission, and the deaconship.

Those who learn that the church has not followed the scriptures should not force immediate changes, which might result in hard feelings and division. The expedient thing to do is to teach brethren the truth of God's word and bring about change through knowledge and understanding.

However, in spite of the rule of expediency, no one should fail to study and teach the truth on this or any Biblical subject.

Some will say, "But if you speak out on the subject, it will cause trouble." Trouble for whom? Those who are ignorant? Those who will not learn? Many of those who object to the study and teaching on women's issues do so on the ground that it is divisive. But truth and its practice cannot be based on universal approval. To suppress truth because it causes tension is, in reality, contrary to the divisive quality of the teachings of Christ. He said, "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). Jealousy, hatred, and enmity exist in families and can be and sometimes are the price we pay for denying self and following Christ. I doubt babes in Christ will be the ones to cause trouble. My experience suggests that the ones who are usually upset when a traditional practice or a traditional doctrine is tested and found to be unscriptural are those who should be mature both in understanding and in spiritual values. But, it is often this group who needs someone to teach them again "what be the first principles of the oracles of God," and the Restoration plea.

The ones who usually get upset are older members who claim to believe in the plea of the Restoration Movement, "We speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent." But the same often falsely assume that we have fully restored the New Testament Church and have discovered and preach all and only New Testament truth.

Had Martin Luther accepted the view that truth might cause trouble, he never would have challenged the heresy he discovered in the Catholic Church. Had Alexander Campbell taken this position, he would never have spoken up on the substitution of sprinkling for Biblical baptism, nor would he have ever launched out to build a united church in a divided religious world, based on the Bible rather than on the creeds written by men.

If we stop searching for truth, and we dare not, we will betray the cause of restoring the New Testament Church and will violate its fundamental principle of seeking to "speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where it is silent."

# Chapter 4

## ***Teachings and Practices of the Churches of Christ***

Though this study will be dealing with the practices of the Churches of Christ, by and large, many of the same basic arguments will be found in some form in most other churches which still keep women in subjection to the men of the church. It will deal with those which forbid women to participate or limit their participation in the specific traditional male roles in the public life of the church.

In most churches, women have not been allowed to preach, teach, lead singing, lead prayer, or read scriptures in public worship services. They have not been allowed to preside at the communion table or to serve communion to the audience. They have not even been permitted to serve as ushers, collect attendance cards, pass collection baskets, or make announcements from the pulpit area. Women cannot lead prayer in Bible classes, which we label private, if a baptized man is present, nor can she be the “official” teacher of a Bible class if a baptized man is present. She cannot serve as a deacon or an elder, or serve on most committees doing church work, let alone chair one. She is not permitted to ask questions in public worship services, nor publicly baptize penitent believers. There are other subtle and overt ways in which she is kept “silent” and in “subjection” to men who rule the church.

We allow our women, however, to sing congregationally, pray in unison with men, read in unison with men, read responsively with men, and lead songs from the pew. A man usually stands up front while she leads sitting in the pew, signifying man’s authority over her. She may prepare communion and wash the communion containers after it has been served, but she cannot “wait” on the table nor serve the congregation. She can teach younger children, other women, and unbelievers - men or women. She may read, make comments, and even argue her point of view in adult Bible classes. She may knock doors on evangelistic campaigns, cook and serve meals in her home and in church, wash the dishes, and tend the nursery. She may show hospitality, greet visitors and members during a public service, and she may make overlooked announcements from her pew in most church services, even on Sunday mornings in smaller churches, and practically all churches on Sunday nights, at prayer meetings, and in all classes. She can sign for the deaf in most churches, even if there is a capable male signer present. In some churches she is allowed to interpret orally when a deaf preacher is signing.

Does it not seem strange that we will allow a woman to translate the local preacher’s sermon for the deaf or on mission visits from the local language to English to male and female attendants, but we will not allow the same women to translate Paul, Peter, or Christ to these same people?

Women are permitted to sing alone and together on certain lyrics or the chorus of many songs, while the men remain silent. In these songs, a woman may praise God,

pray to Him, and give thanks to Him, while all the men, including the leader, remain silent.

If it is a special worship service, such as an afternoon singing, a lectureship, or a camp meeting, she may sing leads as a part of a quartet or sextet of women, or in a mixed choral group. She may also participate in women's glee clubs without any man even being involved. If she represents a school, college, university, camp, Bible Chair or children's home, her group can render hymns before the church, usually in a choir made up of men and women. In these songs of worship, she may sing a solo with or without other voices singing in the background. Sometimes she sings a solo while the rest of the choral group hums. At the same time, men may also sing solos, using the same songs that the church sings in other worship services. The same women, in some choral group, can sing in most churches on Sunday evening and at prayer meetings, or on other nights of the week. Sometimes they are allowed to do so only after the "official" worship service is closed with a prayer. They are allowed because we reason that a closing prayer officially dismisses God from the assembly, even though the same audience is meeting in the same auditorium.

Occasionally, churches will have a business meeting with the entire church present, and even during a Sunday worship service. Women are usually allowed to ask questions in such meetings. They are permitted sometimes to meet privately with the elders if they have proposals, questions, or even objections regarding church life. They are sometimes appointed to do visitations, benevolence, and janitorial work.

However, in the main they are not allowed to function in the pulpit area. Microphones are almost exclusively used by men. Only men are allowed to lead the singing, preach, lead prayers, serve communion, read aloud and make announcements from the platform. The pulpit area remains the domain of men. As they view it, it is a place of leadership, authority and control. Since women don't have any authority and are forbidden to lead, they must stay away from the pulpit. One reviewer of this manuscript calls pulpit roles, "spotlight roles," reserved for men. Women can paint it, vacuum it, carry communion trays to or from it, but beyond that it is for the most part male-controlled territory.

We usually define the assembly as the regular worship service, which is held in the church auditorium. It may be Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, a lectureship, or a revival series. We usually do not refer to the auditorium as a sanctuary. But we treat it as such, where only sanctified men do the leading and performing. We make a distinction between the assembly when the whole church comes together and when part of the church assembles.

How did the church arrive at these kinds of distinctions which make it wrong for a woman to participate in the regular worship services, based on her posture or her location in the assembly?

These restrictions start with a premise that the women are usurping authority over men if they ascend to the pulpit (holy hill) reserved for ministers (clergy), or other

men appointed to lead in worship. Upon that premise, the argument is built that Paul also declares in I Corinthians 14:23, 26, 34 and 35 that when the whole church is “assembled together” that “women are to be silent,” that they are “not permitted to speak,” and if they need to speak up and “learn anything,” then it should be done by “asking their own husbands at home.” We also quote the King James version of I Timothy 2:11, which tells women to learn in silence, and also says they are not permitted to teach, and are not to “usurp authority over men.” Therefore, anything that is conducted in the pulpit area by a woman is automatically regarded as usurpation of authority or a violation of the silence rule.

We have made the pulpit area sacred ground, reserved only for men. The New Testament nowhere mentions a pulpit area where men in authority alone may operate.

Let’s examine the actual practices of the church on silence. First, let’s be honest about it. We do not believe that women should be silent, nor do we force women to be silent. We permit them to sing. But someone will quote Paul’s command to sing, in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. They claim the “whole” church is commanded to sing. Not so! He has said for women to “keep silence.” If they are to keep silent, the singing command is for men only. Note: We’ve also argued that this was congregational singing only. However, Paul says, “Teach and admonish one another.” This certainly suggests that individuals are to teach and admonish other individuals, or perhaps a group of individuals, through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. It is obviously reciprocal, rather than congregational. He did not say, “speak with one another,” but “one to another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.”

The context of both of the passages has to do with relationships and attitudes of daily living, and does not once suggest the instruction applies to any assembly or even a class. These relationships and attitudes are applicable to worship and classes, certainly, but these passages are not about public worship.

These passages are more suggestive of individuals singing to the group or to other individuals than congregational singing. Certainly soloists, quartets, and choral groups could sing, teach and admonish the whole church. But, usually, we rule out such groups in the regular assemblies.

It is interesting that Paul instructed the Colossian Church to read his letter and to have the letter to the Laodiceans read to them. We take the command to sing and apply it to men and women alike, and allow women only to sing some lyrics, in violation of our claimed interpretation of Paul’s instructions on silence in I Corinthians 14 and in I Timothy 2. If women must be silent, then they can’t sing. However, we never allow women to read the scriptures alone and aloud in the regular services in obedience to the command to read.

We reason that the singing command was for women and men, but that the reading was for men only. Why? Not because the scriptures say so, but only because our tradition says so.

There have been a few small sects in history that would not even allow women to sing in worship services. The First Congregational Church organized in New Jersey refused to allow women to sing, in order to be in compliance with Paul's instruction on silence in I Corinthians and I Timothy. Even if their interpretation of these passages was wrong, they were at least consistent. We are not.

When Paul says to teach and admonish in song, whether it is done congregationally, with solos or special groups, women are not silent! They are speaking! They are teaching! They are admonishing! And, obviously, if teaching is being done, others (men and women) are also learning and being admonished by women. Yet, Paul tells us in I Timothy 2 they are not to teach, but to be in silence (King James). Something is obviously wrong with both our interpretation and application.

Does teaching with the use of musical notes differ from teaching without them? Our songs consist of praise, prayer, encouragement, admonition and instruction. Many are written so that sopranos and/or altos sing the lyrics, and these women are often joined by the tenor and the bass singers on the chorus. Some song leaders will ask the congregation to sing the first four verses of some songs by voices: sopranos on the first verse, altos on the second, tenors on the third, basses on the fourth, and four-part harmony on the fifth. I have never known anyone who would try to twist logic and scripture to condemn such a practice. In fact, most people enjoy and appreciate the experience and the change.

Why do we not object to women teaching men in song? I have interviewed over five hundred church members representing a broad spectrum of preachers, college Bible professors, elders, teachers, and college students from our entire brotherhood, and I have not had one suggest that such teaching through a singing arrangement was unscriptural.

I ask the next logical question: Can the women sing the entire song alone? If they can sing lyrics alone, the first verse or two verses alone, the same scripture and logic would permit them to sing the first song, and the men to sing the second song and the whole congregation to sing the third song together. Nothing would prohibit this.

The next logical question would be: If there were only one soprano present, could she sing a solo, or could an alto sing a solo? Of course, she could. The same logic and scripture applies.

The next logical question arises: If it were a small church and it had only one woman, could she be allowed to sing alone? Of course, she could. The same logic and the same scripture would apply.

So, we would let a woman sing alone on the same scriptural and logical basis as we let two or twenty or two hundred sing together in any regular service, while the men remain silent.

If that song happened to be a prayer, then we would let women pray alone while the others remained silent. If the song was praise, we would let the woman sing praises

alone, based on the same logic and the same scripture. If the song taught and admonished, we would let a woman teach and admonish alone with the same logic and the same scriptural basis.

Yet, without the music, many churches will not allow her to do any of the above things alone because of our traditional interpretation of a half dozen verses of scripture out of the entire Bible on silence, women teaching, and submission. Does God allow women to praise, pray, admonish, and teach in violation of our proof texts as long as the praise, prayer, admonition and teaching are done with music, and condemn the same if it is simply spoken?

If we follow our traditional reasoning on Paul's instruction regarding women's silence and teaching roles in the regular services of the church, then our position is as follows:

1. They don't have to be silent in song.
2. They may teach in song.
3. They may admonish in song.
4. They may praise in song.
5. They may pray in song.
6. They may sing with other women while the male voices are silent.
7. They may sing a solo while the men are silent.
8. But they cannot, for the purpose of teaching, admonition, praise or prayer, speak the same words of these songs to the congregation without music.

Why? Not because God commanded them not to, but because of our traditions and our faulty reasoning. Thus, we approve women or a woman singing alone, but would not allow her to read alone in an assembly, even though Paul commanded the church to "sing" and "read" in the same letter. If a woman can teach and admonish in a solo in a small church, the same scripture and logic would allow it in a big church. It would also allow her to read in any church.

### **Announcements During the Regular Services**

Announcements may include nearly anything of interest to the whole church, or to any individual in the group. We announce special services, classes and meetings. We announce weddings, funerals, and sickness. We announce birthdays, anniversaries, baptisms, showers. We announce budgets, contributions, and work days. Those who make announcements from the pulpit area are men only. Yet, very often the male announcer in charge will ask, "Are there any other announcements which we have overlooked?" That means, "Does anyone in the whole congregation have something that we all need to be aware of?" During this period, women often speak up and announce a sickness, a bereavement, or a special need. They announce ladies' Bible classes, baby showers, bridal showers, and the like. No one, to my knowledge, has ever placed a prohibition on such announcements by women or charged that they violate our silence or submission rules. The smaller the church, the more apt we are to have women making such announcements from the pews. No one feels ill at ease if

they do it when sitting down. But, if she stands up to do so, red flags wave and we become concerned. If she should go to the front of the auditorium to make her announcement, many would find reason to object. If she walked to the podium and used the microphone, some would split a church over it. Now, honestly, where in logic or in scripture can any person find any reason that an announcement by a woman sitting in a pew is approved by God and by scripture, while one made at the podium is unscriptural and is not approved by God? Does God really concern himself with auditorium positions or posture? Is it really scriptural for a woman in God's sight to violate the silence rule of I Corinthians 14:34 while sitting down, but unscriptural if she stands up front?

We allow her to violate our silence rule and then reason that she should not come to the front and make the same announcement because she would somehow be usurping authority over men. But if a man from the audience comes forward to make an announcement while an elder or preacher presides, he is not presumed to be usurping authority over them. Why would the woman be usurping authority over men if the men give her permission to make her announcement up front? No one assumes that a 12-year old boy who makes an announcement from the pulpit is exercising dominion. Why would it be true if a woman did? Why do we think this is unscriptural? Only because of our tradition! It has nothing to do with scripture - or logic! One's posture or position in the assembly when making an announcement is nowhere addressed by any New Testament writer. For men to bind such a rule is "binding where God has not bound!"

I have worshipped with many small churches in living rooms in homes and on mission fields. Usually brethren form a circle; there is no pulpit area - no front, no back. In this arrangement, everyone is free to make announcements, and they do so. Never have I seen a woman challenged for "usurping authority" in such a setting. In all honesty I ask, "What is the Biblical difference in this setting and one in a big metropolitan church?" There is none. The only problem is our tradition!

Would anyone really try to argue that as long as a woman is sitting facing the pulpit she may scripturally make an announcement? But, if she is up front making the same announcement, she is violating the scripture? Surely, no one would be so illogical.

## **Communion Services**

Traditionally, we have allowed any male baptized believer, who is faithful, willing and able, to preside over and serve the communion. In many Protestant and Catholic churches, only the clergy presides. Protestants usually use male ushers in passing the communion trays. In the Churches of Christ, we do not "officially" make the clergy-laity distinction, so any man may preside over and serve the Lord's supper. But, we clearly make a distinction between male and female roles. Men may lead the communion prayer; women are to remain silent. Men may wait on the table while standing in front facing the audience; women must sit in the pews facing the pulpit. Men then start at the front of the building and pass the communion from the front pews and proceed to the back pews. In larger churches, male ushers may start from the back and move forward while the ushers in the front are moving from the front to the back. But one thing is

clear: the presiding over and passing the Lord's Supper up and down the aisles are a man's domain. It's a "spotlight" role.

Why? Not because of scripture, but because of tradition. The New Testament nowhere mentions "waiting on the table," neither does it allude to it. Some dominant personality, years ago, must have decided it was God's will. We allow women to pass the Lord's Supper right to left and left to right along the pew. We allow them to pass it forward or backward at the end of the pew if no male usher is present. They may take the communion tray from one end of the pew to the other end of the pew with no problem. We will even allow them to pass it across the aisle if an usher is not handy. We allow them to prepare it, deliver it to the Lord's table before services, and clean up after it. But women can't serve it from the front. Why? Because we, by our traditions, have assumed that this would be usurpation or that they would not be in submission. There is no logic nor scripture to back up such reasoning.

In fact, if you wanted to really prove that women should remain in their place, in subjection to men, the men should be seated and the women should serve them! They serve meals at home and in fellowship halls. Why not serve the communion in the assembly? Who serves or passes a communion tray has nothing to do with silence, usurping authority or submission rules. However, it would have something to do with usurpation or submission if the elders of the church asked able women to serve and they refused. That would be a failure to be in submission to the elders of the church. If a woman or a group of women forced a "men only rule" to serve in the so-called leadership roles of the church, that would be usurpation. But, more on usurpation later.

Some probably believe that serving the Lord's Supper is a place of male duty or honor and that, therefore, those places in Christian worship rightfully belong to men. That, too, is neither supported by scripture nor logic. God did not call men to positions of honor and women to positions of dishonor; He calls both to positions of service.

We will not even let women pass the collection plate from the front to the back or up and down the aisle. We will not even allow women to pick up or pass out attendance cards, or announcement sheets, or church bulletins.

We must honestly ask ourselves, "What does serving communion, passing collection baskets, or picking up attendance cards have to do with God's plan for men and women in the life and worship of the church?" Nowhere does God say or even imply that women can pass trays, baskets, or attendance cards right to left, or down the pew, but not up or down the aisle. Such a conclusion has no Biblical basis! This man-made creed is heresy.

We have reasoned that the silence rule applies only to individuals reading, preaching, leading in prayer, making formal announcements, or leading singing from the front in public. But, we have further reasoned that a woman is in submission if she reads, announces, or leads songs from her pew, and that in such cases the silence and submission rules do not apply. Women are also in submission as long as the contribution basket, communion trays, and attendance cards are passed right to left, left

to right, or to the pew in front, or to the pew in back, as long as they are seated. But, if they stand and walk up and down the aisle, they are usurping male authority. Biblical? Logical? Neither, just faulty reasoning!

As we continue this study, we will need a large dose of old-fashioned honesty and humility! If we continue our traditional practices, we will:

1. Allow only men up front in the worship services to preach, lead prayer, read, lead songs, make announcements, and baptize.
2. Allow only men to be ushers, servers, and presiders.
3. Allow women to make announcements, pass trays, contribution baskets, and attendance cards in a sitting position facing a pulpit, while restricting pulpit positions of power, authority, and honor to men only.
4. Allow women to pray audibly in song, give thanks in song, teach and admonish in song, but will not allow the same women to read, pray, teach, or give thanks audibly without music, unless she does it in unison with men.

### **Other Traditional Exceptions on the Silence Rule**

Every church allows and expects a new convert to make a public confession of faith before baptism. We do not apply the silence rule in this case. Why? We argue that the confession is to be made before men. Therefore, it is all right, even mandatory, to make it before the church. But, we argue that women are to keep silence when the whole church comes together. If they are to be silent in the worship assembly, they cannot make public confession in the assembly, but they must make it elsewhere. Nor can they confess faults or solicit prayers, or speak to their husbands, children, or neighbors. They cannot say, "Amen." Common courtesy remarks such as, "Excuse me," "Thank you," "Please," or "I'm sorry" could not be uttered. If Paul meant "mute" in all the churches, then mute (silent) women must be! Who gave any man or group of men the authority to pick and choose? We want to "have our cake and eat it, too."

We have "reasoned" that a woman can violate the silence and the submission rules of Paul any way that our traditions and culture permit. We do not have a logical, let alone scriptural, argument for allowing women to do some things, in some ways, at some times, in some places, and in some positions, but not in others.

If we allow men, dominant men, or sometimes dominant wives, to pick and choose when the silence rule is enforced or can be violated, then the Bible is not our guide; the opinions of men and women become our guide. No one believes that silent means mute, except where it is applied by man-made tradition! More enlightening, no two churches have the exact same rules in allowing or disallowing women to speak. Each develops its own written or unwritten creed. It has nothing to do with clear or absolute Biblical teaching.

### **Special Rules for Special Worship Services**

No one objects to a woman's singing a solo in a wedding. The bride may quote the words of Ruth, the preacher quotes Christ and Paul, a wedding sermon is preached,

special religious songs are sung, God's laws are enjoined, prayers are offered, the bride says her vows, and she may even speak a special tribute to her husband. The bride and groom may pray in unison. The entire ceremony is conducted as a worship service, usually in a church building.

Wives and daughters do, on occasion, read poems or tributes to deceased loved ones at funerals. Words of faith, comfort, praise, and hope are spoken and sung. Music groups sing to comfort and give hope to those who are mourning.

Seldom have we heard a complaint that suggests these participating ladies are violating I Corinthians 14 or I Timothy 2. Yet, these experiences are definitely ones of worship. And, for certain, the Bible makes no distinction in different forms of worship. Some would dare call weddings and funerals private types of worship, so the silence rule would not be applicable.

However, if speaking by women in Sunday worship is both an act of exercising dominion and a violation of the silence rule, why would speaking at weddings or funerals be any different? If only men can speak, and women are not permitted to speak in a worship service, where does the Bible make exceptions for weddings and funerals? Worship is still worship, and it is usually held in the church building with the church assembled.

Yet, Paul said, "As in all the churches of the saints, let women keep silence in the churches." He did not say, except in classes, weddings, funerals, prayer meetings, singing, reading in unison, praying in unison, greeting visitors, etc. Men have established all exceptions by common consent, without a single verse of Biblical instruction to do so. So clearly we have tried to have it both ways: silence on the part of women where tradition permits, and speaking where tradition permits, while claiming to have Biblical authority for both.

The truth is, we have no explicit Biblical authority or even inferences for such distinctions. Human reasoning prevails. Whose reasoning will we use as authoritative?

# Chapter 5

## *Public Versus Private Meetings*

For nearly forty years, I must confess that I tried to make the scriptures teach what my brethren and I have practiced and taught. In doing so, I now confess to a lot of intellectual gymnastics, which warped and twisted both logic and scripture to give me some sort of rationale I could live with. But, upon a more mature review of my positions, I am now convinced that a more intelligent and honest review of what the scripture really teaches is required. I no longer need those hobgoblins of attempted consistency.

Our warped reasoning is nowhere more evident than in our attempts to define what is a public assembly versus a private assembly, or where a worship assembly begins and ends, or how to end it and allow women to speak. We acknowledge that the New Testament church had regular assemblies. The writer of Hebrews tells us that we are not to “forsake the assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25). The church at Ephesus met on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). The Corinthians assembled for prayer, prophesy, tongues, interpretations, revelations, singing, and the Lord’s Supper (I Corinthians 11-14).

The churches which forbid women to be in the pulpit and which will not allow women to preside over the Lord’s Supper rely on I Corinthians 14, especially verses 23, 34, and 35. This scripture is used to separate the times women must be silent and the times when they can speak. With rare exceptions, churches have not interpreted the silence of I Corinthians 14:34 to be mute. The Greek word used by Paul here is “sigao.” This word means, “to be quiet,” or “to hold one’s peace.” To be mute comes from the Greek word “phimoo.” Paul does not use that word here. More on this passage later.

Our application of the silence rule from I Corinthians 14:34 and I Timothy 2:11,12 pivots on our interpretation of I Corinthians 14:23, “When the whole church be gathered together.” In most churches, large and small, we teach that the Bible classes at 10:00 a.m. are “private” classes and that the later service in our sanctuary when the Lord’s Supper and the contribution are taken is a “public service.” This application gives us a lot more latitude on women teaching men. But even our application is flawed with gross inconsistencies.

We quote Acts 18:26, where Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside and “taught him the way of the Lord more perfectly.” The word “private” is not in the text. We have rendered it so to promote our tradition. We have reasoned that she could not have taught him in a “public” service (Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m., Sunday evening, or at a prayer meeting service, or even in a Bible class with men present, unless she were sitting down facing the front).

First, no one knows why she and Aquila took Apollos aside. Time could have been a factor. The place could have been a factor. Possible embarrassment could have been a factor. But, most likely, it was to get away from noise and confusion. It

may have been because women were not permitted to speak or teach in that synagogue. For certain, it was not because God had forbidden women to teach men, or that teaching men anywhere was considered an exercise of authority over them. What does an uninformed man seeking to serve God have to lose if an informed woman teaches him God's truth? What authority does he give up? God has nothing to lose, but He has souls to gain if a woman enables men to understand and follow the truth. God would not want a man to remain ignorant just because there was no man present or capable enough to teach him the truth, publicly or privately.

Some have even argued that since Apollos was still teaching John's baptism, he was not really a baptized believer, and thus it was scriptural for a woman to teach a man not yet scripturally baptized. But, would anyone really argue that after his baptism she couldn't teach him anything else? Not even in a private Bible class? Of course not. But most would allow her to teach him only if she were in a sitting position and not up in front of such a private class. What does "up front" have to do with teaching? In most home Bible studies that I have attended, the entire group of participants is sitting down, usually in a circle. Does God say that it is all right for women to sit in a circle in the home and teach men across the room, but in a classroom at church a man must stand at the front while a class for adults is being conducted? Of course, He doesn't!

We have reasoned that the rule of silence, when applied, is to be applied only to the "whole assembly" of the church. That is, Sunday morning services, Sunday evening services, gospel meetings, Wednesday night prayer meetings, and other "congregational" worship services. We have traditionally reasoned that the Bible class hour which proceeds this "whole assembly" is made up of private classes. Therefore, because Priscilla could teach in private, then it is scriptural for women now to speak up, read, or argue for a point of view, since these are private meetings. Yet, we won't let a woman and a man formally teach these private classes as Priscilla and Aquila clearly did. We only allow the "Aquilas" to be the teachers. As obvious as this inconsistency is, we still try to convince ourselves that our way is God's way, is doctrinally sound and consistent. Why would we kid ourselves so? Fear, tradition, illogical reasoning, or ignorance is our answer. Bible teaching isn't.

Using our hermeneutic in the case of Apollos, we are taught and allowed to do only one thing. This "approved example" only approves a woman teaching an unbeliever in the presence of her husband. Nothing else was done and nothing else is inferred. If it, indeed, approves women speaking up in a so-called "private" Bible class, then it approves husband and wife team-teaching. No other conclusion can be reached. Of course, some people in an attempt at consistency, would say she had no business teaching Apollos because Paul said, "I permit not a woman to teach" (I Timothy 2:12). But no one would dare try to teach or practice such a doctrine. Priscilla was in clear violation of this scripture; "I permit not a woman to teach" (I Timothy 2:12).

I have attended many worship services in small churches which had no so-called "private" classes. These were services "when the whole church had gathered together." Songs were sung and Bible studies conducted, with men and women participating in reading and in commenting. However, the prayers were offered by men, and the Lord's

table was presided over by men. Contributions were made by everybody. In these small churches, no one argued that women should not read or comment in these public services. However, in large churches such practices are judged wrong. Why? Tradition is the only answer. Somehow, we reason that if we call classes in big churches “private,” that makes them private; therefore, women can speak up and teach from a sitting position because Priscilla did. But we will not let her team-teach with her husband, like Priscilla did. Thus, the rules we apply to that which we call a “public service” in big city churches do not necessarily apply to smaller churches. However, no one ever objects.

In the first place, calling a class a private meeting in any church does not make it a private meeting. The Bible makes no such distinction.

I would define a private class as one which specifies who can attend and which excludes all others. I would define a public class as one which does not exclude anyone from attending, and to which anyone is welcome. I have never attended an adult class which has not been open to the public. In fact, I have never known a church which would not welcome anyone to attend any of its adult classes. I’ve seen older folks in young folks’ classes and young folks in older folks’ classes. I’ve seen sons and daughters go to class with their parents, and vice-versa. I’ve seen grandparents bring their grandchildren to class with them. But I’ve never seen a teacher ask someone to leave because the singing, praying, reading and teaching in that room were being done in a “private” class or because these acts were not worship.

We simply use the word “private” in an attempt to make the Bible fit our practices, not because of what the Bible teaches on the subject. The Bible says Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside to “teach him the way of the Lord more perfectly.” We put “privately” in the text. It helps justify our tradition.

They could have taken him aside for a dozen reasons. It certainly can’t be concluded that it was because a woman can’t teach in public! We simply use this Priscilla argument in an attempt to bolster our assumptions and exceptions to I Corinthians 14:34-35 and I Timothy 2:8-12.

I have taken people aside, that is, away from the setting, and taught them in another setting. But those settings were not necessarily private. Paul left the Areopagus in Athens after a great sermon and was accompanied by certain men, including Dionysius and Damaris, to teach them, and they became believers. But I know of no man who would argue that Paul’s teaching, aside from Areopagus, was, for some reason, “private” (Acts 17:22-34).

I have known of a few classes, even in a church building, which were restricted to certain people for a special study and, thus, were private. But that is not the rule!

Some who recognize the obvious inconsistency of the church’s teachings and practice on women, and the silence question, have tried for consistency by saying that the silence rule applies only on the Lord’s Day at the public worship service, usually

around 11:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.; but in the earlier Bible classes or later Bible classes or any other services of the church, women are privileged to speak up as is deemed appropriate, if it does not create confusion. (Incidentally, men should also not speak up in ways that create confusion.) Such a position does take some real twisting of scripture, as well as logic. The point is, why should women be selectively silent in a service when the Lord's Supper is served, a sermon is preached, prayers are uttered, contributions are given, and not silent in song, responsive readings, prayers in unison, announcements, greetings, etc.? They are following two sets of rules. The same women can speak up while prayer, teaching, singing, contributing, and commenting are going on an hour earlier in a Bible class. Often these take place in the same room. There is neither logic nor scripture to justify two sets of rules. These rules are man-made. They are creedal.

At which of the services, the so-called "private" or the so-called "public," should we "lay by in store"? God really didn't say, did He? I've been in many Bible classes when a contribution was taken up for a special need of people in that group or people not related to that group. Later, the same people contributed again in the so-called "public" service. How do we decide which is the scriptural time to worship in our offering? One cannot conclude that worship at 10:00 a.m. is different from worship at 11:00 a.m. Tradition and convenience dictate our distinction - nothing else. Likewise, only tradition and convenience, or a decision which seems to be "reasonable" determines at which services a woman can speak up, and in what manner.

It is interesting to read the words of Jesus on worship, in John 4:20-24. Here He teaches that worship is not confined to places, in direct contradiction to our definition of worship as that which is conducted in an auditorium or sanctuary, but not in a classroom. God didn't really say when or where, or in what way women may speak up. Only "human reasoning" makes that determination! We allow women to sing in violation of our preaching on silence in the churches because we "reason" from Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 that it is all right for women to sing - in fact, even that they are required to sing. We "reason" that it is all right for them to make announcements from their pews, greet people, or to talk to husbands, children, and others seated next to them, in violation of the silence rule. We allow them to read, question, teach, and even argue for a particular point of view in public Bible classes, all in violation of the silence rule. Why? Human reasoning only, not a scriptural mandate.

Often, a woman is allowed to teach a class of twelve-year-old children or sixth graders. If one of the boys is baptized, some churches immediately assume she is violating scripture for exercising authority over "men," and insist that she step down as a teacher, even if she is the boy's mother.

### **Questions:**

1. Do women lose their authority at the church-house door over their children?
2. Can a grown woman exercise authority over baptized young people in a mission trip, during a party, or in a home?
3. Do the scriptures teach that the line is drawn at a man-made building?
4. Is the boundary drawn at a classroom door?

5. Who sets these boundaries? Does the New Testament or do men?
6. If men set these boundaries, which ones has God empowered to draw such boundaries?

The distinction between public and private has been determined by the judgment of men, not by the scriptures. In essence, we vote on this doctrine and then apply it according to that vote. The public versus the private gathering doctrine simply enables us to exercise our inconsistent practices without any logical or true Biblical reasons to support them.

If it is scriptural for a woman to speak up in the Bible study period of a small church worship service, where classes and worship are not separated, it is both logical and scriptural for her to speak up when they are divided.

# Chapter 6

## ***Our Practices in Christian Universities, Colleges, Journalism, and Drama***

If we read the catalogs and literature of our private “church-related” schools, we would quickly learn our justification for their existence. Although they are called adjuncts to the Christian home by most brethren, they are also just as much adjuncts to the church. They train most of our preachers and missionaries (male and female) and provide training for over one-half of their own faculty members.

The catalogs all call attention to a “Christian environment” with regular Bible classes and daily chapel exercises. Students will make and socialize with Christian friends. They will have a “better” chance of finding a Christian mate. They will have instructors who will teach from a Christian point of view. They will be trained for effective church work and leadership. The mission department will equip students to go to the mission fields. The Bible or religion department will train male students to enter the ministry of the church. The whole environment is conducive to building Christian relationships, establishing Christian homes, and preparing the young to be faithful and more effective church workers. At least four of our universities have graduate schools of religion to train ministers, church leaders and missionaries.

It is interesting to note that here both male and female professors are permitted to teach baptized men of all ages any subject emphasizing “Christian principles” while doing so. A Christian woman teaching science or history can teach creationism from Genesis in her classes. In fact, she is both expected and compelled to, in order to keep her job. To the boards and administrators, she is perfectly free to teach the Genesis account without restraint. But, it is strange that she cannot teach Genesis to the same baptized men across the hall in a Bible class, or at a church building across the street.

As a freshman at Harding College, I took Homiletics from J. N. Armstrong. At times, when he was away from campus or ill, his wife, Woodson Harding Armstrong, would fill in for him and instruct young preachers on how to preach. Mrs. Armstrong taught speech at Harding. No one thought she sinned by training young preachers. I took a course on Oral Interpretation from her. Both male and female students read from the Bible to the mixed class, from the front of the classroom, and in assemblies. But on Sundays, no girls were allowed to read the same scriptures in the same classrooms, because someone had concluded that it would have “violated” I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2.

The late Velma West, wife of Dr. W. B. West, taught New Testament Greek at Pepperdine University, to both graduate and undergraduate students, during the 1940's. Dr. West was Chairman of the Department of Religion at Pepperdine. I took my first course in Greek from Professor Velma West.

In 1953 I enrolled in the graduate school at Harding University. Dr. West was then Dean in that graduate school of religion, and Velma West continued teaching New Testament Greek there. Over the years, hundreds of male students, many of whom had been preaching for decades, studied Greek under her.

Hardly anyone thought then, or thinks now, that a Christian woman could not teach the original language of the New Testament to men and pass along the meanings of God's word in the Greek to those men, and all were baptized believers. Why? Because the dominant male authorities said it was OK.

At Oklahoma Christian University of Science and Arts (formerly Oklahoma Christian College), Jo Anne North, wife of the Executive Vice President, has taught a course titled, "Religious Education for Children." It has been attended by male and female college students and by ministers of the gospel. She also taught this course for credit at the College Church in lieu of regular Wednesday night classes. Her husband, Stafford, and James O. Baird are elders there. Dr. Howard Norton preaches there, edits the *Christian Chronicle*, and chairs the University's Bible Department. Other colleges have similar courses in religion taught by women.

Women are now administrators in most all of our institutions of higher learning and supervise adult male students, teachers, department heads, and other employees. Dorm mothers exercise authority over male students. These Christian women exercise dominion over men at these Christian schools, and no one renders an objection on scriptural grounds. Dr. June Breninger was Dean of Students at Columbia Christian College, in Portland. D'Esta Love is Dean of Students at Pepperdine University. Barbara Tucker is Dean of Students at Oklahoma Christian. It should be noted that, to my knowledge, only two of our Christian colleges has ever elevated a woman to the position of Academic Dean. Dr. Linda Brook was Dean of Alabama Christian before her death in 1988.

In September 1990, Donna L. Bently became the Dean over all three colleges at Faulkner University. She exercises authority over every department, including male and female teachers, along with male and female students.

Dr. Joyce Harding has served as Associate Academic Dean at Lubbock Christian University, exercising authority over men and women on the faculty.

None has become a president, chancellor, or vice president, yet. Why? Because we would probably go to the scripture to protect those chief executive positions for men only. Many would argue that appointing a woman as president would violate Paul's teaching in I Timothy 2:11-12. In other words, to date we apply Paul's standard to only the highest echelon of college administration, but we allow women to exercise authority over men and women on faculty and staff and over young adult college students on a level a notch or two down in the chain of command.

Traditionally, at all our Christian college commencement exercises, the Christian faculty marches in full regalia to a designated seating area, followed by graduating

seniors, wearing caps and gowns. The president of the institution and the dean, the guest speaker, the song leader, the scripture reader, the invocator, and the one leading the benediction, all men, march to the platform.

The service usually goes like this: The president of the college takes charge of this commencement and worship service. He tells the audience how important this Christian institution is to God's work, the church, and what these graduates will mean to the kingdom of God. He then turns the microphone over to designated men to lead the invocation. A song leader leads the congregation in one or two songs. The college chorale (choir) may sing selected and usually religious numbers. The Bible reader reads scripture; the speaker is introduced and gives his or her presentation. Almost always, it is his presentation rather than hers. The speaker also may or may not be a Christian, and often is not in fellowship with the Churches of Christ.

When he finishes the presentation, the audience claps in response. The president thanks him and often confers on him an honorary degree. The dean announces the names of graduates. They march across the platform, where the president confers degrees, and they then return to their seats. The president then charges them to go into all the world and let their lights shine as they build God's kingdom. A benediction prayer is then offered. The recessional begins.

No one seems to wish to call this a worship service, even though God's word is read, praises are sung, prayers of thanks are given and, in His name, a charge is given to the graduates to spread God's kingdom. If it is not a worship experience, what is it? The same college board and administration would seldom, if ever, let a fellow Christian woman give the address, let alone preach a commencement sermon on this occasion. But, a speaker who is not affiliated with the Church of Christ often includes preachments from the Bible in his address and no one seems to disapprove. The conclusion: It is all right for a Methodist, Catholic, or maybe an infidel, if he is important enough (and sometimes rich enough) to address these Christian graduates. But, we conclude, it would be wrong for a godly woman who has served faithfully in God's kingdom to address these same Christian young people. I find that strange, especially coming from a center of higher Christian education.

The same mixed college chorale can sing in this worship service to the benefit of all those assembled, including faculty, students, parents and friends. This audience is made up of church leaders of all kinds. However, most of the same church leaders would not allow this mixed college choir or any other choir to sing the same songs in a worship service on Sundays in their home churches during the morning worship. In fact, some people would split churches over such a "liberal" practice and attempt to "mark" any congregation which did. What is the difference? Nothing but a date and geography!

But deep in our heart of hearts no one can find any difference. I have heard women soloists sing with college choirs on all sorts of occasions and not one soul objected. Isn't that strange that we can bridge that intellectual gap, but cannot, or will

not, bridge that intellectual and emotional gap in worship services at church on Sundays?

We have appointed many women as principals over our lower schools. Male teachers are subject to them. Women are named department chairpersons in colleges, and male professors are subject to them.

Very few women have spoken in chapel services at our Christian schools and institutions of higher learning. My daughter, Cynthia Rowland McClure, has spoken to over half of our Christian colleges. In fact, some of our institutions have brought her back for two or three consecutive years. The students, faculty, and administrators have, almost with one voice, stated that her messages have been among the finest or the finest and most inspirational chapel speeches of the year. Her speeches deal with Christian solutions to human problems. More than one professor, administrator, and student have declared her to be the most inspirational speaker ever to have appeared on their chapel programs. She tells of human struggles, of her faith in God, of God's answer to prayer, and His fulfillment of His promises. She has also spoken at dozens of churches and hundreds of youth meetings.

But, to make presentations "scriptural" and "acceptable", the men who conduct the chapel service "officially" close it with a prayer before she is introduced. She is then permitted to speak, since "worship" is over. The closing prayer permits her to speak, even though her message deals with the same subjects which are dealt with in the announcements, Bible readings, songs, and prayers. Nothing indicates the fallacy of our reasoning more than the fact that she is often asked to remain off-stage until the men have concluded their portion of the program.

Male speakers of every religious affiliation, or even atheists, may speak to the Christian college student body after the "worship" is closed with a prayer and may sit on the stage throughout the entire service. Those of other religious affiliations often speak of their faith and convictions to the students. But, very few Christian women are ever permitted to grace the same platforms during worship. Even though "God is no respecter of persons," college officials are.

However, even allowing a woman to speak is one giant step forward from the early days of the Restoration Movement. J. W. McGarvey at first refused to allow women to attend his Bible classes. Later, he allowed them to do so only if they arrived after the young men were seated, sat in the back, and left early.

David Lipscomb, in 1911, called co-education an experience of doubtful propriety. He later relented and joined James A. Harding in establishing a co-educational Bible School, which is now David Lipscomb University, in Nashville, Tennessee.

Now, young women can major in Bible at our colleges, but are discouraged, even forbidden, from taking Homiletics. It would be a shame, some suppose, if a woman went out and preached that God loved the world and that He gave His Son to save it.

He, no doubt, would rather see men and women die unsaved than to hear the message from women, whose lips are sealed from public proclamation under our silence rule of I Corinthians 14:34.

Another interesting note is that female students are permitted, in most institutions, to make any kind of announcement from the podium which would be of special interest to the campus community at a worship service in a college chapel. But, the same young lady is forbidden to make an announcement from the same podium to the same audience in a Sunday worship service, or in a church building across the street.

Many of our college and university boards of trustees include women. They may cast a deciding vote on who shall be the president, head the Bible department, or teach in the Bible department. They may cast a vote on promotions, Bible curriculum, or who gets fired. They are in a position of great power and authority, which they exercise with every vote. But they are usually wealthy, and this permits the power structures to make selective applications of scripture in what is allowed in the exercise of authority over men.

Perhaps the most glaring inconsistency in what we say the Bible teaches and what we actually practice is what happens at the Annual Christian Scholars Conference each year. The list of paper presenters looks like the "Who's Who" among our Bible faculties of all our schools of higher learning, along with preachers of high academic achievement.

The scholars meet to tell each other what they have discovered about God's eternal truth. They represent institutions and churches which, for the most part, will not allow a woman to teach men the Bible in classes on their campuses or in their home congregations. Yet, at this "Christian" conference, these same men invite women, who are also Christian scholars, to teach them the Bible truths they have discovered in their research.

This Annual Christian Scholars Conference, in 1989, was held at Pepperdine University. The theme was "Leadership." Among the speakers were J. J. M. Roberts, Ian Fair, Everett Ferguson, Winston Harless, Clyde Lewis, Howard Norton, Steve Prewitt, Wyatt Jones, and Charles Stephenson. Most of these men represented one of our colleges or universities. Dr. Tom Olbricht, of Pepperdine University, was in charge.

Apparently, no one in the Pepperdine administration or Bible faculty, or the speakers representing other institutions of learning or churches had any objections to two Christian women, Jeanine Varner of Oklahoma Christian, and Kathy Pulley, of Southwest Missouri State University, lecturing to this gathering of Christian scholars and church leaders.

What is the difference in teaching Christian men who are scholars and teaching Christian men who are not scholars? Would the same men defend these women's right to teach and preach their knowledge of Biblical scholarship on their respective

campuses or before their congregations? The only difference is geography, not Biblical principles.

Should not the brotherhood call these men to repentance for violating I Corinthians and I Timothy? We will not, because we have developed an elastic rationale which will adjust to selective applications of all sorts.

It is reasoned that God allows it at a Christian scholars conference, but He prohibits it on an individual campus or congregation.

### **Teaching Through Writings**

We somehow find no contradiction in our practice of forbidding a woman to teach a mixed class at church, while allowing her all kinds of teaching privileges with the pen. And we all know that “the pen is mightier than the sword.” So, it must be as mighty as a sermon.

As a young man, I bought a book by Zelma Wood Lawyer, titled, *I Married a Missionary*. The book was inspirational, instructive, and convincing. It was about her marriage and her mission work in Africa with her husband. Brother Lawyer died on the mission field in Africa. After a stay in America, his wife returned to the mission field for some time, as a widow. Sadly, the churches which supported her in the mission field would not let her report her work to the whole congregation on Sundays during the “worship” service. But, they could read her message in her book.

Literally tens of thousands have been inspired, instructed, and convicted by this woman’s writings. She has taught women, children, elders, preachers, and many others from her book’s pages, and no one objected.

Mrs. G. H. P. Showalter, wife of the long time editor of the *Firm Foundation*, edited the *Christian Woman* magazine for years. There are hundreds of thousands who have been taught directly and indirectly from its pages. I have read it, off and on, all my adult life. The women who write for it certainly have many messages which teach both men and women.

There are hundreds of articles, poems, songs, and books written by women which have been read and sung by the entire brotherhood.

Restrictions are often placed upon women’s articles in our journals. They are encouraged to write only about women’s subjects. This simply protects and promotes an ill-conceived and unfounded tradition on women’s roles and abilities. Yet, it is violated in every worship service, as Fanny J. Crosby directs our thinking and praise.

The *Christian Chronicle* has the largest circulation of a periodical among the Churches of Christ. The managing editor for over six years was Joy McMillon. Her articles on churches, missions, and people in the brotherhood were informative, instructive, and often inspirational. Through her writings, she instructed probably over 200,000 Christians in every edition on the life, work and mission of the church and its

members. No other woman in our brotherhood comes close to her in effectively teaching us about ourselves and our varied activities for Christ. Her writings were based on sound research and were authoritative, too.

So, we allow women to teach anywhere and anytime through the written word. They may write articles, poems, songs or books which teach hundreds of thousands. Their articles, poems, songs, or books may be used freely in classes or in the pulpit. But, they are forbidden to read one word from any of them there.

## **Lectureships**

Lectureships conducted by churches, colleges and universities are usually dominated by men, with occasional classes thrown in by few women, for women only.

Yet, in the area of Christian education and Christian counseling, women have been known to teach both men and women and no one seemingly objects as long as the class is not a “textual” study. Where does God say that a woman can teach as long as it is topical and not textual?

At the 1987 lectureship at Oklahoma Christian College, a husband and wife team taught a series on Christian counseling. It was attended by men and women, preachers, elders, and deacons. No one created a fuss over the scripture-ness of this wife joining her husband and team-teaching those men.

Similar classes have been held at other college lectureships. No one seems to object, because Christian education and Christian counseling are deemed somehow not to be “Bible” teaching. Thus, they are exempted from our rules. I have not understood the difference.

## **Drama**

In the September, 1990 edition of the Christian Chronicle, there was a feature story about Miss Dezarea Gaines. She had written a play around the life of Fanny Crosby, the famous blind woman who wrote some of the “Great Songs of the Church.”

Miss Gaines performed the play at the Preston Road Church of Christ in Dallas, Texas, twice at Pepperdine University, and twice at Abilene Christian University. Reports say, “The whole message was faith-building.” Others reported they had not known where the songs came from or what they meant before. Songs included were “Tell me the Old, Old Story,” “Blessed Assurance,” and “I am Thine, O Lord.”

This Christian woman has been teaching at the church through drama. The drama is “informative” and “faith-building.” No one would argue that men should not go hear this Christian woman perform or that she should be silenced into subjection because it is God’s will for women. Where did God draw a line between one kind of public teaching and teaching through public drama?

I attended the church whose creed on women was printed in an earlier chapter, just before Christmas in 1988 for a Wednesday night prayer meeting. Men, women,

and children of all ages were in attendance. A few songs were sung and a prayer offered. Then, the elementary students acted out the story of the birth of Christ. Young girls, along with young boys, dramatized the message. They all quoted scripture and sang "Glory to God in the Highest."

Not one person in attendance, I learned later, objected to young girls quoting scripture on the pulpit in this drama. But this church has virtually split because faithful couples wanted to team-teach in their so-called "private" Bible classes, like it is claimed Priscilla and Aquila did. Surely, we are intelligent enough to see the parallels and courageous enough to bridge the chasm which separates our tradition from the truth.

Many Christian plays have been performed on our stages and have been both instructive and inspirational. The leads have included men and women. Such public teaching is not deemed to be in violation of I Corinthians and I Timothy. Yet, this is public teaching through Christian drama at our Christian schools and universities. Should we censor or disfellowship school board members and churches which have allowed such heresy to be practiced?

We do the above things, and much more, because we have "reasoned" them to be acceptable - not because God has defined them acceptable or unacceptable.

We need to examine the scriptures which apply to women's role in the church. Perhaps our "reasoned" positions on women's silence and subjection are in contradiction to what God really says. Could that be so?

Some will argue that pointing out our clear inconsistencies in actual practice does not change the truth of the matter. The point is well made. But, if some take the liberty to reason away the silence and submission rules to fit their practices and traditions, who gives them the right to set limits on others' reasoning for different practices and traditions?

# Chapter 7

## *Women in the Apostolic Church*

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit fell upon the apostles. In verse 14, Luke records that Peter stood up with the eleven and spoke to that assembly. He quoted Joel 2:28ff. He declared that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

Joel prophesied that God would pour out his spirit on all flesh, which would include Jew and Gentile, male and female, free man and bond man. "Your sons and your DAUGHTERS WILL PROPHECY (tell forth the mind and counsel of God). Yea and on my servants and my HANDMAIDENS (bond maidens) in those days will I pour forth my spirit and THEY SHALL PROPHECY." Joel did not limit the gifts of the Holy Spirit to men. Daughters and handmaidens were also to be prophets.

Some might say, "But all of the apostles were men; therefore, God only wanted men to be the public proclaimers of the word and take leadership roles in the church." One could also argue that those apostles were Jews; therefore God didn't want any Blacks or Indians to be proclaimers. And thus, Blacks and Indians should not preach publicly or take leadership roles in the church. Just because the first proclaimers were Jewish men, one would not, therefore, conclude that all proclaimers must be Jewish men.

Joel clearly states that God's gifts would fall upon both men and women. And Peter said that this outpouring was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. Peter also said, "According as each one hath received a gift," each was to minister it among themselves; whether speaking the oracles of God or ministering, it was to be done to God's glory. He points out that each Christian has gifts - not men only (I Peter 4:7-11).

In Acts 8:3-5 persecution came upon the church: "Both men and women" were dragged out and imprisoned. The church was scattered abroad and "went about preaching the word." Would anyone conclude from this text that the preaching and the teaching were done by men only, or that only men were really dragged out and imprisoned?

If we try to make all these scriptures to the contrary fit a preconceived notion about one scripture, I Corinthians 14:34-35, we are forced to dismiss the obvious conclusions from evidence contained in the above scriptures. We can't conclude that women couldn't preach and teach publicly because I Corinthians 14 forbids it. That is an easy way out of a clear dilemma, but it begs the question of what the above scriptures clearly suggest on the matter. And what is suggested in the following scriptures?

Acts 8:12 says, "Both men and women were baptized." Shortly afterwards, Peter and John arrived and prayed for the church that they might receive the Holy Spirit. In verse 17, they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. They all

received the Holy Spirit! The church in Samaria did. Men and women made up the church - baptized men and women. We cannot be true to the text and make it read "and they laid their hands on the men only." I have not found one scholar who would so argue.

In Acts 9:2 Paul made no distinctions between men and women in the arresting and the imprisonment. They received equal treatment.

In Acts 9:36 Paul raised Tabitha, who was a woman full of good works and alms deeds. To the saints and the widows, he presented her alive. This event became known throughout Joppa and they believed on the Lord. Would anyone argue that the widows assembled that day were forbidden by God to go out and tell the story of God's power in raising Tabitha? This resulted in many conversions. Could these ladies testify publicly to both men and women? Certainly they could, and no one would doubt that they did.

In Acts 10:44, while Peter was addressing the household of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard. Would anyone dare to alter the scripture to read, "It fell on only the men who heard?" Verse 46 says, "They spoke with tongues and magnified God." Would anyone argue that the "men only" spoke in tongues and magnified God? Those who spoke in tongues were then baptized. They were not "men only." This was also in an assembly! It had apostolic approval. It is obvious that these gifts went to both men and women, and they both spoke in tongues and magnified God in this assembly. This conclusion is inescapable, unless one is trying to force a foregone assumption and conclusion from I Corinthians 14:34-35.

Verses 14 and 15 of chapter 11 say, "He spake to all the house words whereby they could be saved, and the Holy Spirit fell on them as on us in the beginning." Would anyone dare to change the scripture to read, "It fell on the men only, as it did on us in the beginning?"

Verse 17 says, "If God gave them the like gift as he did also unto us, when we also believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who as I, that I could withstand God?" Do we withstand God if we deny that the women in this household also received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and that they exercised their gifts in that meeting? God would not give them gifts and then forbid their using them.

In Acts 12 Peter was imprisoned and was delivered by an angel. He went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. There, many "gathered together and were praying." A maid by the name of Rhoda answered the knock on the door, and made the first recorded "announcement" by a woman in an assembly in the New Testament church. She announced in that prayer meeting, "Peter stands before the gate." They declared that she was mad, for they firmly believed that Peter was shackled and in jail. Rhoda affirmed more confidently that Peter was there. She had to make a "second announcement" in this assembly. No one thinks that she was acting improperly or unscripturally. Peter didn't rebuke her for exercising dominion over men, for taking a leadership role, or for speaking at a worship service. No one believes that the church

there should have split because she made a public announcement. Instead, they received the announcement of Peter's release with amazement.

Here we have an approved example of a woman making an announcement in a prayer meeting. In fact, she made it twice. She also ran in to make it, so she must have done it standing up. The conclusion is obvious: The New Testament approves women making announcements in worship.

In Acts 13:52 the disciples, not male disciples only, were filled with the Holy Spirit and joy.

In Acts 15:22, after the Jerusalem conference, the apostles, the elders, with the "whole church," chose men to accompany Paul and Barnabas with delivering the decision. Women were a part of the whole church and, without question, participated in this business meeting. I know of no person who would be so presumptuous as to take away the words "whole church" and substitute "only men of the church."

In Acts 15:35, "Paul and Barnabas tarried in Antioch, preaching and teaching with 'many others' also." The "many others," no doubt could have included and did include women. It would be presumptuous indeed to render this passage "many other men." We certainly could assume that by now many of those "daughters and hand maidens" were prophesying. They certainly could and, in all likelihood, did include Paul's women companions he classified as fellow workers in Romans 16. But some say, "Preaching and teaching are not the same as prophesying." One might wish to split hairs in order to maintain a tradition, by so arguing. Prophesying in the New Testament was speaking forth the mind and will or counsel of God in the exercise of a gift. Preaching and teaching are speaking forth the will of God, by either gift or preparation. Either way, it was, and can be, done by both men and women. On Pentecost, twelve men preached as a result of gifts poured out. They may also have been prophesying. They also spoke in tongues. Who is wise enough to draw a distinct absolute line between kinds of New Testament prophesying, preaching, and teaching?

In Acts 16:12 Paul, Silas, and Timothy met with women who were having a prayer service by the riverside in Philippi. Lydia, the businesswoman, was converted, along with her household. Paul and his companions stayed at her house. She was, no doubt, a devout Jew and knew the Old Testament well. She probably knew its history, poetry, and prophecy. Some time later, a jailor, probably a Gentile, was converted, along with his household. The next day Paul departed. Who would one believe was the most capable person to teach, pray, read, or lead in the next Lord's Day service? Would it be the newly converted Gentile, or the Jewish lady who had a background in the word of God and in the worship of Jehovah? Who could have best reflected upon God's written word and the new found faith in teaching those new Christians? Lydia would have obviously been one of the teachers and worship leaders because she was more mature, due to her previous understanding of the scripture, coupled with her faith in Jehovah. If I had been going to choose someone to teach in that service, from what the Bible teaches about the two, I would have chosen Lydia over the jailer.

Someone objects, "But verse 18 says Paul was there many days, so there could have been other men converted to do the teaching." Maybe so. The only problem one has for that argument is that the Bible doesn't say so. But it does mention women and women only. Someone else says, "But surely there were men in Lydia's household." That specious argument has been heard before, "Lydia's household was baptized, so there must have been some babies baptized, too," some would claim. It is worthy to note that Lydia persuaded Paul to stay on "many days" because of her influence, not of his own desires (verse 15).

It is reasonable that Lydia taught, and who could or would teach that in doing so Lydia would have violated I Corinthians 14:34-35 or I Timothy 2:12? No one believes that Lydia was instructed by Paul to give up her business and be a homemaker as "God from creation so intended." Which eldership, which preacher, which editor will demand that women leave jobs and businesses and go home "where they belong" and be submissive to men or be disfellowshipped? Who would argue that an illiterate, tongue-tied, or ignorant Christian man would have to lead in a service when there were informed, literate, and articulate Christian women present.

Why would God want an ignorant or illiterate man to conduct a worship service when literate, able Christian women were present? Moreover, even an ignorant or illiterate man could figure out why the literate Christian woman should be doing the teaching, preaching, leading, and reading. His wisdom would dictate the decision. Only a mistaken, grossly opinionated and misled person could convince him or us to the contrary. Who would lead the church toward maturity best? Who, in Philippi, could best help new Christians grow in the grace and knowledge? The answer seems obvious.

Furthermore, in Philippi, Euodia and Syntyche were quarreling. Paul exhorts them to be of "one mind in the Lord" (Philippians 4:2). No one would suggest that Paul wrote this to encourage them to agree on how much salt was to be added to baked beans. They must have had leading influence in the Philippian church. Paul says, "They labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life" (Philippians 4:2-3).

Does this sound like women who prepared communion on Sundays, or ones who "labored" with Paul, Clement and others in preaching and teaching the gospel? The conclusion seems obvious. These women weren't cooks or seamstresses. They were fellow workers in the gospel.

Yet able and learned church leaders have failed to recognize, or have refused to acknowledge, this clear and logical conclusion. It is amazing what we will do to both logic and scripture to uphold a tradition or a practice coming from a false or mistaken interpretation of scripture.

Let us suppose that Lydia moved to some part of the world where Christ was not known. Let us also suppose that she taught illiterate natives about the love of God in her home or place of business. What if, upon hearing the message of Christ, both men and women were baptized? Who would have conducted the first worship service?

Could she have led the songs, done the teaching, waited on the table, led the prayers, or read the scripture in the presence of these newly baptized men? Or would she have had to cancel “services” until she taught the men privately to read and understand the scripture or until one of them decided he wanted to teach, preach, pray or lead? I know of no person who would argue that she would have had to remain silent and in submission because of I Corinthians 14 or I Timothy 2. Does anyone really believe God would be more pleased to have a worship service cancelled rather than having believers meet to commune, pray, sing, or study under a woman’s leadership? If it is scriptural in the jungles of Africa or the Amazon, it is scriptural in the U.S.A. Likewise, if it is unscriptural in the U.S.A., it is unscriptural in the jungles of Africa or the upper Amazon.

In Acts 17:14, Luke tells of many chief women in Thessalonica who were persuaded by Paul’s preaching. In verse 12, Greek women of honorable estate became believers in Berea. Some of the honorable and chief women, no doubt, were well educated and had teaching skills. Would God have prohibited them from teaching male and female servants, or their husbands, or their peers? I know of no one who would so argue. Would any intelligent, less informed man who wanted to serve God and know His will resent a more informed woman teaching him? Who would dare to so argue? Then no one should draw the line on women teaching boys up to age fourteen only. It would be illogical and without a Biblical basis.

In Acts 18:2, Paul met Aquila and his wife, Priscilla, in Corinth. They provided an abode for Paul. They later travelled with him to Ephesus.

At Ephesus, they heard Apollos, an eloquent man who was mighty in the scriptures, preach. But he knew only the baptism of John. Priscilla and Aquila took him unto them and taught him the way of the Lord more perfectly (Acts 18:26). It is interesting that Priscilla is mentioned first in this duo. Four out of the six times they are referred to in the scripture, Priscilla is mentioned first. Could it be that Priscilla was the more informed, the better teacher, or the better leader? Why did she teach if God prohibited women from teaching men? Aquila could surely have done the job by himself. Did he fail in his manly God-given duty? Was he less of a Christian because he let his wife also teach Apollos? Should all three have been disciplined by Paul?

Would anyone argue that Priscilla could have taught Apollos God’s word until he understood and accepted the baptism of Christ, and then have been forbidden by God to teach him afterwards?

In Acts 21:8 Paul visited Philip’s house. Philip had four daughters who prophesied. This was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Who did these daughters edify when they prophesied? Where did they prophesy? When did they prophesy? No one knows, but one should not conclude that they did not prophesy to the whole church. Nor should it be concluded that they prophesied to women only or to men only in “private” situations. What wretched mental gymnastics one would have to go through to so conclude.

I have heard some argue that these women must have taught only women. Only if we try to force a traditional, pre-conceived notion about I Corinthians 14:34 on all other scriptures, could we so conclude. Who would dare argue that while Philip was down in Gaza or in Samaria preaching that his daughters were forbidden to tell forth the story of the cross to these lost men in Caesarea? Nor would we argue that the use of their gifts in his absence to the building up of the body of Christ there would be wrong. It would seem that God would want all five voices declaring his grace anywhere to all who would listen. Would God ask sinful men to wait for a male messenger? The answer seems obvious.

It is believed that Paul wrote the book of Romans in about 59 A.D., about thirty years after the church was established. During these three decades of history, the church had time for women to both enjoy and practice their freedom in Christ Jesus, and to serve in various ministries of the church. In Romans 16:1 Paul writes, "I commend to you Phoebe, our sister, who is a servant (deacon) of the church that is in Cenchreae; that you receive her in the Lord worthy of the Saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she may have need of you; for she herself also hath been a helper of many, and of myself also." (Note: the word "servant" is translated "deacon" in some versions, and is listed in many marginal comments as "deacon." It is the same Greek word used in Philippians 1:1 and in I Timothy 3:8,12.) We usually think of deacons as "table waiters" - a group selected to care for physical needs. The apostles appointed seven men to do this in Acts 6:3-6. However, they were not called deacons, although their service as a "deacon", if they were, did not preclude them from preaching the word. Stephen died for preaching the word in Acts 7. Philip's sermons produced many believers in Samaria (Acts 8:5-8). Therefore, the work of these men was not limited to table serving. We would conclude the same about this deacon from Cenchreae. Was Phoebe just a dishwasher or a janitor? Did she only teach? If so, did she teach only women and children? Or, like Priscilla, could part of her service be that of teaching men? Paul instructed the Roman church to assist her in whatsoever matters she had need, because she had been his helper and the helper of many others. One must admit that "whatsoever" and "helper" have a broad range of possibilities, including teaching.

Since she was a helper of many, and Paul too, what would have been the greatest help that she could render to others? Certainly being able to help others understand God's will would be paramount. An interest in God's word is what our Lord commended Mary for and chastised Martha for not emphasizing. Phoebe, no doubt, helped Paul "make known the manifold wisdom of God" as part of her service.

Was Phoebe a deacon? The Greek text calls her one. Why would we doubt or deny it? What difference would it make if she were? It is a scriptural designation.

Many church fathers and restoration scholars have believed that I Timothy 3:11 begins a list of qualifications for women deacons. They have also believed and taught that the church should have deaconesses. Paul does not list any particular qualifications of elders' wives, but in the middle of the "male deacons" qualifications he says, "women, in like manner, must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things." This may very well refer to qualifications of female deacons. It may refer to

wives of deacons. But it is safe to say that no one can preclude the interpretation that a deaconess like Phoebe was to have these qualities, or say with any certainty that there were no female deacons.

If the masculine form were used to refer to a female deacon in Romans 16:1, the women could also have been included in Philippians 1:1. But, to say the least, it is difficult to explain this insertion in I Timothy, unless some women or wives (the plural form of "gune" in the Greek is used here and could be translated wives or women) were also deacons, since he did not address qualifications of elders' wives.

There is one conclusion to which every student will agree. Phoebe's service is described by the same Greek word as those men whom Paul qualified in I Timothy 3:8-13. Early church literature lists "deaconesses, widows and virgins." One has to ask, "Why would Paul list special qualifications only for the wives of deacons in the midst of the qualifications for male deacons, when he did not list any qualifications for the wives of elders in the midst of his qualifications for elders?" Paul says, "in like manner" or "likewise"; just as male deacons must have these qualities, so should female deacons have these other qualities.

Others would argue that the first deacons appointed were men only, in Acts 6:1-6; thus concluding that it is clear that God wanted only men to serve as deacons. If this example is binding, one would have to so argue that a church could have only seven deacons, or that it had to limit a deacon's service only to daily ministrations. Incidentally, no New Testament writer calls the deacon's job an office!

We should, at this point, touch on the expediency rule. "All things are lawful, but not all things are expedient." (I Corinthians 6:12.) If some autonomous congregation chooses to appoint deaconesses, there is strong Biblical argument for it. There is sufficient Biblical evidence that would allow a congregation to do so if they chose to. No other congregation has the right to infringe upon another's autonomy in doing so. It is certainly not a decision which should affect fellowship. I heartily recommend a book by J. Stephen Sandifer, *Deacons: Male and Female*, for thorough study on this subject.

In Romans 16:3-5, Paul encourages the church to "greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life laid down their necks and for whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. And salute the church that is in their house." This couple played a major role in Paul's ministry. We have already alluded to the fact that he calls them fellow workers, just as he does Timothy in Romans 16:21. The term was used often to describe those doing the same kind of work. Some have argued that Paul claimed he and Apollos were fellow workers with God in I Corinthians 3:9 but that it did not mean they worked the same way God did. This proves nothing. God was in heaven, but Paul, Apollos, Priscilla, and Aquila were together on earth, building the Kingdom and spreading the message of God. They were fellow workers in it. No one can list their specific jobs.

Do we assume that this woman, who could assist in teaching a man, who was mighty in the scriptures, and who would lay down her neck for Paul, could not pray in

the presence of either? Nor read God's word aloud in their presence? Nor do so in her husband's presence? Nor continue to teach other men?

Some erroneously claim, in order to maintain their traditional interpretation, that being fellow workers did not mean doing the same things as Paul. If Paul were busy preaching on the north side of Corinth and an able, informed woman were available to preach on the south side of Corinth, who believes God would say, "Let South Corinth go to hell, because I don't allow women to preach my truth."

Paul says Priscilla was a fellow worker in suffering and in building the church. They had one in their own house. He also says that all Gentile churches gave thanks for the couple.

In Romans 16:6 we read, "Salute Mary who bestowed much labor on you." The same Greek verb is used in Galatians 4:11, referring to Paul's labor in the gospel, and by Jesus in John 4:38, referring to sowing the gospel.

Would anyone assume that Mary's hard labor was simply washing dishes and cooking at Rome, or would she have had a broader task including prophesying, speaking in tongues, or interpreting tongues, as she bestowed much hard labor on the church at Rome? Few would believe she was silenced from declaring the whole counsel of God to a lost world. Why would anyone not want the gospel preached, by a woman or a man, if sinners were saved?

In Romans 16:7, Paul says, "Salute Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen, and fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who have also been in Christ before me." Junias is listed as Junia in the margin. Many scholars believe that this is another husband-and-wife team. They were not converted by Paul, and to be together after twenty-five years suggests strongly that this was a married couple. "Men" is not in the Greek, but was inserted by the translators. Would this be another case of male bias in the translation? There is excellent scholarship on the side of this being a husband-and-wife team.

She suffered imprisonment with Paul, was kin to him, and was of "note" among the apostles. Was she of note because she was silent and submissive? Was it because she washed and ironed clothes? Or was it because of the public work she also did? Or all of these?

Crysostom wrote of Junia, "Oh, how great is the devotion of the woman, that she could be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostles." This is cited by William Sandy and Arthur Headlan in their commentary on the epistle to the Romans. She obviously did some rather important things in the church. Junia is the preferred translation in view of these facts.

Paul says in Romans 16:12, "Salute Trayphaena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord." These two Christian ladies also labored in the Lord, as did Mary, in verse 6. What their special work was, no one knows. But it certainly enhanced Paul's work, as did the work of Persis, another sister "who labored much in the Lord."

The mother of Rufus, in verse 13, and Julia, in verse 15, are two other ladies whose lives and work were worthy of mention in the Roman letter.

Paul certainly shows how important women were in the ministry of the church. Exactly what they did we are not sure, but we know that women were to prophesy, and they did prophesy. We know those who prophesied did so to the edification, exhortation, and consolation of the whole church (I Corinthians 14). We also know that God put teachers in the church (I Corinthians 12:28). Since these gifts were given to men and women alike, any of these ladies could have been prophetesses and teachers. Who would conclude that these women could not have been fellow laborers of Paul in the public proclamation of the gospel?

Perhaps as important as anything about these women traveling and working with Paul is that they were breaking every tradition of their culture in so doing. So, it should not surprise anyone that they took responsible and public roles in the work of evangelism and edification in the church, contrary to cultural norms.

# Chapter 8

## *Equal but Unequal?*

There is no other passage in Paul's writings where he points out the equality of men and women in the Christian era more than he does in I Corinthians 7.

The Corinthian church had written Paul a number of questions about marriage. He approved the single life. He wrote, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman," and "It is well for them to remain as I." But he approved marriage and sexual intercourse. He stated that those who marry "sin not," and that they were to be allowed to marry (verse 36). As he instructed the Corinthians, he said a lot about the equality which existed between Christian husbands and wives, not the superiority of man. The entire chapter is devoted to those contemplating marriage, or who were already married. One can't help but recognize the equality which the text emphasizes. Incidentally, it is a kind of marital equality which heretofore had not been alluded to in all Holy writings or allowed by Jewish or Gentile traditions.

Here are the verses in I Corinthians 7:

7:2 - "Let each man have his own wife." Likewise, "Let each woman have her own husband."

7:3 - "Let the husband render unto the wife her due. Likewise, also the wife unto the husband."

7:4 - "The wife hath not power over her own body." Likewise, "The husband hath not power over his own body."

7:10-11 - "That the wife depart not from her husband." "That the husband depart not from his wife."

7:12-13 - "If any brother hath an unbelieving wife," "If any man hath an unbelieving wife," "the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband." "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife."

7:16 - "For how knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?" "How knowest, thou, O husband, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"

7:33-34 - "He that is married is careful how he may please his wife," "She that is married is careful how she may please her husband."

Paul made it clear that husbands and wives are equal in all these matters. He did not put the wife in an inferior position to her husband. Nor did he suggest that the husband is her overlord. In this passage, it is quite clear that husbands and wives were quite equal in these marital matters. Contrary to the opinion of many, this passage would suggest that Paul was a champion of wives, not one who put them down.

It should be noted that, even today, many states will not charge a husband with rape if he forcibly takes his "due." If he does, he faces no criminal penalty. Is there a Christian leader who would dare to argue that these laws are just, because a wife is to be "in subjection to her husband?" Or that women are to be in "all subjection to men?"

At what point would a Christian scholar ascertain that enough is enough in a husband dominating his wife or in men dominating women? Who can draw the line? Yet, men feel perfectly free to draw the line in their dominance of women in church activities.

In verse 39 of chapter 7, Paul stated that a widow is “free” to marry whomsoever she will, “only in the Lord.” There is no male domination suggested in this choice, and it is a rejection of the “law” which requires her to be passed along to a brother of the deceased (Deuteronomy 25:5). It should be noted that there is a vast difference between saying that the “husband is the head of the wife,” and saying that “the wife is inferior to her husband.” A wife voluntarily submits to her husband, not because he is superior, but because she loves him. But, she is free to resist his headship any time she feels he is wrong or treating her wrongly. Only she can draw the line.

Most damaging to our submission rules are verses 10 and 11: “That a woman depart not from her husband, but if she departs, let her remain unmarried.” Corinthian wives did not have to stay under the dominion of their husbands, no matter how much doing so seems preferred by us.

Someone will argue that husbands and wives have different roles in the home, so why not in the church, even if there were an equality of sorts. I know of no distinctive Biblical roles in the home for which only men are responsible. Wives give birth and nurse children. But men vacuum, wash dishes, feed babies, iron clothes, make beds, write checks, pay bills, and paint houses. They discipline children, fix toys and mow lawns. They work for pay, drive trucks, repair cars, etc. Women also do all of these things. God does not define the things only women or men can do in the home. Why then would we think God did so in the church? He didn't. Man does.

The clergy of the Christian world and other dominant male leaders in the church have relied upon a few verses in I Corinthians 11-14, along with I Timothy 2:8-15, to build the doctrine of an all-male clergy and of men dominating all so-called leadership roles in the worship and life of the church.

A closer look at these two passages might render an interpretation just the opposite of the dictates of traditional church practices. Many spokespersons of the modern women's liberation movement have accused Paul of male chauvinism and of ugly prejudice against women. It is possible that they, too, have failed to understand what Paul really taught.

There is general agreement among almost all Biblical scholars that Paul deals with the assemblies of the church from chapter 11 through chapter 14 of I Corinthians. We shall see in this study that he teaches about husband-and-wife relationships in both chapter 11 and chapter 14, rather than man-and-woman relationships in the church. He gave instruction on the importance of wives respecting their husbands by wearing a sign of authority on their heads during worship in 11:3-16. In 11:17-34, he gave instructions on the proper observation of the Lord's Supper. The use and abuse of spiritual gifts are covered in chapter 12. In chapter 13 he deals with the problem of exercising gifts

without the motivation of love. In chapter 14 he points out the dangers of confusion and the importance of peace and order in worship services while spiritual gifts are being exercised.

I have taught the I Corinthian letter in adult classes and college classes at least twelve times in my lifetime. When a class is studying I Corinthians 11:1-16, the subject of the head-covering of women during church services has always been the focal point. Discussions centered around questions about a veil, the proper length of Christian women's hair, what was too short, what shorn meant, and whether a scarf, hat, or doily of some kind would suffice to meet Paul's instruction. We always emphasized the fact that men were to always remove their caps or hats during Bible studies, worship services, and during prayer anywhere. We also discussed whether to do so was dictated by custom or by law. I know of Christian colleges where this scripture was used for a basis of forcing young men to remove caps and hats in chapel services.

In my early church experience during the 1930's, as well as now, men were always hatless in church, but then women were always covered. Preachers made it very clear, as did other men leaders in the church, that the law of I Corinthians 11 required both the wearing of hats by women and the removal of hats by men during worship. But of late, it has merely become a "custom," not a law, to be conveniently altered by church leaders. Women may now come to church without veils, hats or any covering. They come with long hair, short hair and medium length hair. But when have any of us seen a man wear a hat or cap in worship? What would we do if he did? Was it tradition, custom or law that the church in my childhood required women to always have their heads covered during worship services, while requiring men to worship with heads uncovered? Is it the law or custom which now permits women to attend assemblies with their heads uncovered and shorn? Catholic churches, Mennonites, and a few small sects are the exceptions on maintaining this practice.

Paul said, "in the churches of God there is no other custom" or practice (verse 16). The R.S.V. states, "If anyone is contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God." This is very similar to the statement in I Corinthians 14:33, "as in all the churches," women were to "keep silent in the church; for it was not permitted for them to speak." Our interpretation of this passage hasn't changed much. Why is the custom of veils, long hair, hats, or whatever, representing a sign of authority by the women in "the churches of God" in chapter 11, not just as applicable as the silence rule in chapter 14? Both rules were to be respected in the "churches."

But, this study does not specifically deal with the covering of the head or the length of hair, but rather with what happened during the church services that Paul described in chapters 11-14. But, we must ask, "How could we conclude that the 'churches' in chapter 11 are not less inclusive than the 'churches' of 14:33-34?" If hats, long hair, veils, uncovered heads, etc., were mere customs to be followed to conform to the local practices and not applicable today, why were Paul's instructions on women being silent any less subject to the argument that this was also just a practice or a custom? Both passages mention the "churches," not just in Corinth.

I have heard it argued by some that if a brother is contentious about women having to wear a veil, the church of God had no such custom or requirement. Thus, they conclude that if women do not want to wear a covering or wear long hair, no “obligatory” custom or law prevails. But I have yet to meet a Greek scholar who argues that this is the clear meaning of this text. Paul says that a man must pray and prophesy with his head uncovered to show honor to Christ, his head, and that a woman must wear a veil to show honor to man, her head, while she prays or prophesies. The concluding verse of this passage literally says there is “no other” custom or practice in the “churches” of God.

Some excuse women from being veiled or from having long hair because it was simply a custom. But I have yet to find a Christian church which will allow men in the pulpit or in the pew to pray or prophesy with their heads covered. Why the difference, if it is just a custom? I merely call for consideration of this inconsistency. For a variety of motives and reasons we accept this inconsistency without blinking our eyes. Still we try to maintain some quite convoluted consistency on the “silent” passage in chapter 14. Why? We will answer this question in succeeding chapters. But one thing is certain. We do not try to enforce in the church today the teaching in I Corinthians 11 about women’s hair and veils. Yet, we still try to enforce in the church traditional treatments of I Corinthians 14. It is because women have refused to follow the male standards on coverings and length of hair. However, we have not yet demanded that men allow women to exercise their God-given talents in the public life of the church.

Many elderships decided that pant suits, slacks, and blue jeans were immodest dress in the assemblies during the late 60’s and early 70’s. They put out creedal edicts and backed them up with scripture. Today, in the same churches, pant suits, slacks and blue jeans are as “in” as head coverings are “out.” If preachers, elders, and Bible scholars were so wrong about these issues, isn’t it possible that they could be wrong about their traditional views on other women’s issues in the church? This should make us humble enough to inquire and study further.

This study seeks to find out what women actually were allowed to do and what they did in the early church, covered and with long hair.

# Chapter 9

## *Praying and Prophesying*

Now I praise you that ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions, even as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoreth her head; for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven. For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn: but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled. For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man: for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man: for this cause ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God. Judge ye in yourselves: is it seemly that a woman pray unto God unveiled? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God (I Cor. 11:2-16).

After nearly forty years of studying and teaching on the subject of women's role in the church and arguing all the traditional points about women's silence and submission, I was shocked when I seriously and honestly reconsidered the implications of I Corinthians 11:4-5. It was not hard to interpret verse 4: "Men should remove their head coverings during worship services," because that is what we teach and practice, and we claim that is what Paul taught. They were not to pray or prophesy in those worship services with their heads covered. However, verse 5 clearly instructs women to cover their heads when praying and prophesying. I was forced to ask honestly, "Were men and women praying and prophesying in the same service?" I could rationalize the women's role of prayer by saying that they could obey the command while being led in prayer by a man or praying silently, and thus conform to I Corinthians 14:34. However, a woman could not prophesy in silence. In chapter 14:3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 19, 24 and 26, Paul stated that prophecy is for edification, exhortation, consolation and instruction. If this is so, then the women had to break silence in order to prophesy. I have yet to meet a Biblical scholar who does not agree that I Corinthians 11 deals with the public assemblies, where most praying and prophesying take place. I have met a few people who declare that it was in a worship service until the evidence clearly refuted their stand on female silence. These same people suddenly saw the light and then it wasn't a worship service.

The Lord's Supper, in the latter part of this chapter, is part of a public assembly. So, without question, Paul was referring to praying and prophesying, breaking bread, and drinking the cup in the public assembly. If we look back to Joel's prophecy and Peter's statement about it, we find that Joel's prophecies came true with the establishment of the church. One then finds these women praying and prophesying alongside men in the public assembly of the Corinthian church. We must conclude that

these women were fulfilling the role which Joel prophesied and which Peter said had come to pass. Any other conclusion is denial and selective interpretation of scripture from one's own bias.

The following questions should be asked and honestly answered by those who conclude that women are prohibited from reading, preaching, leading prayer, teaching, etc, in the general assemblies or the class assemblies of the church:

1. Is it not obvious that men and women were both prophesying in the same assembly in chapter 11:1-16?
2. If, as some try to assert, in order to maintain consistency, women prayed and prophesied only before and to other women, why would they have had to have their heads covered? They wouldn't have been in the presence of men while doing this praying and prophesying.
3. Why, then, would they be required to wear a covering to show their submission, if no men were present?
4. Was the covering worn simply to show other women that they respected men in all other non-assembly situations?
5. Should a woman who is explaining the message of Christ to her children, or praying with them, also wear a head covering while doing so, in order to show that she honors her husband and other men, though none are present?
6. Should a woman wear a hat or covering while she speaks out in a private Bible class, or just in a public Bible class, or in all classes?
7. If this was not a public worship service, does God require women to wear a covering anytime and anywhere they teach or pray, to show respect for their husbands and other men?
8. What were the occasions in which Paul would demand men to remain uncovered while they prayed and prophesied? Would it not be in mixed public worship and public classes, showing both men and women that they respected their head, Christ?
9. How could anyone logically conclude that these women were anywhere other than in worship?

It seems clear that both men and women were prophesying in the same services for mutual benefit. In verses 17-33, they broke bread and drank the cup together in the same service. It seems obvious that this was the Lord's Day service as well.

C. R. Nichol, in his book, *God's Woman*, argued that chapter 11 dealt with the Lord's Day services and that both men and women prophesied in it. He further argued that Paul left the discussion of the regular Lord's Day service at the close of this chapter and began addressing special services where the gifts of the Holy Spirit were being exercised in chapter 12.

His argument is based upon the fact that Paul seemed to finish the discussion of the Lord's Day worship service in chapter 11, which included the Lord's Supper, since he began chapter 12 with a new subject by saying, "Now (change of subject) concerning spiritual gifts." Nichol concluded that a new subject was now under discussion. He then

argued that the silence in chapter 14 was to be exercised only in services where spiritual gifts were being exercised and that since the special gifts of the spirit had passed away with the Apostolic Period, the silence rule regarding their exercise would no longer apply. This certainly is an interesting theory, and I note it here. I certainly agree that this is a valid argument. It alone has enough weight of logic and scripture to cause us to change our doctrine and practice in regard to women's role in the church. It alone should keep honest men and women from being dogmatic about their positions. Although I agree with the validity of the conclusions which C. R. Nichol reached, I, for other reasons, firmly believe we have been wrong on this subject.

In the May 26, 1987, edition of the *Firm Foundation*, Larry D. Mathis took the same view as Nichol. He wrote, "No such meetings are held today. There are no prophets living in the church now; hence, no prophets' wives." He concluded that, "Actually, I Timothy 2:11-12 is the passage that restricts or forbids women such activity today." We shall see later that this "proof text" in no way supports his conclusions on women's role in worship.

We must review what Paul taught in I Corinthians, chapters 11 through 14:33, before we can discuss the short two-verse "proof text" Mathis referred to, upon which much of the Christian world has based its official or unofficial determination to keep women out of the public roles in the work and worship of the church.

First, we need to understand whom Paul is talking about when he refers to women and men in this passage. The question which must be addressed is this, "Was Paul talking about husbands and wives in chapter 11:2-16, or about men and women?" Some of the controversy about women's role in the church and the subject of silence or quietness is due to the translations, and not necessarily all the translations are borne out in the Greek. To make determinations and to get a better understanding of what Paul meant when he used a particular word, the Greek text must be addressed. We need to follow that word through his writings. We will start with the Greek for husband, "aner," and the Greek word for wife, "gune."

The translators of the American Standard Version, twenty-nine times in Paul's writings, translated "aner" as husbands, and twenty-two times, as man. Four of these twenty-two translations in the texts are clear that "husband" was meant: Romans 7:3, I Corinthians 7:13, Ephesians 5:28, and I Timothy 5:9. This leaves eighteen times that it is translated as man. In four of these, "aner" is clear that husbands are not the meaning, those being Romans 4:8,11, I Corinthians 13:11, and Ephesians 4:13. Thus, in fourteen passages there is some room to question the translations. All fourteen are contained in the passages which the church has relied upon to build its doctrinal stance about the woman's role in the church. The translators translated Paul's use of "gune" thirty-three times to mean wife. Twenty-three times in Paul's letters it is translated woman. Two of these passages clearly refer to wives; those are Romans 7:2 and I Corinthians 7:13. The balance of the translations to woman, instead of wife, is also found in the texts under study.

There is a fundamental rule in lexicography that says, "A word should be translated by its most common usage unless there are clear and compelling reasons not to." Paul's most common usage of "aner" and "gune" is in reference to husband and wife, and they are so translated most often.

In I Corinthians 11:3, Paul says, "the head of the woman is the man." I cannot find any other passage in the Old or New Testaments which even suggests that men are the heads of women, generally. Perhaps I Timothy 2 is an exception which we will study later. Now, let us use wife and husband in this text. "The head of every wife is the husband." This agrees perfectly with Ephesians 5:23 where the Greek words "aner" and "gune" are used, "for the husband is the head of the wife." Nowhere in the Bible does God teach that someone else's woman is subject to me or any other man or that my wife is subject to other husbands or other men. It does clearly teach that wives are subject to their own husbands. Colossians 3:18 reads, "Wives, be in submission to your own husbands." Again, "aner" and "gune" are the Greek words.

Thus, if we use wife instead of woman, in I Corinthians 11:3-16, and husband instead of man, we have consistency in Paul's own writings and consistency with the rest of the Bible. The only possible exception is in I Timothy 2.

So, what might be the basis for Paul's instruction in the first part of chapter 11? Christian wives had gained equality in marriage, unlike any granted in Jewish and Gentile cultures (I Corinthians 7). They had gained freedom in Christ. They enjoyed the gifts of the spirit. They were privileged to exercise those gifts. "In Christ Jesus," they had learned that "there was neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, but that all were one." All had access to the throne of God and His grace through Christ. It is apparent, with this new-found freedom and equality, they had begun to remove the signs of submission to their own husbands. They apparently were removing their veils and clipping their hair. They were saying, "Christ has set us free, and made us equal, so let us cast off the veils and cut our hair to show our new-found equality with our husbands."

Thus, Paul instructs wives, not women, that they still have husbands and should show respect for them in the assembly of the church by wearing coverings while praying and prophesying. By the same token, their husbands were expected to show their submission to Christ by removing their head coverings while praying and prophesying.

We should note again that a wife's being in subjection to her husband does not suggest that she is inferior. For he says in verse 7 that she is the "glory" of her husband. In Ephesians 5:25, Paul tells a husband (aner) to love his wife (gune) as Christ loved the church. In fact, the marriage was to be a glorious marriage, just as the church was to be a glorious church. Husbands were to "love their wives as their own bodies" and "to love their wives as they loved themselves." This is not a demeaning position for a wife, but rather, it is a glorified position in the Christian community.

The point that is consistently overlooked in the study of the assembly referred to in this passage is that both wives and husbands were praying and prophesying while

uncovered and covered. These wives were not silent! No one can logically and honestly interpret this scripture to say that the men, or the husbands, were praying and prophesying uncovered in a worship assembly made up of men only. But some argue that the instruction regarding prayer and prophesying by women applied to private classes or assemblies for women and children only. In fact, an objective look declares the opposite. Men and women were praying and prophesying in the same assembly.

There is nothing in the context or the text to even suggest separate services. To attempt to find a way to explain away the obvious is to wrest the scripture and to use warped logic. We must ask and answer one simple question to understand this passage: Where did men and women or husbands and wives pray and prophesy in the assembly referred to in this passage? Prayer and prophesy are a part of worship services. Paul said so a number of times in I Corinthians 14. There is no indication from chapter 11 through chapter 14 that women were in some special assembly.

Paul, in this passage, is not addressing the question of whether wives and husbands may speak in the worship of the church, but rather what attire and hair styles they must wear or not wear while they are doing so.

Paul makes it clear that women and men were both praying and prophesying in a common assembly. He made no suggestion that there was the slightest deviation from the norm in so doing. These wives were simply to show the signs of subjection to their own husbands while participating in the prayers and prophecy. One reads too much - far too much - into this passage by concluding that headship, in any way, denies women roles in public worship. Had it been wrong for women to pray and prophesy in the assembly, Paul would have told them so, instead of telling them how to dress while doing so.

Paul addressed many other problems in worship in the context of chapters 11-14. After addressing the veil and hair issues during worship in I Corinthians 11:13-16, he immediately addressed the proper observance of the Lord's Supper in verses 17-34.

Some Bible students who cling to the traditional interpretation of I Corinthians 14:34-35 declare these women couldn't have prayed and prophesied in the general assembly because such contradicts the above scripture. Those who do so deny the obvious. To them, maintaining their tradition gets in the way of searching for truth.

Some argue that if "aner" is translated husband instead of man, you make Christ the head of only married men. This argument is specious. The fact that Paul addresses a husband and wife problem in no way suggests that he is only the head of married men. He is the head of the church and the church has both married and unmarried members.

Paul says, in verse 17, that in giving this charge "on attire and hair while praying and prophesying," he praised them not, for they came together not for better, but for worse. The charge in verses 2-16 is directly related to the same coming together in verses 17 and 18. They did not show signs of honor required in verses 11-16. They

were factious in verse 19. They got drunk in church. The rich ate and drank in the love feast at church, embarrassing and shaming those who were poor, in verse 22. By so doing in worship, they failed to discern the body of Christ (verses 27-29).

Since we have no Biblical texts outside this passage and our other two proof texts which even suggest that men in general are over all women in general, but that there is ample evidence for wives to be in submission to their own husbands, we could logically conclude that husbands and wives are the subjects of I Corinthians 11:2-16. The Greek certainly allows it.

# Chapter 10

## *Spiritual Gifts*

In chapter 12 Paul dealt with spiritual gifts. There is not even a hint in this chapter to suggest that those gifts mentioned were bestowed upon men only. There is no Biblical evidence to suggest that only men received the gifts of the spirit. Rather, we find clear evidence which proves that church members, male and female, had various gifts.

In 12:3 Paul says, “No man can confess Jesus as Lord, but in the Holy Spirit.” No one would argue that the man here referred only to the masculine sex. Women also confess Jesus as Lord by the same spirit, and they do it in public assemblies of the church. I find it strange that a woman can stand on a podium beside a minister and confess to a congregation that she believes Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God, prior to baptism, but the same preacher never allows that same woman to stand before the same microphone and declare, after she is a Christian, that she believes that Christ is the Son of God and make a declaration of her growing faith before the same assembly. We let alien sinners do something in the assembly that we do not allow fellow saints to do. It is strange that a woman can violate our rendering of I Corinthians 14:34 before baptism but cannot give a public confession afterwards. No one would argue that the confession of Christ mentioned in Matthew 10:32 was a one-time, final confession. Nor do we argue that Timothy made only one confession of faith in his lifetime (I Timothy 6:12).

In 12:4-6, Paul speaks of diversities of gifts, ministrations and working. But it is the same spirit and the same Lord “working all things in all,” not all men! Verse 7 says, “but to each one is given the manifestation of the spirit to the profit withal.”

Would any Bible student rewrite this passage to fit the practice of the church this way: “but to ‘men only’ is given the manifestation of the spirit to profit withal?” Of course not. The “each” in verse 7 included women, as did the “each” in 11:21, who had abused eating and drinking at the time of the Lord’s Supper.

In 12:11 Paul says, “But all these worketh the one and the same spirit, dividing to each one severally as he will.” No person would dare change this scripture to read: “dividing to ‘each man’, or ‘to each man only’.”

In 12:12 Paul says, “the body is one and hath many members.” We know that “many” includes men and women. “For we were all (men and women) baptized into the one body, and all (men and women) made to drink of the same spirit,” verse 13.

In verses 27 and 31 Paul says, “Ye (men and women) are the body of Christ, and severally members one of another.” “And God set some in the church; first apostles.” One can argue that the original twelve were the only apostles or a select group of “ones sent out.” One can also argue that Paul was an apostle “born out of due season.” One

might even argue that Barnabas was also an apostle, that is, one “sent out.” (Acts 14:14.)

But no one can argue that the original twelve did not have a special office and a special mission. The word apostle comes from the Greek word “Apostolos,” which means “one sent forth.” The Greek “Apostolea” means “to send forth.” The preachers of Romans 10:12 certainly became apostles in the general sense when they were sent out. Paul “sent” more than one ministering servant to perform a certain task (II Corinthians 12:17; I Timothy 4:12; Ephesians 4:21-22; Colossians 4:7-9; Philippians 2:19,28).

Anyone sent forth on a mission was an apostle. In I Corinthians 12:18 Paul says, “God set in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, and divers kinds of tongues.” Paul states that these “do not all have the same gifts,” but he tells the Corinthian church, made up of both men and women, to “desire earnestly spiritual gifts,” 14:1.

No one would argue that men only had the gift of prophecy. In fact, all evidence points to the contrary. Nor would one argue that the gifts of teaching, miracles, healing, tongues, or interpretation of tongues were limited to men only. Women certainly had speaking gifts, and they were given for the benefit of the church.

In chapter 13 Paul points out that the possession and exercise of these gifts, or even the willingness to give one’s body to be burned, without love, was a waste of the gift or the sacrifice, for both men and women. These gifts were to be exercised in love by both men and women. The importance of love in the exercise of the gifts applied to the whole church. In fact, he tells the whole church, in the first verse of chapter 14, “to follow after love and to desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.” Those who would desire spiritual gifts, and especially the gifts of prophecy, were the same ones who were to follow after love in chapter 13. These Corinthian Christians include both men and women.

Paul argues that the gift of prophecy was greater than the gifts of tongues because, in its exercise, the church was exhorted, edified, and consoled (14:3-4).

In verse 5 he says, “I would that ye all [men and women] speak with tongues, but rather that ye [men and women] prophesy.” The same “ye all” are the ones who were to follow after love. It had to include men and women. We should remind ourselves again that Joel said, “Your sons and your daughters will prophesy,” and “I will pour up my spirit upon your handmaidens.” We should also remember again that Philip had four daughters who prophesied and that husbands and wives prayed and prophesied together in chapter 11 in the assembly. With this in mind, one can begin to see more clearly that Paul was giving those instructions to both men and women in the exercise of the gifts to the benefit of the whole church.

In 14:9 he says, "So also ye [men and women], unless ye utter by the tongue speech easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye [men and women] will be speaking into the air."

In verse 12, he says, "So also ye, since ye [men and women] are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye [men and women] may abound unto the edification of the church." In verse 20, Paul addressed the entire church. "Brethren [men and women], be not children in mind, in malice be ye [men and women] babes, but in mind be ye [men and women] men."

Verse 23 says, "If, therefore, the whole church [men and women] be assembled together and all [men and women] speak with tongues, and there come in men [men or women] unlearned or unbelieving, will they not say that ye [men and women] are mad?"

The "ye" in the Corinthian church were both men and women. Only by inserting "men only" after "ye" could anyone come up with any other interpretation, and Paul and the Holy Spirit certainly did not do that.

Verses 24 and 25 read, "But if all [men and women] prophesy and there come one who is unbelieving and unlearned, he is approved by all [men and women] and is judged by all [men and women]; the secrets of his heart are made manifest; and so he will fall down on his face and worship God and declare that God is among you [men and women] indeed."

Would anyone dare to change this scripture to read:

"But if all men and only men prophesy."

"He is approved by all men and only men."

"He is judged by all men and only men."

"Declaring that God is among you men and only you men indeed."

Verse 26 reads, "What is it then, brethren? When you come together, each one of you [men and women] hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation." Note: Brethren represents the whole church, the brotherhood of Corinthian Christians. Who was able to exercise these gifts in the assembly? The answer: "Each one of you." Each one assembled. Women did also assemble. Some have mistakenly argued that the pronouns in chapter 14 were all masculine, thus the instruction was necessarily limited to men. But they don't limit the prohibition against stealing to men because of Paul's instruction in Ephesians 4:28, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands that he may have whereof to give to him that need." There are many passages where masculine pronouns are used but which apply to men and women equally.

Someone might argue that women must have had only the gifts of knowledge, wisdom, faith, discernment of spirits, but no speaking gifts. Not so. We already know

that the gift of prophecy was possessed by women. What good would the gift be if it could not be used to teach and edify? Of what value is an unspoken psalm? Certainly the women of the church enjoyed all the gifts, and this whole context proves they, not men only, exercised them in the assemblies.

In verses 27-36 Paul addresses three situations requiring “silence” during the exercising of these special gifts, or in a broader sense, any activity in the assemblies of the church which created confusion. First, there was the problem of the brethren exercising the gifts of tongues without an interpreter, thus creating a situation he addressed in verses 6-19. In verses 27-28 Paul said, “If any man speaketh in a tongue, let it be two at the most three, and that in turn; and let one interpret; but if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church, and let him speak to himself and to God.” So, he commands silence in the absence of an interpreter. He also limits the number of tongue speakers to three in any single service. Those were to speak in order or in turn because all things had to be done unto edifying. There is not one suggestion that these tongue speakers or interpreters were limited to the male sex. On the contrary, the instruction to the “ye all” of this passage says that unless there is an interpreter, they were all (both men and women) to keep their silence.

Secondly, in verses 29-33, he addresses those who were prophesying, no doubt including both men and women who were prophesying in chapter 11:4-5. “And let the prophets speak by two or three, and let the others discern. But if a revelation is made to another sitting by, let the first keep silence. For ye all can prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be exhorted, and the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets; for God is not a God of confusion, but of peace.” No doubt they were sons, daughters, and handmaidens of whom Joel and Peter spoke. He instructed the church to limit the number of those [men and women] prophesying in each service to three, and they were to speak one by one so the church could learn and be exhorted. “Others [men and women] were to discern.” If one of these prophets were speaking and one standing by had a revelation, then the person prophesying was to keep his or her silence.

If we follow both Paul’s commands faithfully and the necessary inference of limitations from this passage, then the church could never allow more than three people to speak or read the scripture to edify the church in any one service or any one Bible class. But we have “reasoned” that this “law” does not apply, and allow at times a half dozen or more to make known the mind and counsel of God in one service, and many more in a Bible class. Yet, we continue to selectively apply verse 34 on silence among women.

Paul did require silence in these two cases. He made it very clear that without an interpreter, tongue speakers were to be silent or hold their peace. If a more recent revelation came to one with the gift of prophecy, the ones assigned to prophecy must be silent or hold their peace. The reason for silence was to maintain order and eliminate confusion in the church. Another reason was that God would be honored, since He was not the author of confusion. Under such orderly arrangements, the church would be truly edified. If God gave women revelations, and I know of no one who claims He

didn't, and if they were given while another prophesied, the Corinthians would have disobeyed God by refusing women the right to reveal His message.

The root Greek word for silence, in I Corinthians 14:34, is "sigao," which means "to be silent, or quiet, or to hold one's peace." The Greek word for muzzle is "phimoo." Paul did not muzzle the tongue speakers in the church when there were no interpreters present. He also said for those who prophesied to "hold their peace" if another Christian gets a revelation while they are speaking. But he did not muzzle them in the rest of the service. In verses 34 and 35, he does not muzzle wives in the church.

In view of all the instructions to the "whole church" which included all those who had gifts of the spirit, enjoyed by both men and women, it is impossible for me to reach any other conclusion from I Corinthians 14:34-35 than that this silence involved only husbands and wives. When will we admit that it is our "reasoning," our "binding," or our "loosing," which enables us to permit women to breach the "silence rule" according to some of our traditions and not other traditions? Can we not see the obvious inconsistencies? Perhaps there is security in our inconsistencies and we are simply afraid to turn the light of reason on some of them.

"For it is not permitted for them to speak." The Greek word for speak here is "laleo." Since this Greek word may also include the idea of babbling, prattling, chattering, etc., it could easily and logically prohibit wives from babbling and chattering in the assembly, as well as asking husbands questions.

The third problem that Paul addresses that required silence was apparently in cases of certain women who were speaking up and asking their husbands questions as they were speaking. They had discovered their new-found freedom in Christ very refreshing in a culture which had shackled them. In chapter 11, they had begun removing signs of respect for their husbands while they prayed and prophesied in the assembly. In this passage, apparently, some continued to fail to show proper respect for their husbands by asking them questions in public. They were not exercising silence and restraint as an indication of their submission to their husbands while their husbands were speaking. And so, Paul says, "Let the women (wives; gune) keep silent in the churches. For it is not permitted for them to speak, but to be in subjection as also saith the law. And if they would learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home" (I Corinthians 14:34-35).

Let's insert "wives" for "women" in this passage. Remember the translators translated "gune" wife or wives at least thirty times in Paul's letters. The translators made the correct translation of "aner" and left no doubt which group of women was to be silent. It was those who had husbands. It clearly identifies those women he told to be silent, the ones who could ask their "own husbands at home." Now if we, being consistent and true to the context, also translate "gune" in this same passage to wives, it seems clearly to instruct not women, but wives! Not widows, but wives! Not divorcees, but wives! Not unmarried women or maidens, but wives were to hold their peace and ask, not men generally, but their "own" husbands at home.

If the silent rule is to all women, then it is also true that all women would have to wait until they got home to “learn anything” or “ask” questions. But this scripture applied only to wives who had “their own husbands at home.” The rest would not be excluded from speaking, learning and asking questions, based on this command. No one can make the silent rule apply to all women and ignore the balance of the text or the context. The ones who were to be silent were those who had husbands at home and that silence related only to questions.

Some have argued that they had surveyed twenty-six English versions and “gune” was translated women in every one of them. Thus, any conclusion on mistranslation must be wrong. I surveyed the ten versions in my library and found that each translated “aner” as husband. So, the 26 translations could have been only half right, since they too, no doubt, translated “aner” as “husbands” consistently. But, the conclusion is quite clear, in spite of numerous mistranslations of “gune”: these women were to ask “their own husbands at home.” Only wives have husbands. Only wives are told to be silent here.

Paul is addressing a husband-wife problem here, not a man-woman problem. A wife, to be truly respectful and obedient, would also have to wait until she got home to ask her husband questions. To be absolutely Biblically correct, she couldn’t even ask the question in the car in route. And, it is fair to ask, “If one is going to be an absolutist on part of this scripture, why not be an absolutist in all of it and impose a prohibition on asking questions on the way home?” Intellectual honesty will not allow us to have it both ways.

It should be noted here that, with the exception of very few small cults, no church requires silence of their women. They are permitted to sing, read responsively, make announcements from their pews, confess their faith, pray in unison, confess their faults, select songs to be sung, greet visitors, greet members, speak to their husbands, speak to their children, etc. No, we do not believe that women are to be silent in the church. We simply set the perimeters ourselves without Biblical directions, at what times and in what ways women can speak, and when women must be silent. Our “reasoning” becomes law. The Bible certainly does not specify when women are to be silent (mute), nor does it permit any of the above if it really means women are to keep silent (mute). If we follow the “mute” theory, women are not permitted to speak at all in the church. Who will dare to speak for God on which exception will be allowed?

This passage states that these wives (women) are to be silent. The same “silent” in the Greek of this passage is in verses 28 and 30. Christians with the gift of a tongue would not be prohibited from speaking in other ways, simply because that gift could not be exercised when interpreters were absent. Yet Paul, in this circumstance, said, “Let him keep silence in the church.” We find no difficulty determining that such a one is only to be silent in regard to the using of the gift of a tongue. The silence is not imposed on such a one in reference to prayer, prophecy, singing, reading, announcing, administering baptism, making confession, testifying, waiting on the Lord’s table, greeting people, etc.

In verse 30 the first prophet was to keep silent (in the church) if another Christian sitting by him received a revelation, but that in no way prohibited that Christian from speaking up in other ways during the service.

Now, what is the condition under which wives (women) were to keep silent or hold their peace in the church? It seems obvious that it was only when wives were interrogating their husbands. Paul did not believe that such public questioning by wives showed proper respect, or that it indicated submission to their husbands. It was, therefore, creating confusion.

“Let your wives keep silent in the churches” certainly corresponds to verse 28 when he commands tongue speakers to “keep silent in the church.” This command would apply to “all the churches” just as the command to prophets would in verse 30. No one would conclude that these “holding your peace” commands applied in other activities in the worship service, such as speaking in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; speaking in prayer; speaking in reading the scripture; preaching; teaching; speaking as in making comments at the Lord’s table and in announcements. Why, then, would anyone conclude that wives would be required to keep silent, except in asking husbands questions or in other ways which might show lack of respect or embarrass their husbands in public, or babbling, thus creating confusion? It is in this kind of speech where they were to hold their peace, not in other ways. They were to wait until they got home to ask their husbands questions about their revelation or their interpretation? The silence instruction to her would necessarily be restricted to the subject addressed, interrogating her husband, and perhaps chattering or babbling.

The silence required in verses 28 and 30 was directed at a particular problem. If we will admit what the problem was in verses 34 and 35, we can see under what circumstances women were to keep silent. Again, we must re-emphasize that no one believes that a woman must be totally silent, or that she can’t speak in the churches, or that she can’t learn anything in the churches, or that she can’t ask anything in the churches. Yet, Paul says very clearly, “if she would learn anything, let her ask her husband at home.” If you took the scriptural absolute there, as many take the absolute on the silence regarding “certain” activities in the church, then the wife cannot learn anywhere but at home. It is obvious and clear that “If they would learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home,” does not say she cannot inquire or learn anything while in church services. But they do learn, they do speak, they do ask questions in our assemblies. We have our man-made exceptions to this command on silence, speaking, and asking questions.

This passage says it is not permitted for women to speak. Yet we allow them to speak. We simply reason away these clear contradictions of the silent command to fit our doctrines and our traditions. We alter this command to fit our customs. There is no other explanation.

Had men been creating confusion by babbling and chattering or by interrogating other men or women in Corinthian assemblies, Paul no doubt would have told them to be silent, too. The principle of respect, order and peace which Paul emphasizes here

would be applicable to any class, general assembly, prayer meeting, camp meeting or lectureship.

Paul says, "They are to keep silent, and it is not permitted for them to speak," but we "reason" that all kinds of exceptions are okay. But if she is to be silent, and is not to speak, then all of our exceptions are violations. The Bible does not command her to sing in an assembly or to pray in unison aloud in an assembly or to read responsively in the assembly. Yet, these are all speaking. The same Greek word that is used for "speak," to command her not to, is used to command someone to speak in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. If the command in I Corinthians 14:34-35 is absolute, we must conclude that women can't speak at all. Or, we must say which speaking is not allowed and vote on the exceptions. Our decisions will be based on our own reasonings and a vote by those in authority of each church. They decide when and where she can speak, because there is not the remotest command which allows her to speak in any of the exceptions. Our leaders "decide" when and where she speaks.

It is surprising that many refuse to, or can't, recognize these obvious inconsistencies between what they say this passage means on one hand, and what they practice, on the other. They actually try to argue that the Bible itself makes these special exceptions. It does not! Men do.

It is interesting that we reason that it is all right for women to violate the silence of I Corinthians 14:34 because Paul commanded the Ephesians and Colossians to teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. But we will not let them violate the same silence rule by reading the scripture commanded in Colossians 4:16. He did not tell men "only" to do the reading of these two letters any more than he told men "only" to sing in 3:16. Nor does it instruct men "only" to pray in Colossians 4:2. If teaching, admonishing, praising, praying and giving thanks in song were to be done by women as an exception to I Corinthians 14:34, why cannot women pray or read aloud in obedience to the above passages in public assemblies as an exception to the same passage? The Bible nowhere says "only men can read and pray in worship," nor does it teach anywhere that "only men can lead in prayer" or that "only men can lead the church in reading the scriptures."

We cannot logically argue that a woman can teach, admonish, quote scripture, and lead the congregation in prayer and thanksgiving when accompanied by music, but that she cannot do the same without music. Furthermore, there is no command that women sing, but there is one that tells them to be silent. We can't have it both ways. Either we make all women remain totally silent in all assemblies, or we confess that our exceptions are merely man-made laws and nothing else.

Paul says, in I Corinthians 14:35, "If they would learn anything"; the Greek for learn is "manthano." It means to increase one's knowledge and frequently to learn by inquiry or observation. What, then, was the learning which led Paul to tell the wives to be silent about and not to speak about? It seems clear it was restricted only to those matters about which they made public inquiry of their husbands in order to avoid

confusion from a husband-wife confrontation in public worship. It certainly was not learning which came from songs, readings, sermons, announcements, testimonies, etc.

The instruction on silence was to wives. It is clearly limited to the things about which their husbands were talking and questions which could be answered at home. Widows and single women had no husbands at home to ask. By asking questions they did not shame their husbands, nor did they indicate insubordination. The only persons who could have been embarrassed would be the husbands whose wives were exercising their new-found freedom and not showing proper respect which God required them to show.

We claim men and women have an equal obligation to sing, to speak, to admonish, to teach with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, from Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3, in worship, and in violation of the silence rule. Why would they not have an equal obligation to fulfill Paul's command to the Thessalonian church in I Thessalonians 5:14 to "admonish the disorderly, to encourage the fainthearted, and to support the weak while extending longsuffering to all" in public? Such admonition, encouragement, and support were given in church services. Paul did not single out only men to do so, any more than he restricted women from exercising their gifts in public. If we can make an exception to the silence rule on singing, we can make an exception on all the above.

# Chapter 11

## ***“As Also Saith the Law” I Corinthians 14:34***

The only time the law suggests subjection of women to men is in Genesis 3:16, “and thy desire will be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.” Note, the law of God in the Garden of Eden did not say men shall rule over women, but “thy husband will rule over you” - over Eve, the wife of Adam. This was not a man-woman law, but a husband-wife law.

Someone argues that all the sermons recorded in the New Testament were preached by men, and the instruction to do the work of an evangelist was given to a man (II Timothy 4:5). Philip’s daughters must have preached something as did the sisters in Romans 16, and I Corinthians 11 and 14. Furthermore, the only New Testament command to “drink wine for your stomach’s sake” was given to a man. Would anyone conclude that women couldn’t drink wine if they had a stomach ailment? Such an argument is specious.

The reference “as also saith the law” might refer to Genesis 3:16, which was a husband-wife relationship, not a man-woman relationship. In fact, no Biblical text ever suggests that men generally are to have dominion over women. God approved just the opposite, as we shall see later. Nor does it teach that women in general are to be in submission to men in general. Therefore, to generalize beyond the husband-wife relationship is to go beyond the law and the teachings of both the Old and New Testaments.

If the law really backs up the argument that God’s original intent was that men generally were to have dominion over women generally, what are the exceptions? Who makes the exceptions?

1. May a heretic rule over a faithful Christian woman?
2. Does a 14-year-old baptized boy rule over his 40-year-old mother, 60-year-old grandmother, or 80-year-old great-grandmother?
3. Does God’s law require Christian women to be in subjection to non-Christian men?
4. If the above are not Biblical absolutes, who will we empower to draw the lines?

Furthermore, no one really believes that all men are to have dominion over all women. Would anyone argue so as to be utterly inconsistent in the face of thousands of examples of women ruling over men on the job, in government, and in church-related institutions?

The Genesis account of Adam and Eve, a husband and wife, adds additional credence to the translation of “gune” and “aner” to wife and husband. It would read, “as also saith the law, and if they [wives] would learn anything let them [wives] ask their own

husbands at home.” This was the same principle God laid down for the first husband and wife, nothing more.

The Old Testament nowhere prohibits women from prophesying and does not require them to be silent in the presence of men nor to be in submission to men generally.

Certainly the law did not require women to be silent in assemblies. There is no command from Genesis to Malachi that prohibits women from speaking or asking questions in assemblies. The Old Testament only once refers to submission of a woman to a man, and it refers to a wife and a husband (Genesis 3:16).

Sarah, in Genesis 21:8-12, not only told Abraham to cast Hagar out, but God told Abraham to “hearken unto her voice” - in other words, to obey her. She told the man she called “Lord” what to do, but God directed her husband to obey her. She ruled over him in this instance. God was pleased. It doesn’t sound as if God’s law demanded that wives be silent or that they have no authority in the family.

Abigail used her power of persuasion to change King David’s mind (I Samuel 25). King David told her, “Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, who sent thee to me this day and blessed be thy discretion and blessed be thou that has kept me from bloodguiltiness”(I Samuel 25:32-33). Does this sound like God, from creation, wanted women to be in submission and silent? Or, does it sound like God could use women even to instruct kings? Here an ordinary woman teaches, persuades and guides the King of God’s people. No one would argue that she violated God’s law.

Esther used her power of persuasion to change the mind of King Ahasuerus.

Both of these women could have been so submissive as to cause unnecessary hurt to others. But instead, they spoke up, even to kings and to good ends. What honest and conscientious Christian woman today would be so submissive as to allow men in authority to teach and practice what is wrong? There is no moral basis for silence and submission in such cases. There is a moral basis for arguing that women should speak out in such cases.

In Judges 13, an angel of the Lord appeared, not unto Manoah, but to his wife and told her of Samson’s birth. The angel instructed her about the Nazarite vow. God had no problem under “the law” in revealing His message to this woman, and having her, in turn, instruct her husband. Like Manoah, most male chauvinists of today would not accept the message from a woman’s mouth. They would have to hear it for themselves (verses 11-14). Manoah’s wife continued to give him instruction and wise counsel (vs. 24) with God’s approval under “the law.”

God had a number of women who were prophetesses. They prophesied to men, even kings.

Miriam was a prophetess (Exodus 15:20) and a co-leader with Moses and Aaron (Micah 6:4).

There was a little Jewish maiden who turned the head of Naaman and led him to the prophet of God and his healing. Naaman was “host of the King of Syria, a great man with his master and honorable.” I have heard hundreds of sermons about the necessity of completely doing God’s will from this story. Naaman was not clean until he dipped the seventh time in the River Jordan. But few have honored the little girl who pointed this important man in the right direction. Some, no doubt, have used this proof text illustration to prove that we must keep all of God’s laws, two of which they believe include keeping women silent and in subjection while overlooking the obvious role this young girl played in instructing her master in this story.

Deborah held three offices over Israel. She was a judge, a prophetess and a military leader. She delivered God’s will to Barak regarding the war with Canaan. She ordered him into battle and accompanied him in battle. They defeated Tabin, King of Canaan, and brought rest to Israel for 40 years. Her song is a part of Holy writings and teaches men and women to this day (Judges 5).

In the same battle it was Jael, a woman, who drove the tent spike through the temple of Sisera. She could have cowered in the corner of the tent, being submissive to man as some claim God ordered from creation. But she didn’t. She took a leadership role and brought down a captain of the host of the enemies of God’s people. Was she submissive to men? No. Her take-charge attitude brought her highest honors. “Blessed above all women shall Jael be” (Judges 5:24).

So, Deborah was not a woman who was submitting to men, she was ruler of men with God’s full approval (Judges 4-5). As a result of her rule “the land had rest for forty years” (Judges 5:31).

Hannah prayed in public (I Samuel 1). But, typical of male chauvinism was Elkanah’s response to her desire for a son: “Am I not better to thee than ten sons?” However, there is no indication that God was upset that this woman was praying in the presence of men. The only thing Eli was concerned about was that it was silent, not because it had to be.

Huldah was a prophetess (II Kings 22:14 and II Chronicles 34:22-33). She preached God’s word to the King of Judah, to Milkiah the High Priest, and to other men, which helped bring about a true reformation in God’s people rarely seen in all the Bible.

Noadiah was a prophetess (Nehemiah 6:14).

Isaiah refers to a prophetess in Isaiah 8:3-4.

Anna was a prophetess and went forth proclaiming the coming of Christ to all who looked for redemption (Luke 2:36-38).

No, the law did not require silence on the part of women. Nor did it prohibit them from telling forth the word of God to both men and women, kings, high priests or otherwise. So, there is no Old Testament precedent for the suggestion that the silence here refers to general silence by women in a worship service, a teaching situation, or as

an indication that women should in any way be in submission to men generally. Can anyone conclude that the law forbade women from prophesying? The New Testament allowed Philip's four daughters to prophesy. God used them. He did not rebuke any of these prophetesses. He allowed it under both His laws. Would God have called all these women to prophesy and blessed their messages if they were violating His law? Of course not.

Psalm 68:11 reads, "The Lord giveth His word: The women who publish the tidings are a great host." This does not sound like publishing the word was, or was going to be, restricted to men. No doubt, this scripture refers to God's spokeswomen.

The law did not demand silence of women in assemblies, nor the subjection of women generally to men generally. In fact, under the law women were permitted to prophesy, counsel, direct, instruct husbands, wage wars, judge, direct kings and high priests, without bringing down the slightest wrath from on High. Rather, they brought down blessings to God's people from on High.

# Chapter 12

## *Other Women, Other Scriptures*

It is very interesting to note that the woman at the well at Samaria went into the city of Sychar and proclaimed to that city that Jesus was the Christ. She testified before the whole city. John 4:39 says, “and from that city many of the Samaritans believed on Him because of the word of the woman who testified.” Christ certainly approved of this woman proclaiming Him to the city.

If she could testify to one, she could testify to ten. If she could testify to ten, she could testify to one hundred or one thousand. No Bible rule sets the limit on the size or place for this woman or any woman to tell others about the Lord Jesus Christ.

If Christ approved of her action, it must conform to the law and to His will. If this woman, who had been married five times and was living with another man, was not restrained by Christ from declaring Him to this city and making converts, how can anyone conclude that the Lord would then forbid Christian women today from declaring his “unsearchable riches?”

We must conclude, therefore, that “as also saith the law” did not prohibit this woman from declaring Christ nor did it refer to other women who prophesied or testified, or judged men, or ruled over men in official positions. The law only referred to the husband-wife relationship, not men-women relationships, when it mentioned submission.

These women judges and prophetesses of the Old Testament ruled and preached with God’s full approval and anointing. But someone will try to argue He did so only because no man was a leader. If that were the case, would we not conclude, then, that women ought to preach and rule if and where men will not or are not? And with God’s approval? Certainly they should.

But someone else argues that when women rule, God’s plan is thwarted. It was not in the cases of Miriam, Deborah, Noadiah, Huldah, Anna, etc. Why would it be now? Of course, the Bible does not spell out a plan in the first place. This is a false assumption upon which the male dominance doctrine has been built.

In Acts 4:31, Luke writes, “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness.” These disciples, both men and women, “were all filled ... and spake the word of God.” There is not the slightest suggestion that “only” men were filled or “only” men spoke the word of God with boldness; the assumption that both “spake” is the only logical conclusion anyone could reach, unless one is trying to force a preconceived notion onto this passage.

In Acts 11:19, Luke writes, “They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulations that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and

Antioch speaking the word to none save only the Jews.” No one would suggest that only the men were scattered and went forth speaking the word to these Jews.

In Romans 2:21, Paul asked the question, “Thou, therefore, that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest that a man should not steal, doest thou steal?” No one would conclude that only men could and should do this teaching and preaching on stealing. Could a woman preach against theft? Of course she could - and she should!

In Romans 10:11-15, Paul says, “For the scripture sayeth, ‘Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be put to shame for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ How, then, shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe on Him in whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? Even as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that bring back tidings of good things?” Would someone suggest that women were ruled out of bringing glad tidings, or preaching and teaching to unbelievers? No one can argue that women could not be sent in the field to make converts and to testify as did the Samaritan woman. Can’t women too have beautiful feet?

In Romans 12:7-8 Paul says of the ministry, “Let us give ourselves to our ministry, or he that teacheth to his teaching, or he that exhorteth to his exhorting, he that giveth let him do it with liberality, he that ruleth with diligence, he that showeth mercy with cheerfulness.” Would anyone suggest that only the men could do the ministering, the teaching, the exhorting, the giving (especially the giving), the ruling, and that the roles of women were only to “give” and to “show mercy” from this passage? Or is that a general application to every Christian to be a part in God’s ministry? It obviously has a general application.

In I Corinthians 14:3 Paul says, “But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men edification and exhortation and consolation.” No one will suggest that only men were able and privileged to prophesy, edify and console.

Jesus, in Matthew 28:19, gave the Great Commission: “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them.” The command to teach and baptize was not restricted to men or to the twelve apostles. That command is applicable to every Christian, male and female.

The apostle Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 2:2, “and the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.” “Men” here is the word “anthropois,” not the masculine form of “man.” So, Paul charged Timothy to commit the message to men and women who, in turn, could continue to pass the word on through their teaching to other men and women.

In Hebrews 5:12 the writer states, "For when by reason of time, ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that someone teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God. And are become such as have need of milk and not solid food." What is the conclusion? If there were male Hebrew Christians who still needed milk, and if there happened to be female Hebrew Christians who had gone on to solid food and had matured in the faith, these mature, full-grown Christian women should certainly be permitted by God to teach those men and women who were yet immature, needing milk, and who could not eat solid food. This conclusion is obvious.

What we allow in the church is considerably different from what we preach in the church. We quote the law, "Keep silent ... ask their husbands at home." Yet, we allow women to ask questions in the church. They ask for prayers. They ask if the congregation is aware of someone being sick, or that someone has died, or of someone who had special needs. In all of our Bible classes we allow women to ask all kinds of questions, to read scriptures, to comment on them, and in so doing they teach others, both men and women. They even argue for a particular point of view and often win the argument on the meaning of a scripture. Because a man stands up in front of a class, that, by no means, suggests that he will be the only one who teaches anything. More often than not, some of the most factual, insightful, spiritual lessons are taught by the women in our public Bible classes.

But someone will say, "I Corinthians 14:34-35 teaches that wives are to ask all their questions at home, so it is wrong if they ask questions in a Bible class." Such questions would be wrong if they created confusion and showed disrespect, whether asked by a woman or a man, to a man or a woman. But the Bible makes no distinction between class assemblies and other assemblies. Men do.

I have been privileged to attend services in small churches around the world where the church came together for worship. They sang; they had Bible studies; they had prayer; they had an offering; they had communion; and everything was combined into one service. No one thought it was unscriptural for a woman in the Bible study portion of those single services to read, ask questions, make comments, and teach others what she had learned from the Bible.

As a boy, I used to attend a worship service at a nearby neighbor's house. I went with my mother and an older sister, who were both baptized believers. About a dozen saints gathered in this good brother's living room. Often, he was the only man present. One of the women, usually one of this brother's daughters, led the singing. The Bible class was taken from a quarterly. The women read verses and made intelligent and instructive comments; they asked and answered questions. After the study this brother passed the bread and the fruit of the vine for which he had led the prayer. A contribution was then taken, and one of the ladies led a song or two, and this brother led a closing prayer. Occasionally visiting preachers came through and preached sermons at these Sunday afternoon services. But no one, to my knowledge, would have had then, or would have now, the audacity to say that those women sinned in answering questions or reading their verses, or making comments as it came their turn around the room as they followed the lesson from a *Firm Foundation* quarterly in

those worship services. I know of no one who would suggest that, somehow, the singing, the communion, the giving, the praying, were all separate from that "Bible study" in the middle of the service when the quarterly was used or that one part was worship service and one part a private Bible class. The worship did not begin with the first song and end with the main prayer and begin again after the Bible study and begin again with the Lord's Supper. Who would dare use such illogical arguments?

No one ever suggested then or now that God was displeased because those ladies read the scripture, discussed it, and taught what they believed it meant in the presence of that dear brother and occasionally other men. Nor did anyone think that those ladies that led the songs were out of line and in violation of the scripture or that they were usurping authority or exercising dominion over men. Incidentally, some of those songs were songs of prayers, and those ladies led in prayer with music. I cannot even imagine anyone thinking God was displeased with those worship services.

These sisters not only led the singing, but they selected the songs to be sung. No one thought then, nor would think now, that this was usurpation, yet they were in charge of the song service.

If there were a congregation of seven people and only one was a man, would he have to lead in every act of worship even if he was unqualified? I know of no scripture which says "God makes allowances for violating the 'silence rule' because the men of the church are unqualified or refuse to lead, or that the rule must be observed only if it is a big city church." Our whole presupposition on the "silence rule" is that qualified men always be present to lead. This is not necessarily so, nor is that a logical conclusion from any scripture.

If that man in this seven-member congregation got out of line morally or doctrinally, could the six women speak up, ask him questions, or discipline him? Or would they have to remain in silence and submission "as also saith the law?"

A woman can read, comment, lead singing, teach, pray, etc., without being guilty of usurpation. If a woman may do so when one man is present, she can, by the same logic and scripture, do so with 10, 100, or 1,000 men present.

We ask a simple question to thoughtful readers. Would God wish the church to grow and mature rapidly in faith, in Christian works, and in Christian living under able Christian women, or would He desire that the church be held back and be led by an illiterate Christian man who was a babe in Christ, because women must keep silent in the church? The answer is obvious. Of course, God would not want His church to be strangled, to be suffocated, or to remain in infancy in its learning and growth because there were no able or willing men present to lead. Nor would He want women's talents buried, strangled, suffocated, or for them to remain in infancy just because qualified men were available. Logically, God would want the talents of every Christian maximized. One must conclude that the scriptures referred to in this chapter apply to men and women alike.

# Chapter 13

## *Silent - Silence - Other Thoughts*

The root Greek word for silence, in I Corinthians 14:34, is “sigao,” which means “to be silent, or quiet, or to hold one’s peace.” The Greek word for muzzle is “phimoo.” Paul did not otherwise muzzle the tongues speakers in the church just because there were no interpreters present. But, certainly, he allowed them to speak in other ways. He also said for those who prophesied to “hold their peace” if another Christian gets a revelation while they are speaking. But he did not muzzle them in the rest of the service. In verses 34 and 35, he does not muzzle women or wives in the church. We must remember that if Paul is demanding silence of all women he doubles his emphasis. First he said “keep silence” followed by, “It is not permitted for them to speak.” If this rule were followed, a woman would be forbidden to even whisper to her husband or children. Yet, these are the two commands bigger than life. We follow them when they suit our tradition and we break them when they don’t suit us in keeping our traditions.

In view of all the instructions to the “whole church” which included all those who had gifts of the spirit, enjoyed by both men and women, it is impossible for me to reach any other conclusion from I Corinthians 14:34-35 than that this was only a husband-wife problem. When will we admit that it is our “reasoning,” our “binding,” or our “loosing,” which enables us to permit women to breach the “silence rule” according to some of our traditions and not other traditions? Can we not see the obvious inconsistencies? Perhaps there is security in our inconsistencies and we are simply afraid to turn the light of reason on some of them.

“For it is not permitted for them to speak.” The Greek word for speak here is “laleo.” Since this Greek word may also include the idea of babbling, prattling, and chattering, it could easily and logically prohibit wives from babbling and chattering in the assembly, as well as asking husbands questions.

If women could prophesy under the law with God’s approval, and if the woman at the well could proclaim Christ at Sychar and make disciples with His approval, women can be evangelists today. The Bible nowhere restricts evangelism to men.

No one really believes that God would refuse men who come to repentance through the declaration of His message by women. Contrary thinking violates the whole concept of the Great Commission, the purposes of God, and His mercy, as well.

Few really believe God feels that His word would be desecrated if read to a congregation through the lips of a Christian woman. How can any person believe that God feels that only men have the intelligence, the spiritual capacity, the articulation ability, and the right to read His word in a congregation?

Yet, some believe that “waiting on the Lord’s table” is a domain of clergymen or men only. It would seem much more logical for chauvinistic men to require women to pass out and pick up the trays and attendance cards than vice-versa. After all, haven’t we traditionally taught women to be in submission and to operate in the servant role, rather than the master role? There could be no greater sign in the church that women were in submission than to have them “wait” on the men as they sit in the pews. Why don’t we force them to do so? Mainly, it is because we have been falsely taught that this is leadership, instead of service, and that only men are allowed the glory and honor of conducting this rite or ceremony. Yet, it has nothing to do with leadership, glory or a position of honor.

The Bible says that the church met in “their house,” referring to Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:5). It was not Aquila’s house alone. Without doubt, it was ruled by Priscilla, because Paul instructed widows to “marry, bear children, rule the household” (Timothy 5:14). One cannot imagine women not ruling their households, especially Priscilla.

These household rulers cooked the food, prepared the drinks and, no doubt, served it at the love feasts the church held in their houses. One cannot imagine that when it was time to partake of the Lord’s Supper, suddenly they were forbidden to serve the bread and the wine.

One can well imagine that these housewives prepared both the communion and the food for the love feast. The church gathered and sang, taught, prayed, ate, drank, took the Lord’s Supper, gave an offering, made announcements, encouraged each other, shared joys, sorrows, and problems - although not necessarily in that order. The assembly was probably centered around a table on which sat the food, drink, and Lord’s Supper. It certainly was not a gathering like most of ours today. There was no exalted, elevated pulpit area, with large podiums and throne-like chairs reserved for only men. A communion table in front of the pulpit with the words “In Memory of Me” carved across the front probably did not exist. One can easily imagine the “ruler of the household” going to the table and returning with the “emblems,” following prayer, and then passing the bread and wine to the guests who were worshiping in her home.

It has been argued that the silent rule applies only when the “whole church” (I Corinthians 23, 26) is gathered together on the Lord’s Day, at a service when the communion is being served. But, we have traditionally applied it to the times when “one half” of the church is gathered together on Sunday evenings or on Wednesday prayer services, or at a revival, or at lectureships, or at youth meetings. Then, some even add home devotionals. And some men will not even let their wives or daughters lead in prayer or give thanks at a family devotional, meal, or at bedtime. In none of these is the whole church gathered. That is really stretching these two “come together” passages to an incredulous interpretation.

Even if it could be proved, and it can’t, that women or wives must keep silent and not speak in the services when the whole church is gathered together to observe the Lord’s Supper, there is no logical or scriptural basis to apply these rules to other

meetings of Christians. If it could even be proved that verses 34 and 35 applied to all women at the gathering of the whole church when special spiritual gifts were being exercised, then we would still need a rule for direction on other meetings. I know of no Bible verse which gave Priscilla the right to teach Apollos at all. If the rules of I Corinthians 14 apply to all meetings and gatherings of Christians, regardless of place, why did Paul even mention a "whole church" gathering anyway? He should have said, "When two or more Christians meet anytime, anywhere, and one is a man, women are to keep silent." But he didn't.

What we have done is to use verses 23 and 26 to keep women silent in the "regular services" - that is, in reading scriptures, leading prayers, preaching, baptizing, and waiting on the Lord's table, all of which have more to do with our concept of exercising authority than our concept of silence. We then say that she can speak up in a mixed Bible class without violating the silence rule. But, if she stands up in front to speak or to read in a Bible class, she sins and is in violation of I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2. Why? Because when she is in a standing position she usurps authority. Or, she exercises dominion over men. How contradictory and illogical. But, it is a convenient way to interpret scripture so as to mesh them into our traditions.

What a circuitous route we take to prohibit women from leading a Bible class in prayer or song, yet allowing them to read and teach from their seats. The authority we believe is derived of the "silent" rule when "the whole church is assembled together" and "as also saith the law" is bolstered by our use in I Timothy 2:8-15. We then mix these phrases, "I would that men pray in every place," and that the women "keep silence," "not to have dominion over men," and "to be in quietness." Then, by applying this mixed bag of scripture according to our tradition, or not applying them according to our tradition, we come up with a man-made binding creed. However, it is a terribly inconsistent one.

In the reading of scripture in a Bible class, a woman is not silent. When she makes an intelligent commentary, she is not silent. When she teaches a man something in this process, she is not silent and she is "teaching men", including husbands, elders, and deacons.

Often, when I have acted as a chairman (teacher) of an adult Bible class, women have instructed me "more perfectly" in the way of the Lord. That was not wrong. They were teaching me, along with other men, with my blessing and that of those in authority in the church.

But, remember that I Timothy 2:12 says that she is not to teach, and traditional application is that she is "not to teach a man," especially in public if he has been baptized. Yet, we let her teach men all the time. In almost every class, we let her teach men by reading, commenting, and arguing. Is she violating I Timothy 2:12 by such teaching? In fact, she violates both I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2 on the rules of silence, asking questions, learning, teaching, and speaking if we try to reach and maintain any degree of consistency in what we argue that these scriptures say.

Why do we allow her to speak up in a class? Our answer: Because Priscilla did so with Apollos.

Our interpretation and application of the silence rules are conveniently meshed with our interpretation and application of our “exercising authority over” rules. There is no Biblical mandate, let alone a list of exceptions to the rules. Human judgment alone dictates our policies and practices. Since human reasoning determines the exceptions from church to church and across the brotherhood, who has the right to restrict others whose reasoning determines that women may break our man-made rules in other ways? Who will step forth and speak for God on which exceptions He will allow in order to remain in fellowship?

# Chapter 14

## ***Other Considerations - "What?"***

There is one additional and extremely important argument that should be honestly considered, before we leave the fourteenth chapter of I Corinthians. It regards the Greek term, "e," translated "what?" in the introductory word of verse 36. The argument has strength and must be considered by all serious students of this subject. Translated "what," it is an exclamation negating or contrary to the verses immediately preceding it. Thayer's position was that the "e" with the grave accent may appear "before a sentence contrary to the one preceding (it)...." He listed I Corinthians 14:36 as an illustration. The conclusion would be this: Paul has quoted what some Corinthian husbands or men were teaching regarding the place of wives or women in the Corinthian church. It may have been what was socially acceptable among the Gentiles. It may have also come out of Rabbinical law. "Let your wives (women) keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted for them to speak; but let them be in subjection as also saith the law. If they would learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home" was not an Old Testament law. And Paul retorts in verse 36, "What? Was it from you, husbands, men, or you Corinthians, who say women should be silent, that the word of God went forth? Or came it to you, Corinthian husbands (or men)?" According to Thayer, Paul would be actually teaching the opposite of what we have traditionally believed and taught that he said. This proof text, which has been used to keep women in silence and subjection, loses its force completely. That is most ironic. Incidentally, there is no grammatical evidence that "as in all the churches of the saints," in verse 33, is connected with verse 34. It probably is saying that "God is not a God of confusion, but of peace" in only Corinth, but "in all the churches of the saints." But this must be better understood.

We have traditionally interpreted churches in verses 33 and 34 as congregations of the church universal. "Ekklesia" is the Greek term for church and more properly translated "assembly." These scriptures would and should read, "As in all the assemblies of the saints" and "Keep silence in the assemblies." We certainly don't believe women should keep silence in the churches in the universal sense, as members twenty-four hours a day.

Using the logical translation of "Ekklesia," we would say Paul instructs women to be "silent" and "not to speak" in the assemblies of the saints. But we get into trouble again. Just which assemblies are women forbidden to speak in? Which must she remain silent in? A Bible class is an assembly of saints. A home Bible study is an assembly of saints, prayer meetings, lectureships, singings, and gospel meetings are all assemblies of saints.

Not only are we forced to form a creed on which assemblies she may speak in, but we must designate which speech is acceptable to us and to God in each assembly. That is a big order! These problems are cleared up further when we view the significance of the arguments in this chapter.

Was Paul countering the heresy of these Corinthians, among whom were some who believed that women, or wives, should be silent in the worship service, because of Rabbinic law or custom. Certainly, there is no Old Testament law that suggests that because a wife was subject to her husband she should also be silent in assemblies. He is asking, "Do you mean to think that it is from you, husbands only, or men only, that the word of God went forth, or that no wife or woman in the church received the word or can declare it?" Paul is using the interrogatory to make a positive statement about husbands (or men) not being the only ones who received the word of God or from whom it had to come. No one doubts that Paul's questions in this text are rhetorical. The answer is obvious: "The word of God did not come from you husbands (or men) only." The Corinthians certainly understood that this was the truth coming out of the two questions.

So, Thayer's position clearly makes this position as credible as any other, in view of what women actually did in the Old and New Testaments. Why? Because Paul has no doubt that the word of God did not originate with the Corinthians, but quite the contrary. Moreover, Paul knew women had the spiritual gifts because he had already instructed them on how to dress their heads when prophesying or praying in worship.

The "what!" was a rebuke of those Corinthians who believed that wives (women) should keep silence not speak in the church. There is certainly sound argument in the Greek for that interpretation. This argument sheds light from a different perspective and should keep any student of God's word from being dogmatic about trying to maintain the traditional absolutes and non-absolutes that we traditionally attempt to force into this passage. These conclusions certainly make verses 34-35 conform to the rest of Paul's teaching in the context of chapters 11-14, which clearly show that all members, including women, were publicly exercising speaking gifts.

Paul then states, in verse 39, "Wherefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and forbid not to speak in tongues." This instruction was given to the brotherhood at Corinth. It tells men and women to earnestly desire to prophesy and does not forbid them, men or women, from speaking in tongues. Why would Paul instruct the men and women in the Corinthian church to seek the gifts of prophecy and tongues if women were going to be forbidden to exercise them in the assemblies of the church? Remember, this whole chapter is about assemblies. The whole church is being instructed.

It is about the way in which gifts were to be exercised that Paul has been giving instruction in this entire context, not that men and women could not exercise them peacefully and profitably in the assembly.

We know that when the church assembled, individuals, including men and women, had Psalms, revelations, tongues, or interpretations, etc. The evidence is overwhelming! No serious student of this subject can fail to recognize the clear implications of Thayer's statement on the study of this subject.

Traditionally, we have read I Corinthians 14:34-35 and concluded that this was an absolute rule, but absolute only where we decide to enforce it. And then, we justified violating this absolute with our exceptions as we have seen fit. Better exegesis would compel us to fit verses 34 and 35 into the entire context of chapters 11 and 14, instead of starting with verses 34 and 35, and forcing the context and the rest of the Bible to agree with our interpretation of those two particular verses. The evidence is too overwhelming to argue that both men and women did not both have gifts and did not exercise those gifts in the assemblies of the church.

With this acknowledgement, it is clear that the most these two verses and those in chapter 11 say is only that a wife should not appear to challenge her husband's authority over her by removing a sign of authority in such a way as to cause confusion by questioning him in the assembly. And, perhaps Paul was only saying, "You are not to chatter or babble in the assembly." This would meet the requirement of the Greek for "speak." Neither insubordination to husbands or babbling was allowed.

Using Thayer's position and that of other lexicographers, Paul is telling the Corinthians they are not the only source of God's word. So, how dare they try to impose silence on women or wives in the churches of the saints, which was a false tradition being created in Corinth? In the interest of honesty and consistency, we all know women ask all kinds of questions in the various assemblies of the church. Who is wise enough to speak for God on which questions and in what assemblies women can ask questions, even if the above arguments are wrong? Who will dare draw the lines for God and impose their "special" insight on all others, even causing a hellish division in the church, or in maintaining false doctrines based upon our tradition instead of the teachings of the Bible? When there are clearly two or more logical conclusions to be reached on a particular scripture, no one person or group has the authority to impose a single interpretation on all others.

# Chapter 15

## ***Prayer, Quietness, Exercising Dominion I Timothy 2:8-15***

"I desire therefore..."

It should be noted up front, in an exegesis of this passage, that Paul had already exhorted that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men or kings, and for all in high places," I Timothy 2:1-2.

Paul would have Timothy and any and all brethren to so pray that the church could "lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity," verse 2. The whole church was to pray for such. These prayers were not limited to men any more than the command to pray without ceasing in I Thessalonians 5:17 was limited to men.

Paul then said, in 2:4, that "God, our Savior, would have all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth." Who would conclude that God would "silence" capable women from bringing "all men to a knowledge of truth" and salvation? Why would the presence of able men alter an able woman's role or limit her from exercising her talents or gifts?

In I Timothy 2:8 Paul said, "I desire therefore that men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands without wrath and disputing." In order to understand this scripture, we must first understand how we have conveniently applied it to uphold a tradition of the church. It has been the "proof text" which gives males the exclusive privilege of "leading" in public prayer and which proves that women cannot "lead" in public prayer if a believing man or boy is present.

But note: Nothing in this text even suggests a worship service. Nor does it use the word "lead," let alone "lead only." If we take it just as it reads in most translations, only one thing is required: Men are to pray in every place. Does that mean that men only are to pray both silently and audibly in every place, including assemblies, but that women are limited to praying silently and audibly in some private places? Or, may they also pray silently in every place? If not, the only logical conclusion is, women cannot pray in any place where only men can pray - that is, in public places. Women would have to cover their ears while men pray in public places, since only men can pray in public places. Moreover, if only men can pray audibly in assemblies, women cannot sing a song of prayer, because audible prayers are limited by this scripture to men, according to our tradition.

Traditionally we, with one voice, have said that "every place" means "every assembling place." But that isn't what this scripture says. It says, "men are to pray in every place." If we add that men "only lead in prayer in every assembly, class and devotional," and Paul does not, then you have our doctrine and practice. The scripture would have read like this if it taught our practice: "I would that men only lead in prayer in

every place.” Can this mean that women can only pray silently even if no baptized man is present? If we interpret it to read only men can lead in prayer in every place, we eliminate women from leading in prayer anywhere, at any time, since only men can lead in prayer in every place. But why are they permitted to pray even silently, if men are the only ones who may pray in every place? To get our practice, Paul would also have had to add, “But women can pray silently or in song in every place.” But he didn’t.

It seems strange that we, who have traditionally also added, “only men may lead in prayer, in worship, classes, and devotionals” to this scripture, do not emphasize “lifting up holy hands.” I confess not knowing how high hands are to be lifted or how holy these hands must be before God listens. But I do know that those who generally demand an absolute adherence to the doctrine that only men are to lead in prayer in every assembling place, seldom, if ever, lift their hands at all, nor do they teach others to. Yet, “lead” and “only”, which are not in this text, are added to get their doctrine.

The question must be asked: If the first part of this verse is literal, and if it really means only males can lead in prayer in all situations where men and women are gathered together, why do not these men have to lift up their hands during the prayer? What kind of consistency is there in saying that the first portion of this text must be altered, added to, and then adhered to, but that no one must adhere to the last portion? There is no sound hermeneutic that would allow anyone to so interpret this passage. Where does God give anyone the right to bind human additions and a skewed interpretation onto the first part of this verse to get a doctrine and to refuse to even acknowledge and then utterly disobey the second half of the verse?

It must be noted and acknowledged that “worship service,” “class,” “devotional,” “prayer meetings,” “home Bible study,” “lead,” “males only,” are not found in the entire context. Men add them, contrary to God’s revelation, in order to justify their doctrine and their practice. Does the Church of Christ speak where the Bible speaks here, or does the Church add to and take from the Bible to accommodate its practice? I Timothy is not about worship, so the church is forced to add to this scripture, “lead,” “only,” and “worship services,” and delete “lifting up holy hands” to get its doctrine and practice. But logic would forbid women from ever leading prayer in any place because we actually teach that scripture says that only men may lead in prayer in every place.

To understand I Timothy 2:8-15, we should recognize a number of problems which must have existed regarding relationships that Paul addressed here. In this letter, he first said there is a need to respect civil authority. So he said, “Pray for kings and those in authority,” 2:1. The “man only” rule does not apply to this prayer. The letter was written to a man. Should we conclude women can’t pray for kings? Children of elders were to be in subjection, 3:4. Deacons were to rule their children in their houses as well, 3:12. Elders were not to be rebuked, but respected, 5:1. The younger men were to be treated as brethren, 5:1. The elderly women were to be treated as mothers and the younger women as sisters, 5:2. Widows were to be honored, 5:3. Children were to take care of their own kinfolk who were widows, 5:4. A man was to take care of his own household, 5:6, and on goes Paul’s discussion of relationships and responsibilities which each member of the church had toward others. Servants were to

honor their masters, 6:1-2. The rich were to respect the poor, 6:17,19. It is clear this book emphasizes relationships and personal behavior and that it is not about worship services.

Some will argue from 3:14-15 that these instructions to Timothy were about behavior in the “house of God” and that thus they are about worship. Such a conclusion is in direct opposition to the total instruction of the entire book, which is “seven days a week” behavior.

Threaded through all of I Timothy there is a discussion of human relationships and how we should behave one with another. If, in many of these relationships, there is to be submission or subjection, why do we think it is strange that Paul would not address husbands and wives and their relationships in 2:8-15? In verse 8 he writes, “I desire that men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands without wrath and disputing.” The Greek word for men here is “andras,” and it can be translated “men” or “husbands.” It is the same word found in I Corinthians 14:35 in the passage, “ask their husbands at home.” I think it is interesting to note that had the translators translated “gune” to wives and “andras” to husbands, instead of men and women, no one would have been hung up on this issue. There is no other Biblical reason, or even the slightest Biblical suggestion, that only men should pray or lead in prayer in every place. If we translated the Greek for “men” and “women” to husbands and wives as the translators did in the following passages, we would decide that it was to husbands and wives that Paul wrote verses 8-15. Notice John 4:18; I Corinthians 14:35; Ephesians 5:22,25; Colossians 3:18-19; I Timothy 3:2; Titus 2:4-5; and I Peter 3:7. If Paul wanted citizens, servants, widows, the young, the aged, the elders, and others who were under someone in authority or who were in authority to act in certain ways, would he not also want husbands (andras) and wives (gunaikas) to also act in certain ways?

Now let’s translate andras (husbands) for “men” in this passage, and see how husbands would relate to the context, rather than imposing our presumed and forced conclusions that Paul is talking about men praying and leading in prayer in all worship services. “I would that husbands pray in every place lifting up holy hands without wrath and disputing.” What kind of persons does Paul say husbands should be? Men of prayer - ones who pray everywhere. They are not to be filled with wrath. Husbands were not to have doubts and disputes as they prayed, just as James instructed others to pray in James 1:16. We must emphasize again, there is not the remotest suggestion that the prayer here involves any kind of worship service, or devotional, or lectureship, or chapel service, or Bible class, or home Bible study. Rather, he is simply saying to husbands, “I want you Christian husbands to be men of prayer wherever you are, and I want you to lift up holy hands without wrath or disputing.”

In verses 9-15 Paul’s letter would read like this, if we translated “gune” to “wives,” in the place of “women”: “In like manner that wives adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly raiment; but (which becometh wives professing godliness) through good works. Let a wife learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a wife to teach, nor to have dominion over a husband, but to be in quietness. For Adam was first formed, followed

by Eve. Adam was not beguiled, but the wife, being beguiled, hath fallen into transgression. But she shall be saved through her childbearing, if she continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety.” In verse 8, Paul had told husbands some qualities he wanted in them, and then he told wives in verse 9 how they should dress and how they should behave and how they should care for their hair, and he emphasizes that good works are the things that wives should be noted for. In verse 11, these wives were told to learn in quietness. The King James version mistakenly translated in Greek, “hesuchia,” “silence” instead of “quietness.” When students of the King James version and some other early versions read “silence” in this passage, they connected it with the “silence” in I Corinthians 14:34 and concluded that one passage fortified the other for silence in the church on the part of women. But, in truth, the word translated “silence” in I Corinthians 14:34 is “sigao,” which means “to hold one’s peace, to be silent,” or “to cease chattering or babbling.” But it doesn’t mean “to be mute or muzzled.” Remember that is the Greek word, “phimoo.”

Later English translations correctly use the word “quietness” instead of “silence,” thus weakening further the argument for silencing women in the worship services. But we must remember that a worship service is not even suggested in this context. Rather, Paul is telling wives how to dress and how to behave.

The same Greek word for “quietness” used in II Thessalonians 3:12 says, “Now, them that are such, we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their bread.” No one would argue that these men and women could not talk while they worked and ate.

In I Thessalonians 4:11 Paul used the same root word when he said, “Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and work with your own hands.” We do not believe that these people could not talk or speak while they worked.

I Timothy 2:2 reads, “That we might lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity.” We will not argue that talking or speaking is forbidden in this tranquil or quiet life.

Then, what was Paul saying to these wives in I Timothy 2:9? He was saying that wives were to be quiet-spirited, not loud and brassy as they lived in subjection or submission to their husbands.

Women may, and do, teach their husbands or other men, but not in a way that creates confusion, disturbs the peace, or forces their husbands into submission. If women may teach their unbaptized husbands who voluntarily allow it without being guilty of exercising unscriptural authority over them, they likewise may teach believing men.

In verse 12 we read, “I permit not a woman to teach nor have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness.” Some have decided that the first part of the verse, “I permit not a woman to teach,” means a woman should never teach a man under any circumstances. This makes the rule absolute. But I know of no one who practices the

absolute position that a woman is not to teach any man. We know she can teach and did teach, for Priscilla had apostolic approval in teaching Apollos. Philip's daughters taught. Many women joined Paul as fellow workers in teaching and preaching the gospel.

Some say it means a woman cannot teach a man in a public Bible class or in a public worship service. We know this is not true, since women prophesied both in I Corinthians 11 and I Corinthians 14 to the edification of the whole church when it assembled together. Women are also permitted to teach and edify in public Bible classes today. We know we allow women to teach and admonish in song because of our traditional interpretation of key scriptures. Women were to be teachers of that which is good, and obviously at any opportunity (Titus 2:3-4). Certainly older women were not limited to teaching only younger women. The Great Commission was not limited to men. We send women on missions every year.

Paul instructed Timothy to commit what he had learned to faithful men (anthropois) that they might teach others also, II Timothy 2:2. Anthropois was the generic word for men which included male and female. So, Paul had already given his approval for men and women both to learn and teach others, regardless of sex.

Hebrews 5:12 reads, "For when, by reason of time, ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that someone teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God: and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food." By reviewing these scriptures, we can conclude that women or wives should teach the gospel anywhere or at any time. Expediency is the only limiting factor, and it also applies to men.

"I permit not a woman to teach" stands alone in the Greek, but few doubt that it is connected to the phrase following, "nor to have dominion over a man." The Greek word for "dominion" is "authenteo." I cannot find that it is used in any other New Testament passage. It literally means to exercise authority on one's own account, to act on one's own authority. Its early usage meant to use one's own armour to kill. It had its roots in the practice of infanticide - killing one's own. As it changed to the concept of dominion or usurping authority, it still referred to dominion over one's "own." Thus, in this text, it refers to the wives not exercising authority over their "own" husbands, not over men who are not their own.

If Paul really meant "women," and not "wives," were not to teach or exercise authority over men, what were the limits? Was teaching and exercising authority limited to church services? The text does not so indicate. Can a female college professor teach men English, History, Greek, or Science, but not teach in the religion department? Or does the prohibition apply to all teaching? God didn't reveal the answer; we decide the answer based only on human reasoning and tradition, not law. In essence, we vote on when and where women can teach and exercise authority over men. Whose reasoning will we accept as God's law?

Can a woman be a supervisor of believing and unbelieving men in a secular job, in a government position, or in the military? Is a Christian woman forbidden to supervise or have authority over her Christian farm hands? Must a Christian woman who owns a farm or factory submit to all her male employees?

This text does not restrict the teaching or the dominion to the church or the church activities. So, how do we decide where to draw the line? Human “reasoning” is the answer. The command, in its current translation, sounds absolute, doesn’t it? Christian women, those subject to Christian teaching, were not to teach, nor were they to exercise authority over men, period! That would include authority over men at work or in classrooms on the campuses of schools and colleges.

We permit women who own farms and businesses to teach, train and exercise authority over Christian and non-Christian men whom they employ. It is evident that we must have misapplied and misunderstood Paul’s instruction in this passage.

Now, let’s see how this passage reads when we translate “woman” to “wife” and “man” to “husband” in verse 12. “But I permit not a wife to teach, nor to have authority over her husband, but to be in quietness.”

Now, what is Paul really saying? He is saying, “Wives are not permitted to teach (over) or exercise authority over your own husbands, but to be in quietness.” Such a translation agrees perfectly with Ephesians 5:22, Colossians 3:18, and I Peter 3:1. This passage is not about authority or delegating authority in the church. It is about wives dominating their husbands.

Again, I emphasize “quietness” here is not “silence.” But a wife is to be quiet-spirited and learn without being loud, brassy, pushy, and boisterous. She is to act quietly. This conclusion would very well correspond with I Corinthians 14:35. The instruction of two passages would thus be: Wives are not to rule husbands at home or rule over or interrogate their husbands publicly at church. Rather, they were to live and learn in quietness and in peaceful ways in family relationships, in church, and in the world. Likewise, Paul would not approve loud, brassy, pushy and boisterous men. All Christians are to lead the same quiet and tranquil lives (I Timothy 2:2).

Then, Paul continued his instructions to confirm the argument that this passage refers to the husband and wife relationship and not to a man and woman relationship. “For Adam was first formed and then Eve.” Their relationship was a husband and wife relationship, not a man and woman relationship.

In verse 15, Paul made it unmistakably clear that the passage refers to husbands and wives, and not to men and women. He writes, “But she (the woman addressed above) shall be saved in child bearing.” Now whom does God permit, and whom would Paul permit to bear children? Single women? Widows? Divorcees? Or married women? We all know that in God’s kingdom only wives were to bear children. So it is unmistakably clear that Paul was speaking to husbands and wives and how they were to act in their relationships.

The “she” in verse 15 is the same “gune” of the earlier verse. The “she” is a woman who bears children. The “she” who bears the children is the wife of the man who is to be a man of prayer, who lifts holy hands without wrath or disputing, while praying everywhere, obviously a husband. When we compare this reading with I Peter 3:1-7, we see an almost identical wording and instruction for wives’ behavior. The only difference is that Peter concludes his passage with instruction on prayer to husbands, instead of beginning as Paul does, with instructions on it.

In like manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, even if they obey not the word, they may without the word be gained by the behavior of their wives: Beholding your chaste behavior coupled with fear, whose adorning let it not be outward adorning of braiding the hair and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel: But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price. For, after this manner the holy women also, who hoped in God, adorned themselves being in subjection to their own husbands: as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord: whose daughter, ye are if ye do well, and are not put in fear or any terror. Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor to the woman (wife) as unto the weaker vessel as being also joint heirs of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered.

Here he says, “You are to live in such a way, [no doubt with holy hands, without wrath and disputing] that your prayers be not hindered.” And in I Timothy 2:8 Paul says, “Pray everywhere” and live in such a way that your prayers will not be hindered. They give similar instructions on husbands’ prayer. In this passage in I Peter, wives were to try to convert their husbands by teaching them the word. That’s no prohibition on teaching their husbands, let alone other men. But, if teaching the word failed, perhaps then, he says, their behavior and manner of dress might cause their husbands to be won.

Peter also speaks of a meek and quiet spirit, not a silent one. “Quiet” is the same root Greek word as is used in I Timothy 2:11-12. Peter also emphasized respect for civil authority just as Paul did in his letter to Timothy: “Be subject to civil authorities,” 2:13-14. Servants were to be in subjection, 2:18-19. Wives were to be in subjection, 3:1,7. Younger people were to be in subjection, 5:5. There are many similarities between Paul’s letter of I Timothy and Peter’s first letter in regard to relationships of Christians, of mates, of older people, of younger people. This very similarity adds great weight to the argument that the use of “gune’s” and “aner’s” is referring to husbands and wives in I Timothy 2 the same as they refer to husbands and wives and their relationships in I Peter 3.

This conclusion also adds weight to the argument that the early translators may have used their own prejudices when they translated silence for quietness into text, just as they translated “baptizo” to “baptize” instead of “immerse.” To translate it immerse would have gone against their practice of sprinkling and pouring as baptism. We should also note here that Peter told his audience, men and women, in the 15th verse of this same chapter: “But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord, being ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is within you.” “Every man” includes believers and unbelievers, Jews and Greeks, bond and free, males and females. By answering questions regarding their faith, whether we translate the first

portion of this chapter “women” or “wives,” women would still be teaching (every man) through their answers. Women are not excluded from giving answers in public assemblies or in privacy.

There is no compelling reason textually to translate the Greek words in I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2 to “man and woman,” instead of “husband and wife,” as we have indicated, but there are very good textual reasons for translating these words “husband and wife.” If they had been so translated in early versions of the English scriptures, they would agree with all other scriptures regarding the husband and wife relationship and who is to be in submission to whom. This would also not have had Paul making one statement in chapter 14 of I Corinthians, which contradicts many other of his clear statements which approve women’s participation in evangelism and public worship.

Is it not strange that we can translate “andras” men and then add “only lead in prayer in every assembly where men are present,” and turn around and take away “lifting holy hands” in verse 8? We then conclude that women are to be silent from verses 11 and 12 even though the correct translation is quiet as admitted by all Bible scholars. Furthermore, we conclude that if a woman leads in anyway it is an exercise of dominion or usurpation of authority. But there is no Biblical text which suggests that anyone, male or female, is exercising dominion or usurping authority just because he or she delegated the authority anymore than a 12-year-old boy usurps authority when he leads, especially when any assembly of any kind is not so much alluded to , let alone mentioned, in the entire context.

Stranger still, than our adding to verses 8, 11, and 12 to get our tradition and doctrine, is the utter disregard to the clear teaching on women’s or wives’ dress in verse 9. When has some preacher, elder, or editor demanded that women with braided hair or with a permanent wave come to church with straight hair? When has one demanded that women quit wearing pearls or gold? When have we demanded anyone to quit wearing expensive apparel?

If this scripture applies to assemblies, as many falsely assume it does, then may the same women dress immodestly, have fancy hairdos, wear pearls and gold outside the assembly?

If verse 8 limits praying or leading in prayer to men only, it prohibits women from lifting holy hands, since this instruction is to men only, according to our tradition. If women are forbidden from prayer by this verse, and therefore from lifting holy hands (since we claim the instruction is to men only), may women lift unholy hands to God?

We cannot maintain our integrity and add to, take from, and then totally overlook the wresting of this text in an attempt to bolster our traditional application. Wise, honest and responsible Christians will recognize this, and cease teaching false conclusions from this text.

The only logical conclusion we can reach from this text is that husbands should be men of prayer everywhere and lift holy hands without wrath and disputing or doubting, and that wives should dress modestly, not braid hair, wear pearls or expensive clothing, be quiet spirited. They are not to teach, usurp authority, or exercise dominion over their husbands.

To conclude otherwise is to emasculate this text and misuse it to justify our traditions. The apparent contradiction of the teaching in I Corinthians 14:34 with chapter 11 on women praying and prophesying in the church is hereby further explained.

# Chapter 16

## *Applying Other Scriptures*

The Jews killed Christ to stop His message. Peter, at first, would not accept the fact that the Gentiles could be saved. Do we do the same thing when we limit able and informed women in teaching and preaching Christ to the lost? Or building up the saints? Or encouraging the fainthearted?

Ephesians 2:20 says, "The household of God was built upon the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone." There are New Testament prophets, like Philip's daughters. Corinthian women were instructed to seek the better gift, that of prophecy. Upon them the church was also built.

I Thessalonians 4:8 reads, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Were men only to teach these words and give comfort? Or could women use these words regarding the second coming to comfort men and women alike? It is obvious that all the brethren in the church were to do the comforting of one another, privately and publicly.

If these brethren, by reading and teaching, comforted the congregation about the second coming of Christ, on what logical basis would we conclude that this instruction to "one another" would be any different from the singing to "one another" in Ephesians and Colossians, which we claim included women speaking in song in worship settings? If, in the assembly, women can teach others in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, why could they not also be included in this command to "comfort one another" with the words of the apostle Paul in a public assembly? To do otherwise is to be selective in application of similar rules. Certainly the command was not that "men only" do the comforting with Paul's words, nor was such comforting restricted to private gatherings any more than singing was.

In Ephesians 5:11 Paul says, "Wherefore exhort one another and build each other up." Each Christian, man and woman, was involved in this command. The exhortation and the building up were obviously to be done by both men and women. There is no more indication that the building up and the exhortation were limited to men, than singing was limited to men. Paul concluded this verse by saying, "Even as also ye do." Every church member is included. To suggest that women could not be doing their exhorting and building up in both public and private is to "wrest" the scripture, defy logic, and go against what we allow in our interpretation of Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3.

"And we exhort you brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all, see that none render unto any evil, but always follow after that which is good one toward another and toward all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you, quench not the spirit, despise not prophesying, prove all things, hold fast to that which is good, abstain from every form of evil." (I Thessalonians

5:14-22). No one would argue that “men only” were to exhort the brethren. Paul instructed “Thessalonian Christians,” men and women, to exhort the brethren. And, the same group was to admonish the disorderly. The same group was to pray without ceasing and give thanks in everything. They were not to quench the spirit, nor despise prophesying; all these activities were done by men and women.

The same reasoning which allows women to speak to men under “one another” in the assembly in song will allow women to “speak to one another” in fulfilling all of the above instructions by the apostle Paul. Today, most of this is already done in public Bible classes, rather than other public worship services of the church, by women. But it is done. Those who were to pray without ceasing and to give thanks in all situations were not men only. Who was to “lead” in prayer is not remotely suggested, here or anywhere else. The word “lead” is not used in the New Testament as we use it most often.

Paul orders them not to despise prophesying. He did not say “prophesying by men.” What if there were women prophets? Were they forbidden to prophesy? What if no men had the gift of prophecy and women did? Could the Thessalonians despise their prophecies because they were uttered by women? God was the one who gave her the gift in the first place, so the church could profit. By despising the prophesying of a woman who had the gift, one would despise God’s revelation and reject Paul’s instruction in this passage.

Someone will reply, “But if she prophesies she is usurping authority.” This is not so. God gave her a message of prophecy she uttered to the benefit of the church. They listened to her prophecy. There is no wresting of authority from anyone. By giving women the gift of prophecy, He gave them the authority to speak. You can’t get any authority higher than this. Telling God’s truth in any situation is not exercising authority over people. They voluntarily come to listen; they can voluntarily leave. Only tradition calls this an exercise of dominion - the Bible does not.

I Thessalonians 5:27, “I adjure you, by the Lord, that this epistle be read by all the brethren.” Again, we must emphasize that women were permitted to sing, by the instruction to sing, and should also be allowed to follow this instruction on reading. Only tradition precludes them from doing so, not scripture or logic. Would women be restricted to reading it to themselves while alone? Or to a group of other women only? To illiterate brethren? Or to all brethren? This scripture does not place a restriction on women reading this epistle publicly or privately.

I Corinthians 16:15 reads, “Now I beseech ye brethren (ye know the house of Stephanas, they were the first fruits of Achaia, and they have set themselves to minister to the saints), that ye also be in subjection unto such, and to everyone who helpeth in the work and laboreth.” This leading household was a ministering household, and one would well imagine that the wife or perhaps the daughters were involved with men in its ministry and leadership. Paul included the whole household. He further says that they had set themselves (plural - more than Stephanas himself) to the ministry of the saints, and told the Corinthian church to be in subjection to such, and to everyone, including

male and female members, who work and labor. Women would certainly be included in the command if they also helped in the work and labored. The only reason to argue that they would be in submission to Stephanas and other men only, would be to maintain our false assumptions from the applicable texts. Such a conclusion does not come from the text.

In I Corinthians 16:19 he writes, "Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord with the church that is in their house." This husband-and-wife team was involved in the work of the church. If Priscilla had the knowledge and the skills to help teach one who was mighty in the scriptures like Apollos, why would anyone doubt that she also taught men and women of lesser knowledge who came to her house for worship and study?

In Galatians 3:27,28 Paul writes, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female, for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus." This passage clearly teaches that Jews have no special privilege over Greeks since both have the same baptism and both have put on the same Christ. It is true that the Jews had the greater knowledge of scripture, but Greeks could still preach, teach, etc. Free men have no special privilege over bond men, for they too put on the same Christ in baptism. It is true that slaves were subject to masters, but they could still read, teach, prophesy, etc. in worship. How could we thus conclude that the equality between men and women was somehow different, since both male and female had put on the same Christ through baptism and had enjoyed the same spiritual gifts? Women could speak in tongues and prophesy, teach, sing, and pray right along side free men, bond men, Jews and Greeks.

Paul says all of the above are "one." If "one," why should each not respect the others' gifts and talents and allow them to be used for the benefit of all? Certainly Gentiles, who knew the word, could teach Jews who had accepted Christ. Masters could teach slaves, and slaves could teach masters. And males could teach females, and females could teach males. They are all one in Christ Jesus, and any one of them could edify and teach the other.

Would anyone argue that a sister in the Galatian church, who might have had an early privilege of learning the truth about being saved by grace rather than works, could not teach this truth to Galatian Christians who did not understand it? If she moved elsewhere and some false concepts about justification by works of the law were held, would God want her to remain silent? Would she let heresy flourish because she was to be in submission to uninformed men and thus be forbidden to teach?

In Galatians 6:1 Paul writes, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a trespass, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, looking to yourselves lest thou also be tempted." Would anyone argue that spiritual women in a small church would have to remain silent and in submission if there were only a couple of men in the congregation and both of them were ignorant, in error in doctrine, and were living unholy lives? What is applicable and permissible in a small church is likewise applicable and

permissible in a big church. A godly woman has the same responsibility to restore the fallen and to keep the life and the doctrine of the church pure as men have.

In Ephesians 3:14 Paul writes, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the father from whom every family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through His spirit in the inward man. That Christ might dwell in your hearts through faith, to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length, and height, and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge that ye may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Paul, in the above prayer, included all Christians at Ephesus, men and women. To this mixed group of saints he taught in chapter 4:11-13 that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers in the church were there for the perfecting of the saints.

Would anyone argue that his prayer for all the saints in Ephesus for inner strength through the spirit was limited to male members? Godly, informed, spirit-empowered women had a role in the ministries and the maturation of the church. Women could teach against or cry out against the evils of vanity, darkened understanding, alienation, ignorance, hard hearts, and lasciviousness condemned in verses 17-19 of chapter 4. They could, and they should.

In Ephesians 5:1-14, Paul addresses a number of sins from foolish talking to fornication to other unfruitful works of darkness, and he tells the church to reprove such. He does in no way limit those who do the reproofing to men. In fact, all Christians have the responsibility.

Ephesians 5:22-23 deals with wives being in subjection to their husbands. It is interesting that Paul said, "Wives, be in subjection to your own husbands." This strengthens the argument that the women who were to be in subjection were only to be in subjection to their "own" husbands, not to other husbands in the church, just as they were to ask their "own" husbands at home, in I Corinthians 14. The men of the church have no right to force women of the church to be in subjection to them. My wife isn't in subjection to another woman's husband! This also strengthens the argument of a mistranslation of "gune" and "aner" in chapters 11 and 14 of I Corinthians, and in I Timothy 2. Just as in this passage from Ephesians, husband and wife would be the consistent, logical, and preferred translation in the three texts with which we are dealing.

Ephesians 5:22-33 clarifies what "as also saith the law" means. It is quite clear that a Christian wife is to submit to and recognize her husband as her head from this passage, as did the law. In every organization, someone must be ultimately in charge, if it is to stay together and function well. So with the home. The only requirement in the law was that Eve was to be ruled over by her "own" husband, Adam, nothing more.

Headship in the home, however, does not mean in the slightest way to suggest trampling on the rights of the wife. In fact, just the opposite is true. Paul said,

“Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for it,” Ephesians 5:25. The head of the house is to have a self-sacrificing love for the wife.

The husband is to “love his wife as his own body,” verse 28. “Nevertheless, do ye also love each one his own wife even as himself, and let the wife see that she fear (or reverence) her husband,” verse 33. To love one’s wife as one’s own body is to be considerate of her needs, as a husband is of his own needs. To “fear” is to respect or reverence one’s husband to whom God has given ultimate responsibility in ruling the home.

There is nothing in this passage which makes a wife inferior or a husband superior. Nor were husbands made inferior because wives taught them. Rather, this passage from Ephesians is God’s instruction on how the relationship of the husband and the wife should be viewed. Husbands should not oppress their wives nor suppress their God-given talents; neither should the church.

In Ephesians 6:13-20 Paul writes, “Wherefore take up the whole armour of God.” The battle is not to be fought by male church members only. Women are also to gird themselves for battle. They, too, are to take “the sword of the spirit which is the word of God.” If a godly Christian woman has an opportunity to exhort, teach, reprove, and rebuke evil men, men in error, or ignorant men, who would or could believe that God would want her to retreat from the battle in silence and let evil, error, and ignorance prevail to the destruction of men’s souls? If Christians, male or female, can teach, exhort, and rebuke evil non-Christian men, why could they not teach, exhort and rebuke Christian men in error?

Women, just like the apostle Paul, should want fellow Christians to pray that they too might “make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:9). Can we believe that God would want men to remain in error and be lost, and that able, gifted women stand by maintaining silence? If they, by opening their mouths, saved one man, Jesus said, “that soul would be worth more than all the world.” What scripture or logic would restrain women from preaching and teaching truth, thereby converting or restoring men?

Do we really think that God wants women to snatch souls like Apollos from Satan only in private classes; and that the same God prohibits her from snatching souls from Satan in a “humanly” defined and circumscribed public service?

Could women, if given the opportunity, speak up for truth and righteousness, with God’s approval, in a Presbyterian church? A Baptist church? A Methodist church? A Catholic church? A Unification Church? Then why not in any Church of Christ with God’s approval? Would God prefer that any errors that may be taught to the above listed religious groups be allowed to prevail because of the “silence” argument of I Corinthians 14:35? Or would He want women to instruct all people more perfectly in the way of righteousness? Why would He then prohibit the same women from instructing the Churches of Christ more perfectly in the way of righteousness?

God would not prefer that error, in any church, be allowed to prevail because tradition says informed women were commanded to keep silent and not to teach men.

In Philippians 1:9-10 Paul says, "And this I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and discernment, so that ye may approve what is excellent." God would not want only Christian men to so abound. What if brothers did not so abound and Christian sisters did? Whom would God want to do the public and private teaching in the church at Philippi: knowledgeable, discerning women or ignorant, undiscerning men, or both knowledgeable and discerning men and women?

In regard to the preaching of Christ from insincere motives, Paul says, "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea and will rejoice." If Paul could rejoice that Christ was preached from impure motives, how could we believe he would condemn women for preaching Christ with pure motives?

Throughout the book of Colossians, Paul encourages the church to grow spiritually and to watch out for false teachers and fleshly pursuits. He reiterates the charge to wives (gune) to be in subjection to husbands (aner), not men, in 3:18.

The whole church was to continue in singing and giving of thanks in 3:16-17. They were to continue to be steadfast in prayer in 4:2. In 4:6 he says, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt that ye may know how to answer every one." Certainly both men and women had an opportunity to teach and instruct and to give the right kind of answers to everyone. And the "everyone" certainly included men in the church as well as women. This was a general command.

When Paul concluded this letter, 4:10-17, he again listed the fellow workers and included "Nymphas and the church that is in their house." There is textual evidence that this passage could have been translated, "Nymphas and the church at her house." If so, it is another bit of evidence that yet another woman, who was a fellow worker worthy of Paul's salutation, had a church meeting at her house. There are tens of thousands of husbands and wives who are "fellow workers," doing the same things in a business they operate and in the home they live in, with no distinction in roles played. Why would we conclude that women could not be in the public ministry as were men in Paul's labors?

I have heard some argue, "But God's ways are not man's ways, and therefore, He has a good reason of His own for keeping women silent." Such is a "cop out" and rejects the logical implications of the great commission, the mercy of God, and these passages.

### **I Peter 4:7-11**

But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore of sound mind, and be sober unto prayer; above all things be fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins; using hospitality one to another without murmuring; according as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; if anyone speaketh, speaking as it were the oracles of God; if any man minister, ministering as the strength which God supplieth; that in all things God may be

glorified through Jesus Christ who is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever.  
Amen.

Peter again seems to reiterate in synopsis form the message of Paul in I Corinthians 11-14. "Be sober unto prayer," verse 8. "Above all things be fervent in your love," verse 8. "Each one hath received a gift," verse 10. "Use your gift to minister it among yourselves," verse 10. And, whether it is speaking the oracles of God or ministering, it is to be done to the glory of God.

There is no justification to conclude that speaking, as it were, the oracles of God was a man's domain any more than was using hospitality in verse 9 or being sober unto prayer and fervent in love, verses 7-8. In I Peter 5:5 he says, "Yea all of you gird yourselves with humility to serve one another." The greatest service any man or woman could render to others would be teaching them the unsearchable riches of Christ, saving the lost and strengthening the saved. God would have a Christian make these unsearchable riches known to any person, man or woman, anytime, anywhere that he or she has the opportunity.

Peter says, in II Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. In verse 18, he admonishes the Christians to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Our longsuffering God would certainly want a Christian woman, who had grown in the grace and knowledge of God, to teach those who had not come to repentance and to teach those who had not grown in the grace and knowledge as she had, regardless if it were a man or a woman.

### **Jude 3**

Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you, exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.

There is no limit in this scripture or in logic that men only were the ones to contend earnestly for their faith, nor does Jude limit those who "snatch the lost out of a fire" in verse 22, to men. Women can debate issues and contend for truth as well as men.

# Chapter 17

## ***From Then Until Now: Women in the Restoration Movement***

Prior to granting American women the right to vote, the prevailing attitude of American men, in and out of the church, was that women did not have the capacity to make informed decisions on matters of state. Moreover, they could vote through their husbands (their heads) and through their sons.

If women wanted to tell the story of the cross, it also could be done through their husbands and sons.

But thoughtful Christians argue that the church and the world would be better off if women were allowed to teach, preach and evangelize just as women in the New Testament period did. Most of the men of the church have not only argued such to be unscriptural, but have belittled such suggestions. They have even claimed that women were too weak to baptize and meet the rigors of the ministry. But history has proven them wrong.

Clare Hale Babcock challenged this concept and by her 75th birthday had baptized three hundred souls.

Sadie McCoy Crank established fifteen churches in Southwest Missouri, baptized over five thousand souls and conducted over one thousand funerals.

Various leaders among the disciples' wing of the Restoration Movement stood on both sides of the issues. Alexander Campbell, founder of Bethany College, allowed women to enroll, but the prevailing philosophy was that their training should be that which aided them to serve as wives and mothers. It was so argued on scriptural grounds.

Some schools would not allow women to attend Bible classes. They later changed, but allowed women to enter only after the young men were seated, and made them leave the classroom ahead of the young men.

David Lipscomb was so opposed to co-education that he declared that Southern girls who attended these institutions returned "prostitutes." He later recanted and allowed Nashville Bible School to admit women.

His answer to questions in the *Gospel Advocate* showed a gradual change of mind in his attitude on women's role in the church. Late in life, when asked about women speaking and teaching in the church, he replied by quoting I Corinthians 14:34-35, and referred the questioner to I Timothy 2:8-15. "Yet," he wrote, "Women have the right to teach those who know less than themselves; Priscilla and Aquila taught Apollos (Acts 18:24-26). So, I am sure that a woman may teach the Bible to young and old, male and female, at the meeting house, at home, at a neighbor's house, on Sunday or

Monday or any other day of the week, if they know less than she does, if she will do it in a quiet, modest, womanly way.” He went on to say he had seen wrongs committed by women but that they still had the right to teach men. (Page 736, *Questions Answered* by David Lipscomb and Sewell.)

No doubt Lipscomb would have also admitted that he had seen many wrongs committed by men.

Lipscomb had come a long way, and I am also sure he would not have approved of a man teaching in a wrong way, but would have approved of his teaching with quietness, modesty and in a gentlemanly way, just as he expected ladies to do.

C. R. Nichol, a well-known preacher, debater, and Bible instructor in two of our Christian colleges, wrote a very enlightening book, *God's Woman*. It had little influence on the churches of Christ because the church was still steeped in the same traditions of most other churches. Culture, power structures, and the political pressure to defend and maintain the doctrinal status quo prevailed. The doctrines preached and defended by the more prominent and dominant preachers and editors held sway.

But now change is in the air, and I list some of the changes which have occurred that no one would have believed possible in 1930.

Velma West, wife of Dr. W. B. West, Chairman of the Pepperdine College Department of Bible, was employed by the Bible Department to teach New Testament Greek to preachers and aspiring preachers. She finished her career at Harding College. Hundreds of preachers learned the Bible in its original language from this Christian woman.

Single Christian women have gone to Africa, Europe, Asia, South America, and the islands of the seas as fully supported missionaries. They evangelized, built churches, and established camps to instruct and train men and women.

The number of women who were added to the faculties of Christian colleges has increased. Many chair departments with men in submission to them.

In the early 80's, Faulkner University (formerly Alabama Christian College) in Montgomery, employed Dr. Linda Brook as Academic Dean. From 1983 to 1988 all teachers, male and female, were subject to her.

Columbia Christian College appointed Dr. June Breninger as Dean of Students. She exercised authority over all students, male and female, while serving in that role.

Dr. Joyce Harding has served as the Associate Academic Dean for three years at Lubbock Christian University and has exercised authority over all faculty members, male and female.

Pepperdine University appointed D'Esta Guild Love to be Dean of Students and all students are subject to her supervision.

Oklahoma Christian University appointed Barbara Tucker to be Dean of Students in 1990. All students, male and female, are subject to her.

These institutions have charged these Christian women to supervise men, to enforce the campus rules of Christian conduct, and to discipline students who misbehave.

JoAnne North, wife of Dr. Stafford North, Oklahoma Christian University's Executive Vice President, has been teaching a Bible course in "Religious Education for Children" for years. Both men and women take the course.

In 1988, a well-known evangelist and his teenage daughter addressed the combined adult Bible classes at the College Church of Christ, in Oklahoma City, on Wednesday night. Many reported it to be one of the most memorable and beneficial prayer meetings in their lifetime.

Joy McMillon served as managing editor of the *Christian Chronicle* from 1983-1989. She and her husband Lynn, who is a professor of Bible at Oklahoma Christian University, appear on seminars together as team teachers.

They, along with Carl Brecheen and Deanna Beauchamp, Randy and Camilla Becton, Ed and Jane Coates, Tom and Sandra Milholland, Bruce and Charlotte Davis, Royce and Pam Money, Steve Hare and Jeri Pfeifer, all appeared on the National Family Conference in Dallas, in September of 1990. This conference was sponsored by the Highland Church of Christ, in Abilene, Texas. These church leaders did team-teach to mixed audiences. During last year's conference, one woman addressed the entire assembly.

Such teaching on the Christian home by both men and women to both men and women apparently was accepted by such brotherhood figures as Paul Faulkner, Harold Hazelip, Glenn Owen, James Cail, Mike Armour, and Jim Mankin.

Cynthia Rowland McClure has spoken in chapel at most of our Christian colleges and universities, at some three or four times.

Michelle Thompson was not only the president of the student body at Oklahoma Christian University, but she gave a baccalaureate address for her senior class.

Irma Lee Batey, Marcie Lee Bircher, Patricia Burk McNicol, and Peggy Spoons West, all serve on the "Great Songs of the Church" hymnal committee and help determine which songs will be included or excluded from the book which many churches will use for worship. Serving with these Christian ladies are other brotherhood leaders like Bill Teague, Tony Ash, Loyd A. Deal, R. Stafford North, Thomas Olbricht, and Ken Davis, Jr.

A score or more of women serve on the boards of trustees of our colleges and universities. Helen Young is probably the most prominent one. Helen has been an effective church leader through her writings, lectures and board memberships. She is a

senior editor of a daily devotional guide, *Power for Today*, and consulting editor of the *Twentieth Century Christian* magazine. Tens of thousands of people are led in devotions and are instructed by these two publications. She was one of those who paid tribute to Helen Pepperdine and Howard White at their funerals in 1990. Mrs. Pepperdine gave the commencement address at Pepperdine University at least once, and was a life member of its Board of Regents.

The *Christian Chronicle* carried a feature story in July 1990 about Sister Fanny Lewis, of Cleveland, who took the leadership in her community as a councilwoman and citizen and cleaned it up.

Erin Gammon, of Dallas, Texas, writes a column for *Action* each month. Her "Tips for Teachers" articles instruct both men and women.

Sammie Guild has been writing an article for *The Challenge of Africa* for years. It is a combination of information, inspiration and encouragement in missions.

The Brookline, Massachusetts, Church employed Micki Pulley as a minister, perhaps the first one in any Church of Christ. The church has had many visitors, and she says no one ever walked out on one of her sermons.

The Bering Drive congregation, in Houston, has approved the appointment of women as deacons serving in most acts of worship, including ushering, greeting visitors, receiving the offering, reading scriptures, leading prayers, leading singing, and serving communion.

The Dayspring Church of Christ in Edmond, Oklahoma, uses an entire family unit to wait on the table and serve communion, and women read scriptures in worship.

Tom and Sandra Milholland co-taught a class on Christian Counseling at Oklahoma Christian's Annual Lectureship in 1989. It was attended by elders, preachers, other men, and wives.

The Woodmont Hills Church in Nashville has eighteen ministries in which women work and, in some cases, head.

The Vandelia Church of Christ in Lubbock has a number of husband-wife teams heading committees and teaching.

In San Jacinto, California, Elizabeth Turner oversees the visitation program among other leadership roles.

Two ladies serves as treasurers of the Springfield, Arkansas, Church of Christ.

Jan Butcher often leads singing in Newport, Oregon.

Charlotte Greeson directs the family singer choral group at the Richland Hills Church in Fort Worth.

The Preston Road Church of Christ in Dallas appointed Beverly Williams to plan and coordinate a family retreat.

Pam Money is a full-time Christian counselor at the Highland Church in Abilene, Texas.

Peggy Blanton is a marriage/family counselor at the Central Church in Amarillo, Texas.

At the Biblical Studies Institute in Austin, Texas, Melinda Wurley is a Bible scholar and instructor.

It was reported via a half-page ad in the April 1990 *Christian Chronicle* that on June 24, 1990 there would be an international youth rally broadcast over CSN networks. It was to originate in Berlin and be broadcast to the Tarrant County Convention Center in Fort Worth and the Nashville Municipal Auditorium. Program moderators were to be Jeff Walling and Jay Utey. Audience interviewers were to be Deborah Brewer, of CBS, and Jan Elkins, of ABC. These women were involved in an international youth rally, where singing, prayer, and talking about faith would be broadcast across the nation. Thousands were expected to participate.

On May 19, 1990 a similar broadcast covered eight hours of a seminar on Christian solutions to family problems. Centers were used in Tulsa, Atlanta, Dallas, Nashville, and Columbus, Ohio. Four women participated in the Christian broadcast, instructing men and women on Christian family relations. They were Sandra Milholland, Pam Money, Grace Napier, and Patty C. Rowley.

In the August 1990 *Christian Chronicle* it was reported that two couples, the Pete Brazles and Curtis Shumards, were leaving for Honduras to work in medical missions there. They would join eight women who had been on the field for years. These eight women have been leading and serving the Honduran Church in a program named Predisan, a Spanish word meaning "to preach and heal" (Luke 9:25).

These women included Doris Clark, Amanda Madrid, June Hendricks, Debbie Dabbs, Katherine Deams, Celia Lett, Paula Haught and Sandra Warner Mesia. These Christian women are surely fulfilling the Lord's command to preach and heal.

Jule and Judy Miller conduct soul winning workshops for churches across the nation.

Calina Petruna Koval, a Soviet citizen, broadcasts, interprets, and announces from the World Christian Broadcasting studios in Franklin, Tennessee. In fact, she preaches to the USSR in the Russian language. Ed Baily, vice-president of WCBS, says, "Calina is a dedicated individual who has a growing sense of ministry and mission."

Dr. June Breninger, Ed.D, of Columbia Christian College, and Dr. Lucia Carpenter, M.D., participated in a CSN broadcast on what the scriptures say about

AIDS and the church's response to the problem. They joined Dr. J. P. Sanders, Prentice Meador, Larry Jones, television personality Marsha Haney and others. The program was broadcast September 1990 on a cable channel nation-wide.

Dr. Jerilyn Pfeifer is the director of Academic Services at Abilene Christian University.

Jane McMullin is Assistant to the Dean of the Graduate School at Abilene Christian University.

Hundreds of Christian women stand in front of congregations signing for the deaf. Others translate into the language of visitors. These women are teaching men and women publicly. I have had sermons translated to English by women in a dozen countries around the globe, from other languages.

### **Christian College Boards**

Many of our Christian Colleges have Christian women serving as trustees. These women were selected because they were competent as Christian leaders, or because they had money, or both.

Would honorable male trustees select women to serve with them as trustees only because they were big donors or potentially big donors? Or because they had the leadership skills and experience to help direct the college or university? Whichever motive causes the male directors to add female directors to those boards, these women are given great power to exercise in the Kingdom of God through their positions.

The following is just a portion of the power they exert when their votes help make decisions of profound significance:

They have the power to hire and fire presidents, deans, business managers, department heads, faculty and staff members.

The power of their vote can determine who may teach Bible on the campus, who will head the Bible Department, who will speak on its lectureships and even who may speak in chapel.

They determine what doctrines may or may not be taught on campus.

They have the power to fire employees who write books on such subjects as "evolution" or even "the women's role in the church."

They vote on school rules, dress codes, tenure and promotions. The list goes on.

Yet, the same men who select women to ostensibly direct the affairs of an institution with millions of dollars in budgets, thousands of students, and hundreds of employees, teach on Sunday that they must be subject to men and cannot even teach a baptized twelve-year-old boy in a Bible class. These ladies are not in subjection to

men; they help men rule giant Christian institutions through their votes. Do these women exercise their power and privilege to speak up, or do they defer their voting decisions to the superior men on the board? If they defer, then their judgment is not desired and their membership is based on the lowest common denominator - money.

In a situation where the male board members are divided on an issue, one female trustee would have the power to determine the outcomes of all of the above decisions.

Isn't it strange that those same board members would argue in Sunday School that the Bible requires women to be silent and in subjection and to exercise no authority over men? It is even more strange that a woman could vote on a multi-million dollar budget, hire and fire faculty members, help make decisions which affect the lives of hundreds of faculty members and thousands of students, but that she could not lead a prayer to God in the presence of any of those men or even teach a twelve-year-old baptized boy?

Most likely, not one among us would dare to suggest that the Christian college has less impact upon the Kingdom of God than does one congregation of the church or a dozen congregations. Yet, we have women voting on issues which greatly affect the total Kingdom. However, the same women could not vote in most local churches on whether to use "store-bought" or "home-made" loaves for communion.

Thoughtful and wise Christians surely find such reasoning ludicrous. Either the Bible approves of these Christian women having this power and the right to exercise authority, or their membership on these boards is an act of hypocrisy, unbecoming of forthright decent Christians. If they do not have the Biblical right to make decisions and to exercise authority over personnel, curriculum, rules, budgets, etc., this becomes the worst kind of exploitation of women and Bible teaching imaginable, i.e., they violate the scripture and their money is what puts them on the board. If they do have such power and do exercise such authority, it violates everything we claim I Corinthians 11 and I Timothy 2 teach. And, it is perpetuated and endorsed by some of the richest, most powerful and most influential men in our brotherhood. Can all these men be wrong? Is the word of God elastic enough to include or exclude any practice which will enable us to accommodate any violation of the silence and submission rules, as long as money comes in to support these institutions?

The Bible departments and administrations of these institutions of higher learning are committed to perpetuating the traditional interpretations and applications of the three short proof texts, while their boards violate them in selecting rich or powerful women to serve as directors of their institutions.

Surely we are smarter and more honorable than to even attempt to perpetuate such illogical and inconsistent practices.

# Chapter 18

## *Important Questions*

Does anyone believe women are less intelligent than men?

Does anyone believe women are less articulate than men?

Does anyone believe women are inferior teachers, readers, singers, speakers, or organizers than men?

Does anyone believe God would allow men and women to remain ignorant of His grace just because no man was present to teach or preach about it?

Does anyone believe the Bible prohibits a godly, mature Christian woman from teaching a class just because a baptized twelve-year-old boy is present?

Does anyone believe that just because a man stands at the front of the class, he is the only one teaching?

Does anyone believe a woman may read God's word in a class, comment on it, and teach it to others (both men and women), but that the God whose word she teaches would be displeased if she opened her mouth in prayer to Him in that same class?

Does anyone believe Priscilla could teach Apollos God's word, but she could not pray aloud in his presence?

Does anyone believe that leading a mixed group in prayer is having dominion over them?

Does anyone believe that serving communion is an act of dominion?

Does anyone believe that picking up the collection plates or attendance cards is taught in God's word to be only a man's job? Or an act of dominion?

Does anyone believe that the public reading of God's word by anybody, male or female, is an affront to God and is an act of dominion?

Does anyone believe that a botched song service led by an incompetent man is more acceptable to God as worship than a well-led song service by a competent woman?

Does anyone believe that leading a prayer is an act of dominion over husbands? Or sons? Or brothers?

Does anyone believe that a woman can teach through poetry, or writing songs, books, or articles in religious journals, but that it would be wrong to teach the same men

the same messages in Bible class or worship service? If so, where in the scripture do we find a distinction between teaching by writing and any other method of teaching?

Does anyone believe that God would be displeased if a Christian woman related to a congregation what God had wrought in her life, but that He would be pleased if a male Christian did so?

Must all members of the church have to sing to obey God in a worship service? If not, what percentage of the congregation must sing in order to have God's stamp of approval? Can ninety percent sing with his approval? Fifty percent? Twenty-five percent? If fifty percent could sing and be approved, why could not one percent? What if the church had only one hundred members, or four members, could twenty-five percent of that small congregation sing and still be acceptable to God? What if that twenty-five percent of a congregation of four happened to be a woman? Would she have to be silent in order to meet the requirements of I Corinthians 14?

What logic can be used that restricts obedience to commands in the scripture for the church to exhort, admonish, teach, preach, comfort, and encourage to only the men in the assembly, and yet allows women to do the same at other times?

What scripture allows the church to make all kinds of exceptions to women's speaking in the assembly, but imposes restrictions on their reading, leading prayer, waiting on the table, picking up attendance cards, and preaching? What scripture specifies these limitations or grants exceptions to the silence command?

How do we scripturally differentiate between these different kinds of silence, and these different "permits" to speak? Is the scripture actually that clear?

Where in scripture does God allow a woman in a small church to lead singing from the pew? Is she any less leading singing if she does it from the pew than from the podium? In so doing, is she serving the church or exercising authority?

Where do the scriptures clearly point out that her posture and position in the assembly are of great importance?

Would the song service be better if a woman directed the songs from the front? If not, why don't we have men lead from the pews?

Would God be more pleased with our best song service than our worst song service? If not, why are we so concerned about quality anyway?

If we really believe that Paul meant for women to be silent when the whole church is assembled, is there a single exception that cannot be performed outside the assembly, and thus allow for obedience and consistency?

Can't a woman confess her faith outside the assembly?

Can't a woman sing outside the assembly?

Can't a woman greet members and visitors outside the assembly?

Can't a woman ask for a song book, attendance card, etc., before the assembly begins so she will not have to violate the scripture which we have claimed says that she is not to "speak" in the assembly?

Where does God give instruction on exactly when an assembly begins and ends anyway?

Is the submission of the younger (men and women) to the elders (older persons) any more or less absolute than other calls for submission, such as to the "household of Stephanas" in I Corinthians 16:16, or "to one another" in Ephesians 5:21, I Peter 5:5, or "of wives" in Ephesians 5:22, Colossians 3:18, I Timothy 2:12, or I Peter 3:1, or "servants" in I Peter 2:18?

If not, why can younger men or even older men not be in submission to older, better informed, and more experienced Christian women?

Does any thoughtful student believe that Paul and the Holy Spirit really intended to say, "I would that men only lead in prayer in every place where Christian men and women gather to study or worship" in I Timothy 2:8?

Does anyone believe the Holy Spirit is so inaccurate as to have left the true (?) meaning out of this passage?

Why didn't the Holy Spirit help us by adding our doctrine to this scripture? Why didn't the Holy Spirit, even in the slightest degree, indicate that this was a command to be obeyed at a worship service or a Bible study or a home devotion? Have we not simply used this as the "proof text" to prop up our tradition of wording prayers in male-dominated worship services?

If a Christian man were critically ill and were being attended by a doctor who was a Christian woman, could she, at his request, pray for his healing and comfort, just as many male Christian doctors do? Would anyone argue she could do so only in a silent prayer?

If Jews and Greeks, bond men and free men, male and female, are "joint heirs," why would God allow male Jews and Greeks, male slaves and free men to exercise their heirship in leading in worship and hold back the women?

Why did the translators translate "gune" wives in at least thirty-three passages, and "aner" husbands twenty-two times, and yet in I Corinthians 14:34-35 mix them, "women keep silent...ask husbands at home?" Which is a more logical translation: "Women," many of whom had no husbands at home, or "wives," who had their "own husbands at home"?

Why did the translators do the same thing in I Timothy 2, in spite of Paul's using Adam and Eve, a husband and a wife, as his illustration for the lesson he was teaching?

Why did he, then, specify that the “she” of the passage was to be saved in child bearing, when the only woman God had approved to bear children is a wife?

Do we believe a wife is not to “teach (over) or have dominion over” her husband, or that she is not to teach him at all, or, does “I permit not a woman to teach” stand alone, thus prohibiting any teaching by any woman?

Do we not believe this scripture teaches that a woman is to have a tranquil and quiet spirit indicative of a wife professing godliness, rather than to be silent?

Do we not believe and practice that a quiet spirit would direct a woman to learn in quietness, but not necessarily in silence?

Does anyone believe that our women in the church learn in quietness or in silence? Or that women sin when they read aloud and make comments aloud while learning in all of our Bible classes? How do men learn - in quietness or silence?

Does anyone believe that the New Testament circumscribes and defines a worship service, as opposed to a Bible class, or that it defines a Bible class as private and a worship service as public?

Would anyone believe that God would be displeased with a small church that combined a Bible study, song service, prayer, communion, giving, invitation, announcements, and all the rest into one service?

Why then would anyone argue that a large church could not scripturally do the same?

Can women scripturally read their verses and make appropriate comments in a small church worship service where no separate Bible class is held?

Must we have “separate private” Bible classes to be scriptural? If so, where does God so direct?

May communion be taken by a group which meets on Sunday for a Bible class?

Does one believe that it would be wrong to use a quarterly as a teaching instrument in a public worship service and have all members present read their verse and make appropriate comments instead of the usual sermon?

Does anyone believe that there is clear scriptural authority for women’s reading, commenting and answering questions from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m., on the Lord’s Day in a class, and that they are clearly in violation of the scripture if they read the same verse to the same men and the same women between 11:00 and 12:00 noon? Where, in I Corinthians 11-14, or anywhere else, does the Bible make a distinction between coming together for classes and coming together for worship?

Was the edification from a prophet in class different from edification from a prophet in worship? If so, where does God make the distinction?

What New Testament writer established the Sunday School or Bible class arrangements?

Doesn't the assembly of I Corinthians 11-14 include prophecy, prayer, the Lord's Supper, singing, tongues, revelation, interpretation of tongues, edification, unity, order, peace, etc.? Who has the authority or the wisdom to speak for God as to when, where, and in what ways a woman may speak or must be silent? Who will be bold enough to write this creed for "all the churches" to follow?

Do we really believe that God's word is final? If so, why do we let tradition, security, safety, ignorance, fear, cowardice, or maintaining the status quo keep us from preaching and practicing the truth of His word as we learn it? Do we stand by our plea, "Back to the Bible," do we compromise, or do we build on a fuller understanding of truth?

Must a Christian wife agree with her Christian husband, even when he wrests the scripture?

Does she violate the "submission rule" if she argues that his wresting is wrong?

Is my wife bound by scripture to be in submission to all other husbands or men? If not, which ones are excluded, and under what conditions?

If it is unscriptural, according to I Timothy 2:12, for a woman to refuse to be in submission to men, why did Paul allow wives to leave their husbands in I Corinthians 7:11?

If a wife could refuse to be in submission to her own husband, and even leave him, why would we even suggest that I Timothy 2:12 is an absolute rule about all women being in submission to all men?

If a woman may speak up in services to get clarification on a song number or scripture citation, or an announcement, why couldn't she ask the preacher for clarification about an unclear point in his sermon?

If a church in Wallowa, Oregon, had seven members and all were widows, could one of the widows teach and baptize a 12-year-old grandson who was visiting her for the summer?

If the baptism occurred on Saturday, July 15, who would conduct services on July 16, the mature Christian widows or the 12-year-old grandson? Or a 30-year-old grandson?

If each widow converted a grandson in July, would each be compelled to turn the teaching and worship services over to those babes in Christ?

Suppose none of the men agreed to teach or lead in worship. Would the church have to quit meeting?

What empirical or Biblical evidence do we have that men are generally better equipped to participate and serve in worship than women? Were male prophets or judges superior to female prophets and judges?

Is there not substantial evidence of men having “butchered” prayers, songs, readings and sermons while capable women were forced to sit by in embarrassed silence?

Who has led the factions and the rebellions in the church? Men or women? Have not preachers, elders, editors, rather than women of the church, caused most divisions?

Who believes that women have no responsibility to rebuke the immoral, the heretical, the factious, the deceitful, the unjust or the abuser of power and position?

Is it not strange that a church which does not officially separate laity and clergy, which does not even believe that ordination of a clergy is biblical, ordains men to do all the leading (serving) in public worship? Since “lead” or “leading” is not included in any text in the New Testament as we apply it, but a mutually shared ministry of making known God’s manifold wisdom, including all the redeemed, why would we demand that men fill all roles? Aren’t women able to serve as well as men?

In spite of all the clear arguments that the gifts of I Corinthians 11-14 were for men and women and were exercised to the edification of the church, how can we shrug and say, “I am sorry, folks, women must still keep silent, and if they learn anything they must wait until they get home to ask their husbands?” Why then do we make a dozen exceptions to the silence rule?

Isn’t the maintenance of the traditional, inconsistent, and unscriptural stances in the church too costly in terms of intellectual honesty? In keeping our integrity? In our submission to God and His truth?

Why do we arbitrarily name and sanctify a pulpit area as the domain of men, when the New Testament does not even mention a pulpit, let alone a pulpit area?

Can anyone overlook Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Noadiah, Anna, the Samaritan woman, Philip’s four daughters, Phoebe, Priscilla, Junias, Tryphena, Persis, Euodia, and Synteche? Can we overlook Joel 2:28-29, which clearly points to a day when “daughters will prophesy” and that His spirit will be “poured out on handmaidens?” Can we overlook Peter’s declaration that this was fulfilled in the establishment of the church?

Psalms 16:11 says, “The Lord giveth the word: The women that publish the tidings are a great host.” Facetiously, I ask, “Can we honestly conclude from this statement that it is alright for women to publish the word or the glad tidings, as long as it

is in a letter, poem, song, book, tract, private Bible class, or magazine article, but they are forbidden to publish it with their lips in most other places?”

Would anyone translate I Corinthians 14:26 thus: “What is it, then, brethren, when you come together, each one of you men, and only you men can have a psalm, a revelation, a tongue, an interpretation?” Yet, is not that what we most blatantly do to get our doctrine? Isn’t the cost to our intellectual integrity for such additions to God’s word entirely too high?

Would anyone translate I Corinthians 14:1, “Follow after love, yet only you men earnestly desire the spiritual gifts?” Isn’t the price too high?

Would anyone translate 14:23, “If, therefore, the whole church be assembled together and all men and only the men speak in tongues?” Isn’t the price too high?

Would we translate verse 24, “But if all men prophesy ... declaring that God is among only you men, indeed?” Isn’t the price too high?

Would anyone add “only lead” to I Timothy 2:8?

Would a translator dare do any of the above?

The most important question in this series of questions is, “Will we compromise our integrity and our quest for eternal truth in order to maintain our traditions by making the above additions to and deletions from the word of God?”

# Chapter 19

## *Clear Conclusions*

The truth is that the ministry of Christ is open to Jews and Greeks, bond men and free men, males and females. All have the equal responsibility and task of teaching and preaching the redeeming power of Jesus Christ.

Women prayed, sang, prophesied, spoke in tongues, interpreted tongues, evangelized, witnessed, and taught in the total life of the church in New Testament days. They were deaconesses and fellow workers in the gospel with the apostles. They ministered.

Today, women in worship services and in public classes sing, teach, exhort, encourage, read (at least responsively), say “Amen”, pass communion, pass collection trays, make announcements, confess faith, confess fault, greet visitors, greet members, etc.

No one suggests that any of the above is a violation of the silent (keeping one’s peace) argument in I Corinthians 14, or the quiet rule of I Timothy 2. How, then, is it possible for us to conclude that such exceptions are permissible and that others are not? The truth is, we have simply “reasoned” that they are all right, primarily because tradition has passed those exceptions down to us, and not because God has revealed these exceptions to us. Every so-called scriptural exception, including a confession of faith, could be done outside the regular church services in order to obey the silent rule. Based upon Paul’s command that women are to be silent when the whole church comes together, they could do none of the speaking acts above. No one believes that women are to be silent. No one demands that they be silent. So, why don’t we just honestly admit it? The only possible answer is that we are prisoners of our genes, family backgrounds, traditions, cultures, prejudices, and ignorance.

We have decided that certain activities are men’s jobs and that women are not in subjection if they do them. This is purely human reasoning and has nothing to do with what the Bible teaches. An example is waiting on the table during the Lord’s Supper. What authority is exercised in “waiting on the table” or in “passing out the trays?” There is none. Rather, it is a sign of servitude, not dominion.

What authority is there in passing the collection trays or picking up attendance cards? There is none! In fact, these also are acts of servitude and not dominion!

What makes wording a prayer an act of dominion? If a brother is asked to lead a prayer, that is not an act of dominion, but an act of service. The song director serves the assembly, but that is not an act of dominion. Rather, it is an act of submission to the elders who ask him to serve. Preachers are also in submission as they preach. A church made up of women could hire and fire a male preacher. Service in worship is not dominion! A wife may lead a husband to Christ and still be under his dominion. If a

twelve-year-old boy leads prayer or waits on the Lord's table, he is not exercising dominion over the elders, deacons, and preachers, nor over his mother and father. Serving in worship roles doesn't mean the exercise of authority over anyone. Why then would a woman be exercising authority over anyone if she served the church in these roles with her talent? She doesn't when she serves bread and drink at home. Why does it suddenly change at an assembly?

If men really wanted to keep women in their "place," as tradition had dictated their "place" to be, women should serve the men in all the above capacities. If a man or a group of men in the church permits a woman to serve in any capacity, that is not exercising dominion, nor is it the usurpation of authority. Those who have authority may delegate it to anyone. The truth is that if a woman who is qualified to serve is asked to and refuses, that would be insubordination.

But we have already shown that there is clear textual evidence to support women participating in the public worship of the church. It should also be pointed out that the "silence rule" in I Corinthians 14:34 had to do with the services where the brethren were exercising spiritual gifts. Thus, if one wanted to be an absolutist, he would argue that the instruction on silence had to do only with the exercise of spiritual gifts in a particular service, and not in other regular services of the church. Since most of us believe that the miraculous gifts of the spirit, such as tongues and special revelations, are past, then the instructions on silence would no longer apply as we have traditionally interpreted this passage in I Corinthians 14. The rule would not apply to any other services of the church where spiritual gifts were not being exercised. C. R. Nichols would have been right in his book, *God's Woman*. Again, we must emphasize that women in the early church had those spiritual gifts and certainly exercised them in worship, as much as some now wish they hadn't. We simply try to conform to our traditional interpretation of I Corinthians 14:34-35 and I Timothy 2, while we deny or reject overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

We have pointed out that most of us allow women to praise, pray, exhort, teach, and admonish men privately and publicly in song. Why, then, would anyone still contend that it would be unscriptural for them to do so without music? They can sing scriptures to men and they can read scriptures to men privately and publicly, individually or in unison.

They can make announcements from the pew and even ask questions from the pew. What kind of logic or scripture would prohibit them from doing so from the pulpit? God does not say, "Doing so sitting down is permissible, but standing up front would be wrong." Such an activity has nothing to do with scripture, or dominion, or servitude, or logic, but it has everything to do with tradition!

If women can enjoy an exception to the silence rule by singing, they can enjoy an exception to the rule by reading, or praying, or prophesying, or teaching, or waiting on the Lord's table.

A woman may baptize. The same command that tells her to teach includes the command for her to baptize. Our tradition might not allow it, but God's word does. What humbler, yet greater, service could one Christian render to another than assisting a convert in baptism? God did not make baptizing a man's work, nor does He put it under his dominion.

However, in many churches, it has been the dominion of the "clergy." In fact, some people postpone baptism until a certain preacher is available to assist. Others boast about the preacher who baptized them, as if it made any difference. Many members would be shocked if a woman took a man or another woman or a boy or girl into the baptistry to baptize them, privately or publicly. And, yet, there is no person who could reach such a conclusion from any scriptural text.

Women are allowed to read in the public Bible classes. They make comments in the public Bible class. In a quiet-spirited way, they argue for a particular truth in a public Bible class. They do it all the time. Men ought to also so argue in the same quiet spirit.

If they can read, comment, and argue, they can also lead a prayer. Nowhere in the New Testament does a single writer state, "Men only may lead in prayer," or, "only men may word prayers in public or private worship." Such teaching is foreign to the Bible. Our male-dominated churches and male-dominated clergies have established this tradition, not the scriptures. The idea of who may "lead" in prayer is not even suggested in any scripture.

May women preach in the public service of the church? They prayed and prophesied, spoke in tongues, interpreted tongues, gave revelations, read or sang psalms in the Corinthian services in the first century. What would prohibit them from doing it in the twentieth century? Nothing but tradition or expediency.

It seems a shame that we have taken a faulty translation and interpretation of three scriptures and have tried, with glaring multiplied inconsistencies, to force the rest of the Bible to fit that faulty translation and interpretation.

It is even a greater shame to recognize our glaring inconsistencies and then draw lines of fellowship over one of these inconsistencies. If some congregation allowed women to pass the communion up and down the aisles, many preachers and churches would accuse such a church of heresy. And, yet, such a practice has nothing to do with heresy.

I submit that it would be an even greater shame to recognize the truth and continue to keep women in the church in an inferior position where God had not placed them. I do not wish to get to the bar of judgment and be told by God that I discriminated against Jews or Greeks, slaves or free men, men or women.

Women did and do have places in the public teaching and worship of the church. I do not wish to be the one responsible for keeping them in bondage and in unscriptural subjection by not allowing them to exercise their God-given abilities.

There will be the shrill, strident voices against women taking their place and exercising their talents in the life of the church. There will be other shrill, strident voices which are just as extreme and sinful, which demand the right of women to rule over men, rather than understanding that in Biblical teaching wives are to be in submission to their own husbands and that all Christians are to be in submission to one another.

It is time for honesty, courage, and prudent action on the part of the church. To do nothing is to fail in our commitment to restore the New Testament church. To force congregations, before teaching them, to accept women's new roles could be factious and unloving. Most of our beliefs are based upon intellectual and emotional experiences over a lifetime. Change will not be easy. It will be easier to change intellectually than emotionally. But we can't skirt the challenges of new compelling arguments, nor can we, like Tevye in "Fiddler on the Roof," support the male-domination theory in the teaching and worship in the life of the church, simply because "we have always done it that way," or because we have falsely believed it should be done that way. What I have personally found hard to accept and admit is that the Bible itself does not make the exceptions to the silence or quietness rule. I was forced to admit that men have decided, through the process of reasoning and tradition, what our creed on the exceptions will be. Those exceptions vary from church to church, congregation to congregation, and country to country, based on men's opinions on where to draw the line. We decide the exceptions, and we should be honest and honorable enough to accept and admit that the Bible does not.

Serving and leading are not the same as dominion. Isaiah 11:6 says, "A child shall lead them," but this in no way suggests that a child shall have dominion over them. Enlightened and faithful Christians have a responsibility to prepare, teach, guide, and, in loving ways, assist churches to come to a greater knowledge of the truth, and to use the God-given talents of capable, blood-bought men and women in its work and worship. Truth demands it! Conscience demands it!

I thank God that our churches are autonomous and that each congregation may set its own pace and make its own strides in the restoration of the New Testament church on any subject of study, and, in particular, the use of women in Biblical roles in the life of the church.

I consider the failure to acknowledge or even to recognize our inconsistencies to be of greater eternal consequence than our stubborn refusal to allow women to participate, except in our traditionally approved ways. Why? Because that represents a basic flaw in character. Such failure deals with intellectual honesty, fairness and justice. We all know what the prophets of God have said about such. We are all inconsistent. However, when our inconsistencies are recognized, yet go unacknowledged or unadmitted, they become hypocrisies. It is precisely at this point that our inconsistencies become issues of Christian character.

C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes, in their book, *Discovering our Roots: The Ancestry of the Churches of Christ*, made a most significant statement on page 8: "If we assume that our roots are entirely sacred and not profane, entirely apostolic and

not historical, entirely Biblical and not cultural, then we have elevated ourselves above the level of common humanity, and, in essence, made ourselves into gods.”

We are not gods! However, we must continue to honestly seek Him and His ways. This honesty forces us to admit three truths that are central in this book:

1. We do not practice what we say the Bible teaches on women’s role in the life and worship of the church. Our practices are riddled with contradictions, inconsistencies, and selective application of what we claim the Bible teaches.
2. The Bible does not teach what we have maintained it teaches. The man-woman translations can and should be translated husband-wife, in our three “proof texts,” if we are ever to arrive at any consistency in what we practice and teach. It is the only way to reconcile the obvious contradictions between these three passages and a host of scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments, which clearly allow women to participate in the life and worship of God’s Kingdom.
3. Our traditional views of these “proof texts” fly in the face of God’s mission to save the world through teaching and preaching His word. The talents of women are being suppressed by our mistranslation and misapplication of those texts, in worship and in the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

No Christian community is free of its baggage of traditions, biases, prejudices, fears, local customs, flawed or misapplied hermeneutics, misinterpretations, and misapplied scriptures. In fact, some churches have been built upon a special single doctrine. The Seventh Day Adventist Fellowship is built around the keeping of the seventh day Sabbath. That is its most distinctive doctrine. But, for the most part, the Christian world rejects this doctrine. Why? Because it believes the Seventh Day Adventists are in error.

Every Christian community changes its doctrine or its practices for many reasons. Outsiders judge such changes to be either good or bad. Most racially segregated churches have changed both their practices and doctrinal stances on race since 1953. Yet, before that date, they often argued for segregation on scriptural grounds, i.e., Ham’s so-called curse.

The same arguments against admitting blacks to white churches will be used against giving women their God-given places in the public life of the church. “It will cause division.” “People will leave.” “It will create tension.” Thank God we rose above such crude and cowardly arguments and integrated most of our congregations because of truth. May it so be with our women. “His truth goes marching on.”

The concept of restoring the New Testament Christianity on the basis of Biblical teaching is, in my view, valid and essential. There is no other basis for a united church in a divided world.

Those who believe in this restoration principle still have baggage. Otherwise, we would be united. But we are not. Every generation debates old and new issues. No one can speak ex cathedra. Some unofficially dare to.

The Restoration goes on. Christian integrity, intellectual honesty, academic freedom, and a humble spirit force all men of good will to reexamine positions, accept new truth, and move forward in building up the Lord's Church.

In preparation for this study, I read the New Testament through two times to try to find one thing which precluded women that Christ or the writers taught disciples to do to spread the Kingdom, encourage the weak, teach and preach the Gospel, comfort the troubled, exhort, admonish, minister to the needy, serve in worship, or supervise activities of the church. I found only one - those who qualify for the eldership.

I believe that when I Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:34-35, and I Timothy 2:8-15 are properly translated and interpreted, all other passages become fully consistent.

When we acknowledge the logic and scripturalness of this change we will no longer have the hobgoblins of our "inconsistency" staring us in the face, nor will we be forced to use highly questionable mental gymnastics, wrested scriptures and contorted practices to justify our present exceptions to the three proof texts.

We can maintain our moral integrity and our intellectual honesty and get on with doing God's will in giving women their proper place in God's Kingdom along with Greeks and slaves.

Otherwise, we will remain in our prison cells with the bars in place on the windows. We will live in a state of denial while we continue conducting seminars on "Why the world will not come to Christ" or "Why so many are leaving the church" and "Why we can't all see the Bible alike."

Informed, thoughtful, and courageous people will no longer take the pat, uninformed, contradictory and inconsistent answers given by the dominant male figures in the church on these hard questions.

Free men and women - freed by the blood of Christ - will no longer follow those in authority who put them in or keep them in shackles of intellectual and spiritual slavery. Serious, qualified leaders will respond to truth and positive change in the church.

Others, sadly, will die from an imposed slavery of the minds and souls of the membership. Many will resist Biblical change and further search for truth and remain shackled by the need for acceptance and the security of our traditions. Like children with their security blankets, some brethren will refuse to turn loose the baggage which both binds and blinds, because the comfort of assumed orthodoxy has become more important than their quest to more fully understand God's will. Some also need to dominate others, especially women. Many will continue to get their satisfaction and status from dominion, rather than shared service.

May it not be so among discerning Christians. May God give us the wisdom and courage to expand and enhance the restoration of God's Kingdom.

# Chapter 20

## *EPILOGUE*

Visualize with me an unusual, but not an unscriptural scene. It is Sunday morning and we walk down the hall of the educational wing of the church. We peek through the window on the first door. An elder is teaching a group of middle aged men on the subject of bishops, elders, and shepherding.

Next door, the minister and his wife are team-teaching a mixed class on family relations.

Across the hall, an older lady, who spent 40 years in the mission field in Africa, is teaching a mixed college class about mission work.

Next door, new converts are being instructed on Christian growth and maturity by a godly older brother.

In another classroom, a sister who recently graduated from a Christian university with a major in Biblical Languages is teaching a dozen men and women New Testament Greek.

Down the hall, a Christian woman, who is a trained psychologist, is teaching a group of recovering alcoholics and their mates.

In the auditorium, a Christian woman who is head of the music department at the local Christian university has a large group of men and women studying worship and is training them to read music and blend voices to more effectively teach and admonish in song.

In the family room, the new youth minister is teaching teenagers to resist Satan and live for Christ in this sin-pressured world. She recently graduated from a Christian university. The teenagers have already learned to love and respect her.

Down another hall, men and women are teaching classes of children from cradle roll age to teens.

After classes are over and the congregation gathers in the auditorium, a brother calls the meeting to order and welcomes members and visitors. He encourages everybody to shake hands and be friendly. The church members spend five minutes shaking hands, hugging, greeting one another with holy kisses (it's Biblical and commanded), and extending hospitality.

Then the lady who taught the music class encourages the church to join her in two songs of praise.

She is followed by a brother who reads a scripture and tells how it has special meaning in his life.

After the reading, a sister asks the church to join her in the offering of prayer and thanksgiving.

Another song is sung and is followed by a testimony of one of the recovering alcoholic women on how she was powerless until she relied on God to see her through the day, one day at a time. She thanks her teacher for the spiritual insights she has given in her class. She then thanks the church for its efforts in reaching out to and reclaiming people like her. She then offers a prayer of thanksgiving for God's help and for this supporting body of Christians.

The preacher, a man, preaches his sermon, and two teenagers come forward to become Christians. Their father takes their confession and their mother baptizes them.

Three men and three ladies wait on the communion table and serve the church. One of the ladies offers thanks for the bread and a man offers thanks for the wine.

A sister who recently returned from Honduras reports on her work there. She reports that she has established a new church in the jungles and has converted sixty-four people in the past year.

During the announcements, the elder announces that Sister Jones, from our favorite Christian university, and a professor of Biblical Archeology, would be preaching for us next Sunday morning on the subject "Archaeological Evidence That The Bible Is True."

The bulletin reports the activities of deacons and deaconesses who are involved in dozens of ministries within the membership and in outreach.

To some, such a vision is shocking. They have been so conditioned by training and experience that such a change creates not just discomfort, but fear and uncertainty. They find it difficult to bring themselves to give up the status quo or relinquish their concepts of authority and leadership, no matter how logical and Biblical the arguments for change may be.

But, there are others who have not closed their minds and who have not stopped learning and who will accept the logic and scripturalness of such a church. They will recognize this truth and the need to change. They will make changes with care and courage. A true priesthood of believers will emerge.

The church will give up its traditions for truth just as it gave up "one cup at communion," instituted "individual Bible classes," and overcame the "segregation of the races."

Truth will win out. The bars on our prison cells will be stripped away. We will be freer of the constraints of fear, culture, ignorance, and tradition. The talents of all

Christians, male and female, will be used to God's glory and to the growth of His Kingdom.

So be it! And again, Amen!