

Honoring Women in Ministry - Part 2

The Bible is not as Gender Specific as it seems.

This verse has been wrongly used to disallow women from teaching in the general congregation.

2 Greek words often translated “brethren” or “brothers” are most often not gender specific

- 1) Adelphos - from delfus (womb) - from the same womb.
- 2) Suggene - the same genes or a common (genoa) beginning. i.e. a blood Relative

Now this passage is not specifically talking to men only as is often taught. This is the word Adelphos without a specific prefix for men or women. Therefore we see it refers to males and females with the same Kingdom genes who may each have a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue and/or an interpretation.

Conclusion: Women are not being excluded here from teaching, prophesying, and using their gifts as long as things are being done in order and to build others up!

Three Important Governmental Words

- 1) Elder – “Presbuteros” (Acts 20:17, 28) Mature in years and experience. An older wiser person. Someone who has the ability and experience to guide others along.
- 2) Overseer – “Episkopos” (1 Timothy 3:1) This word after the 7th century was sometimes translated “Bishop”. But the word comes frequently as a verb primarily to a person who is watching with sensitive caring heart.
- 3) Pastor (Shepherd) – “Poimen” (1 Peter 5:1, 2) This word refers to a person who knows how to lead, feed, and care for sheep.

Conclusion: These are the 3 dimensions of the caring responsibility of leaders in the Body of Christ and they are used interchangeably.

Three Challenging Passages

1 Timothy 3:1-11 “Can women serve in church government?”

- 1) (v. 1) “anyone” - Greek - “tis” it is translated “anyone” and it really means “anyone!”. Male or female as it is not gender specific.

Some traditional churches limit these offices to men. But there were recognized female deacons which must have been qualified to oversee and serve in the church (*Romans 16:1 Revised Standard Version “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchré-ae”*).

- 2) (v. 10, 11) Bible Comparison:

ESV – (10) And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless (11) Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.

YLT – (10) And let these also first be proved, then let them minister, being unblameable. (11) Women—in like manner grave, not false accusers, vigilant, faithful in all things.

Since we find women functioning in these ways, it must have been permissible and since women in general are included when Paul teaches about qualifications, it must have been permissible for women to lead.

Conclusion: women can serve in a governmental capacity.

1 Corinthians 14:34,35 “Can women talk in church?”

1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 ESV “The women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. ³⁵ If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.”

Cultural setting:

- A Different Teaching Style: Often the Bible makes better sense when you understand that in those days all teaching and learning was conducted orally with frequent dialogue between teacher and students and with freedom for listeners to comment, express their opinions and ask questions as part of the process.

This freedom to debate could sometimes get out of hand, especially in a larger setting when too many people were trying to participate at the same time.

The Church in Corinth grew rapidly and when the whole Church came together, the small group style of teaching in the Synagogue quickly became impractical. It was then necessary for some of this free dialogue to be regulated to maintain order.

- The Talmud (Jewish Rule Book) vs. the Torah (Law of Moses)

Many harsh Jewish religious legalism, and traditions were derived from the Talmud and not the Scriptures. (Talmud was a list of traditional rules the Pharisees had summarized and/or expanded. Jesus rebuked them for their heavy handed traditions that bring people under their control. Talmud = traditions; Torah = scriptures)

Two quotes from the Talmud:

- i) *A man's Tallith (head covering) is a sign of subjection and shame before God. Therefore a man should always veil himself to show that he is ashamed before God and unworthy with open face to behold Him.*
- ii) *A Woman will have no place or right to speak in the Synagogue. A woman wasn't even permitted to learn or be taught alone or with the men.*

It could be that Paul was clearing up the heavy handed rules that were associated with traditional way of dealing with women. He may have been repeating a question and not making a statement. Some Greek scholars admit that this is possible.

Possible explanations:

- 1) Since women were not allowed to receive a formal education as men, they had lots of questions with simple answers. However, due to the size of the gatherings and the way things were taught orally, the questions were no doubt overwhelming their meetings. Therefore being silent here simply means "stop being disruptive".
- 2) Paul may have been addressing a specific group of un-submissive women who were becoming self-indulgent and acting improper by questioning the integrity and authority of some male leaders. This would definitely have brought shame upon themselves and their husbands.
- 3) Perhaps this verse was being stated as a question answering a Corinthian question previously sent to Paul.

Best Explanation: This was a present day cultural problem. Some women were being innocently disruptive because they were eager to learn. Paul is encouraging the husbands to be servant leaders and teach spend times encouraging their wives with the basics.

1 Timothy 2:8-15 "Can women teach men?"

These words were written by Paul to Timothy when the Church in Ephesus and surrounding region was being plagued with Gnostic heresies. Likewise we find that the Spirit of Jezebel had attacked and penetrated some Churches in Asia causing serious problems. In fact, some of the Gnostic teachers were women who used sexual enticement to attract and excite their audiences as they taught.

Note: The Gnostics taught all matter is evil and only the spirit of a person can be sanctified. They reasoned, "If God gave you an appetite or a desire He must want it to be satisfied. Mankind will not be penalized for acting naturally.

(To the church at Thyatira, near Ephesus) **Revelation 2:20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.**

1 Timothy 2:12 ESV "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise (KJV = "usurp") authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet."

Two definitions of Usurp :

- After 4th century - "Usurp" Greek word is "authenteo" "to control in a domineering manner"; 'to shout orders at' or 'to bark at'
- In Paul's day - "Usurp" Greek word is "authenteo" "to physically and violently murder" or "to sexually lunge at or to entice".

Best Explanation: Paul was not banning women from teaching. Instead this was a response to the reality of a "Jezebel Spirit" which was seeking to divide and control the churches in Asia Minor.

Recommended Resources:

"Who Says a Woman Can't Teach?" by Charles Tromeby (book)

"The Truth about Women" by Alan Vincent (cd's)