

Women – Man’s View or God’s View

The Role of Women in the Church – Continued

June 2002 – Tape of the Month

- I. Re-cap of teaching from Women’s Conference, March 2001 (*The Role of Women in the Church - 2*, May/June 2001 Bimonthly tape)
 - A. Great women of God – the wise woman of 2 Samuel 20.
 - B. Absence of gender-specific roles in the Church – Romans 12:4-8; the women of Romans 16.
 - C. Exclusion of women from leadership/ministry.
 - i. Difficult scriptures: 1 Timothy 2:11-15.
 - 1. An invitation to learn.
 - 2. Do not permit a woman to teach or claim authorship of man, refuting a Gnostic myth making in-roads into church doctrine.
 - ii. “Watered-down” translations of words when they are used in the context of women – e.g., “virtuous” of Proverbs 31 (KJV) is “powerful,” “capable.”
 - iii. Confusing the role of women in the Church with the role of women in marriage and family, i.e., generalizing from the submission of a wife to her husband to the submission of all women to all men. Genesis 3:16 is a curse, the result that Adam and Eve brought on themselves by sin; *NOT* God’s will.
- II. Man’s View or God’s View - Other difficult scriptures explained
 - A. Historical, cultural view of women colors how we understand the Bible.
 - i. Examples: Greek philosophers & writers who shaped Christian thought; Church Fathers who cemented the ideas into Christianity (see page 4 - Origen).
 - ii. *All* Scripture must be interpreted in light of the culture to which it was originally addressed. Then the appropriate application to the current culture can be determined.
 - iii. In looking at Greek and Hebrew words behind the English translations, it is important to focus not only on the Greek or Hebrew word *used*, but also on the ones *not* used.

B. 1 Corinthians 11:1-16.

- i. v. 1 – goes with Chapter 10.
- ii. v. 2 – new subject. Teachings = traditions, not doctrine.
- iii. Corinthians is a book of reproof of practical problems in the Church (see below).
- iv. Key to understanding the section is 10:32.
- v. v. 3 – head = *kephale*. Means “foremost part” or “prominent part.” NOT indicative of hierarchy.
- vi. Throughout this section, the words for “man” and “woman” are the same Greek words that are also translated “husband” and “wife.” Context determines the best translation.
- vii. vv. 4-6 - Corinth was a blend of three cultures: Greek, Roman, and to a lesser extent, Jewish. All three were represented in the Church. Each culture had its traditions about head coverings.
- viii. vv. 7-9 – Man is the glory of God; woman is the glory of man. Again, NOT about hierarchy, but about the magnificence of God’s creation of male and female.
- ix. v. 10 - authority = *exousia*. “Sign of authority,” not a hat. Angels??
- x. vv. 11 and 12 – expressing interdependence of husband & wife rather than hierarchy.
- xi. vv. 13-15 – hair = *kome*, not the usual *thrix*. Hair that is long & ornamental. v. 14 – nature = natural order, mode of thinking, long established customs.
- xii. v. 16 – ties back to 10:32, and closes section.

C. 1 Corinthians 14:33-35.

- i. How could Paul approve women praying and prophesying in 1 Corinthians 11, then state in Chapter 14 that women must remain silent?
- ii. Silent - Not the Greek word *phimoo*, “to tie shut or muzzle;” not *hesuchia*, “quietness, tranquility, stillness.”
- iii. *Sigao*, voluntary silence, a listening. Like the disciples being silent about the transfiguration (Luke 9:36); like Jesus before Pilate (Luke 19:40); like the apostles and elders listening to Paul and Barnabas’ report of their itinerary (Acts 15:12). It is silence asked for in the midst of disorder or clamor.
- iv. Acts 21:40-22:2 – Both *sigao* and *hesuchia* used. *Sigao* when people signaled that Paul was about to speak; *Hesuchia* when they began to attend to what he was saying.
- v. Speak – 30 Greek words for “say, speak, teach,” etc. Which one here and why? *Laleo* = talk, converse, chat. No reference to meaning or significance of content.
- vi. Women were unaccustomed to worship, unaccustomed to public speaking, for the most part uneducated. They would drift off into chatter among themselves and disrupt the service.

- vii. Be in submission – *hupotassomai*, voluntarily submit; be responsive to the needs of others. Verses 32 and 34.

D. Ephesians 5:22-33.

- i. Head, *kephale*, and submit, *hupotassomai*, are also both used in this section.
- ii. The point is not rank, hierarchy, or authority, but both husband and wife honoring each other, each in the manner that fits with how God created them and designed them to live.

E. Our conclusion from these sections of Scripture.

- i. Scriptures indicate that women are invited to serve freely in the Church – to teach, pray, prophesy, and fulfill whatever avenues of service the Lord calls or inspires. 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 1 Corinthians 11:1-16; 14:33-35.
- ii. Indeed, these scriptures *elevate* women! (see page 5 – Comparison)

III. Women are not just men in a different body!

- A. *Wild at Heart*, by John Eldredge - Eve
- B. Esther - courageous, full of faith, beautiful, *captivating*
- C. Esther or Deborah, wise woman defending city or Ruth - No box. But what a woman brings to ministry is uniquely WOMAN! And what you bring to ministry is uniquely YOU!

Sources:

Bristow, John Temple. *What Paul Really Said about Women*. Harper, San Francisco, 1988.

Keener, Craig S. *Paul, Women & Wives*. Hendrickson Publishers, 1992.

Kroeger & Kroeger. *I Suffer Not a Woman*. Baker Book House, 1992.

Some Origins of the Belief that Women Are Inferior to Men

(Taken mostly from: *What Paul Really Said About Women*, John Temple Bristow, Harper, San Francisco, 1988.)

- Pandora's Box – 800 BC. First recorded myth that blames a woman for the ills of the world.
- Persia – 700s BC. Esther, fear of kings advisors that women would rise up and defy their husbands.
- Apocrypha – 250 BC. “The Wisdom of Ben Sira,” “From woman is the beginning of sin and because of her all die.”
- Talmudic writings – Jewish prayer that every man prayed every day thanking God that He did not “make me a Gentile, a woman, or a boor.”
- Greek Philosophers –
 - Socrates – 470-399 BC. Often referred to women as the weaker sex, and argued that being born a woman is a divine curse since woman is halfway between man and animal.
 - Plato – 427-347 BC. Disciple of Socrates, taught Aristotle.
 - Aristotle – 384-322 BC. Formalized the practice of sexual discrimination and brought authority to the belief in sexual inequality.
 - Demosthenes – contemporary to Aristotle. Role of women in society: “courtesans for our pleasure, female slaves for daily sexual use, and wives to bring up legitimate children and be faithful steward in household matters.”
 - Greek Stoics – regarded women as hindrances, distractions, and temptations.
- Philo – Jewish philosopher contemporary to Christ. “A wife is a selfish creature, adept at beguiling the morals of her husband.”
- Church Fathers –
 - Tertullian – AD 160-230. Roman lawyer, trained in Greek Stoic philosophy, leading defender of Christianity. “Woman, do you not know that you are each an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the Devil's gateway; ...you are the first deserter of the divine law; ...you destroyed so easily God's image in man.”
 - St. Augustine and Jerome – Church fathers schooled in Stoic philosophy, taught celibacy superior to marriage.
 - Thomas Aquinas – AD 1225-1274. Gentle and brilliant, a doctor. Did more to systematize Christian beliefs than any other, and harmonize them with Greek philosophy. Interpreted Paul's writing through the eyes of Aristotle. With his teachings, the Greek deprecation of women became firmly cemented into Christianity (p. 114, Bristow).

Comparison of Paul's Teachings and the Common Teachings of the Time

(Primarily from Bristow, *What Paul Really Said About Women*)

Paul:

Male and female are one in Christ.
Galatians 3:28

Men and women can worship publicly.
1 Corinthians 11:4 and 5

Women are to learn.
1 Timothy 2:11

Marriage and intercourse are a gift from God.
Genesis 1:27, 2:22-25; 1 Corinthians 7:7;
Ephesians 5:31

In times of trouble it is better for the unmarried to stay single.
1 Corinthians 7:7, 25-35, 39 and 40

Husbands and wives are to be responsive to each other's needs.
Ephesians 5:22-33, 1 Corinthians 7:3-5

Sexual intimacy should be confined to marriage.
1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 7:1 and 2, 36-38

Woman is the glory of man.
1 Corinthians 11:7

Husband and wife each have authority over the other. Either may choose to refrain from sex if both agree and for a short time.
1 Corinthians 7:3-5

Aristotle: A female is a deformed male, in every way women are inferior to men.

Jewish custom: Men and women worshipped separately. Only men counted for a quorum.

Aristotle: Women are inferior to men in their ability to reason. Jews, Greeks, and Romans prohibited women from schools.

Stoics: Sex is harmful; marriage is a distraction.

Jewish Mishrah: An unmarried man is not even a man.

Aristotle: A man's courage is in commanding his wife; a woman's is in obeying.

Greek and Roman tradition: Female slaves are always sexually available to the man of the house.

Jews and Greeks: Women are morally weak—a source of temptation.

Greeks, Jewish Mishrah: A man may abstain from having sex with his wife at any time. A wife could be fined for refusing her husband.

Some Practical Problems Addressed in 1 Corinthians

- Chapter 1-4 Divisions in the Church; favoring one leader over another
- 5 Sexual immorality among church members
- 6 Settling disputes; more sexual immorality; what is permissible vs. what is beneficial
- 7 Marriage & sex; circumcision; being married vs. unmarried
- 8 Eating meat offered to idols
- 9 Compensation for preaching/teaching
- 10 Idolatry; eating food offered to idols
- 11 Headship; worshipping with head covered or uncovered; meals in the church & the Lord's supper
- 12 The manifestations in the Church; functioning as one body
- 13 Love
- 14 Manifestations in the church service
- 15 The resurrection from the dead
- 16 Giving & collections