

## **A Brief Study on Women Preaching & Teaching in the Church**

### **Overview of How we Ought to Interpret the Bible**

- “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.”
- The Bible is the Word of God and is our authority. In interpretation, we must look in context (lingual and historical) and interpret a topic within the entirety of the Scripture, not a single isolated verse.
- We must remain faithful to God’s Word. Not just in the letter of the law, but in the Spirit of the law.
  - Sometimes, opposing advice is given to different churches in different letters. We should understand this as speaking to specific situations. Example: Paul gives advice for single women to stay unmarried in 1 Corinthians 7 and tells single women to marry in 1 Timothy 5.

### **Texts Used Against Women Teaching & Preaching in the Church**

- 1 Timothy 2:9-15 (emphasis vss. 11-12): **9** I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, **10** but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. **11** A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. **12** I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. **13** For Adam was formed first, then Eve. **14** And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. **15** But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.
- 1 Corinthians 14:31-35 (emphasis vss. 34-35): **31** For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. **32** The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. **33** For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people. **34** Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. **35** If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

### **Texts Used For Women Teaching & Preaching in the Church**

- Ephesians 4:11-13: **11** So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, **12** to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up **13** until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
- Acts 2:17-18: **17** “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. **18** Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.”
- 1 Corinthians 11:4-6: **4** Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. **5** But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. **6** For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.
- Galatians 3:26-29: **26** So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, **27** for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29** If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.
- Romans 16:1-2: **1** I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. **2** I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

### **Interpretations & Notes on the Above Passages**

- **1 Timothy 2:11-12:** study of the word authority here indicates a negative abuse of power, not leading people to understand God's Word. There is no real context given to describe this command for being in a church setting. This makes more sense in a marriage context, because language is singular.
  - "Paul's restriction on women teaching certainly made sense in a world that refused to give women teachers a hearing and in which most women were uneducated." Study note from Archaeological Study Bible.
  - Word study on "usurp authority" (G831, *authenteo*) shows it's the only time it's used in the New Testament. It carries the understanding of domination over another. This should not be confused with the way we might look up to a person explaining God's Word or that since the person is trained in teaching, they carry a certain authority in explaining over others.
- **1 Corinthians 14:33-34:** contextually, men and women sat with their own gender. As women asked questions to their husbands, this led to shouting across the room. Paul is telling them to quiet down in church to not disrupt the teaching and to ask their questions to their husbands when at home.
  - "Paul had already noted that God had gifted women with the capacity to prophesy and pray in public. So rather than intending to silence women totally in the church, Paul may have been referring to interfering chatter or to the promotion of false teaching." Study note from Archaeological Study Bible.
- **Ephesians 4:11-13:** there is no gender indication or limitation for the roles described here. That includes "pastors and teachers." Women can excel in these roles.
- **Acts 2:17-18:** prophecy is available to men and women, not just men. This was a quotation from Joel. Prophecy is not limited to future telling – it is speaking on behalf of God. It often includes a call to repentance.
- **1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Corinthians 11:** chapter 14 says women can't speak in church but chapter 11 says women can speak and prophesy in church. How do we interpret these verses and the apparent contradiction?
- **Galatians 3:26-29:** faith in Christ is what we focus on theologically, not a person's ethnicity or gender.
- **Romans 16:1-2:** letter of Romans is given to Phoebe, a woman. Women are often funding ministry and church work and helping Paul lead.

## Conclusions

- Paul doesn't say anything about women being silent to any of the other churches. There were some local issues that caused women in Ephesus and Corinth to be misled by idols and promote false teaching. This likely means he is addressing situations specific to the churches in Ephesus (1 Timothy) and Corinth (1 Corinthians). There are many other Scriptures about teaching that do not specify gender.
- Women were told to learn and they had significant roles in the church throughout the New Testament. Phoebe, Prisca, Lydia, women at the tomb, Samaritan woman, and others listed in church letters. Women continue to do that today to exercise their gifts.
- Remember that modern preaching and preachers did not exist in the same way in the New Testament as they do today. Many teachers were itinerant preachers, not a single individual who led a local church through Bible exposition and spent hours during the week preparing. The Bible can give us conceptual wisdom for modern situations that did not exist during its time, but we can't suggest it prohibits women preaching as we understand it when preaching was so different then. Furthermore, you have women who do preach in the Biblical sense (proclaim Biblical truth) as they share the news of the resurrection of Jesus and are told to prophesy (speak God's direction) in 1 Corinthians 11 and elsewhere.
- **We believe women are gifted and able to preach in a church setting. This is due to Scriptural support in three areas: 1) the Scriptures that appear to speak against women teaching can be understood as situational and specific to those local churches; 2) the Scriptures give many examples of people being called to preach and teach without distinction of gender; 3) women are specifically mentioned in the roles of prophesying in a church setting (1 Corinthians 11) and their prophesying is done through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2).**

Our Process A Note From Nate:

In 2016 we recognized some amazing teaching and leadership giftings from our church in a few ladies (who had a heart of humility) that caused us to take a 2 year process of bible study and prayer to see what the Lord had to say about women in ministry. I (Nate) was raised in an environment that women lead in worship (Worship Minister) and teach kids Sunday school (Kids Minister). The idea of women teaching was not something I'd seen in practice

We (Nate and Elders of Village Christian) consulted with other Christian leaders...but mostly spent time in bible study and prayer for a two year time period (2016-2017)

From that resulted a clear conviction that when God provides a gifting in men and women, we need to find a way to use that gifting in the church (when there is a heart of humility) The gifting is one part....the heart of humility is the key part.