

WHAT THE **BIBLE SAYS** ABOUT WOMEN IN MINISTRY



WWW.NL-FL.ORG

REV. DR. MARIA KHALEEL
NEW LIFE ASSEMBLY OF GOD
7885 PINES BLVD
PEMBROKE PINES, FL 33024

Establishing Biblical Precedent

(Precedent-something done or said as an example or rule to authorize or justify a subsequent act of the same or analogous kind)

Examples of Women appointed of God to the preaching ministry:

Judges 4:4, 5:7 Deborah was a prophetess and the judge of all Israel, making her both the spiritual and political leader of God's people.

Judges 4:6 She exercised leadership over men.

II Kings 22:14 Huldah, the prophetess. The male spiritual leadership (the Priests) sought counsel and instruction from her.

Acts 21:9 The four daughters of Philip were prophetesses - Paul visited in their home and never rebuked them or tried to silence them in the least.

Exodus 15:20 Miriam was a prophetess

Isaiah 8:3 Isaiah's wife was a prophetess

Luke 2:36 Anna was a prophetess who prophesied over Jesus

Realizing that God cannot contradict himself, for that would violate the perfection of His nature and He would no longer be God, then God could not have made a mistake in calling these women to the ministry, neither does He make a mistake when He calls women to the preaching ministry today. Neither are there exceptions to God's definitive rules (for example: God does not say "Thou shalt not commit adultery-but in certain cases I might allow it" - God's commands are absolute). Therefore, when there is a seeming discrepancy, there is a lack of understanding on our behalf. If God actually commanded that women are to be silent, then God erred in calling the above referenced women to the preaching ministry - but God cannot err, therefore we need to more carefully study these portions of Scripture.

Exposition of Scripture

The word "prophet" in the Greek means "one who speaks forth openly, a proclaimer of divine message" and was denoted among the Greeks as an interpreter of the oracles of God.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew "Roeh" indicates a prophet is one who has immediate intercourse with God, and "Nabhi" is one from whom the message of God springs forth.

(Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, pg 904)

A commonly accepted New Testament translation of the word prophet is a speaker forth for God. This is a word which characterizes the New Testament preacher and equated with the office of teacher in II Peter 2:1, when he draws a parallel between false prophets and false teachers, using the words interchangeably, and thereby equating the office of prophet with the office of teacher as comparable functions.

Therefore, in prophetic ministry both preaching and teaching is involved. Very clearly women "prophets" or more accurately, prophetesses, are involved in preaching and teaching. According to the record of Scripture which we have seen, they were divinely appointed of God to do so, and to do so over an entire nation, not just the women.

I Cor 11:5 "But every woman who prays or prophesies. . ." Paul never disputes the woman's right to pray or prophesy in public, he here only addresses the social custom of the day - the covering of the head with hair or a veil. Of course, in verse 16, he emphasizes that this is a social custom and not an ordinance of the church (prostitutes or immoral women of that day shaved their head and came out uncovered in public, and this was considered a shame). Dr. Stanley Horton, a leading Pentecostal Theologian, says in regard to this verse, women are equally free to pray and to prophesy publicly, that is, in the congregation. (What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit, Dr. Stanley Horton, Gospel Publishing House, 1976. Pg. 206).

If Paul condones women's public address of the congregation in the ministry of the Word in I Cor 11:5, certainly he is not going to contradict himself in I Cor 14:34-35 (then too would Scripture be in error, if it were self-contradictory).

I Cor 14:34-35 says "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. 35 And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church." This is a commonly misinterpreted passage. According to noted Bible scholar Dr. Finis Dake, "This does not contradict the fact that women were free to pray and prophesy in the church (I cor 11:5, 13; Acts 2:16-21; Acts 21:9, Joel 2:28-32)," and "If they will LEARN anything, not preach, pray, testify, or prophesy anything, let them ASK their husbands at home not at church." (Dake's Annotated Reference Bible, pg. 187, notes G & I)

Once again, Dr. Horton says, "while Paul is speaking about interruptions and disorder, he suggests that another type of interruption should be avoided: Women (who were usually uneducated in that day) were asking questions in an improper manner and thus contributing to confusion. They were to hold their questions and ask their husbands at home. This should apply to both men and women in matters that customs consider unbecoming. But Paul is in no sense trying to hinder women from prophesying, speaking in tongues, singing, or otherwise contributing to the worship. He expected women to pray and prophesy if the Spirit gave them a ministry (I Cor 11:5). The Bible makes no difference in spiritual manifestations between men and women." (Horton, pg 235)

Further, in considering the context of this verse, we see that Paul is speaking about the guidelines for the manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit in the public church service, surely he could not have meant women to be silent in this area for that would be a contradiction of Acts 2:17 and Joel 2:28, "And in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons, and your daughters shall prophesy."

Also, in I Corinthians 12, Paul says that we are one body, and that the gifts are given to each member of the body, both male and female, including the verbal gifts.

Scripture interprets Scripture. We must not take isolated verses out of context. We must interpret it within the entire counsel of God's Word. Studying all He has to say on the subject, and thereby gain a proper understanding.

Another often misinterpreted passage is I Timothy 2:11-12. "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. 12 And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence."

Correct interpretation of these verses requires us to pay attention to two factors:

1. The Word "AUTHORITY"-from the Greek "authenteo", is a compound word derived from "autos" - self, and "hentes" - working, meaning to exercises authority on one's own account or one who acts in his own authority. (Vine's, pg. 91-92)

The woman was not to teach (instruct or dictate) or usurp self-appointed authority over the man, but a woman in ministry, operates in the authority of Christ.

2. Secondly, notice that in v 11-12 Paul changes from the plural "men" and "women" which he uses in the preceding verses, to the singular "the woman" and "the man". "The man" is the Greek word "andros" derived from "aner" meaning "man" (an individual male), at times translated "husband," as it is in I Tim 3:2. (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, word #435, pg. 12).

Paul brings it down from the general corporate level to the individual personal level: a man and a woman. He continues the discourse by speaking of the relationship of Adam and Eve - speaking of the familial order - the man is the head of the household in marriage.

I Peter 3:1 "Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands" - he does not call for submission to all males.

Nowhere in the Bible does it say that women are subject to all men. The order of creations tells us that woman was taken from Adam's side. Not from his head to rule over him; nor from his foot to be beneath him, but from his side to be on level with him. In fact, Gal 3:28 says, ". . .there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 5:21, in speaking of the relationships in the body of Christ, Paul says "submitting yourselves one to another in the body of Christ"- speaking of brothers and sisters in Christ submitting one to another, not the sisters exclusively submitting to the brothers, but vice versa also. Then, the next verse he tells wives to submit to their husbands - once again, not to all males.

Scripture speaks for itself and when we look at the overall counsel of God's word, then we get a proper understanding of Biblical Doctrine. Let us not be guilty of taking individual Scriptures out of context and interpreting them according to our preconceived prejudices. If we allow Scripture to speak for itself, it very clearly makes provision for women in any level of ministry to which God has called her. Neither is there any Scriptural support to presume that the only reason a woman was called is because a man was not obedient. It is quite apparent from Scripture, that it is, and has always been a part of God's design.

Paul, in speaking of the preaching ministry, said "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the glory might be of God and not of ourselves" (I Cor 4:7). The treasure was the glorious Gospel of Christ (vs. 4), the message of God. The vessel was not important. If the call of God, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and the fruit of ministry are evident, the vessel is not of importance, whether male or female.

God surely will not anoint and bless the ministry of one who is operating outside of His will. Jesus, in speaking of false prophets, said: "You can identify them by their fruit. . . . A good tree produces good fruit. . . . and a bad tree cannot produce good fruit." (Matt 7:15-20).

Discern the full counsel of God's Word, and discern the fruit of this ministry, certainly God will not anoint that which is not pleasing to Him.