

In a world becoming obsessed with equal opportunities for men and women, the role of women in the church is being questioned.

The Bible is the only source of authority which deals with religious matters and although some religious teachers have used the Bible to support their views of women's role in the church, very few rest solely upon it.

In fact, it is commonly believed that the church has the authority to make new rules not necessarily consistent with Scripture. The church does not have such authority, as we are told in 2 Timothy:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,
2 Timothy 3:16, NIV

In other words, the Bible is able to guide God's people today as it was when it was first written. The message is simple, clear, logical.

In Paul's first epistle to Timothy, chapter 2, verses 8-15, he presents his instruction to women. Let us consider verses 11-14:

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.

1 Timothy 2:11-14, NIV

Other scriptures speak of circumstances in which women may speak and teach, such as Titus 2:3-5, but here in Timothy she is forbidden.

So what is it that Paul is insisting upon? The answer is that here, as in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, the Apostle is speaking of the regular meeting of the assembly when they are gathered together to worship God in fellowship.

At that time, the man, as Scripture instructs us, is to stand before the people as the representative of the Lord Himself, who chooses to speak in that way through his servant -- whereas the woman represents the church, itself in subjection to Christ, receiving her instruction from him. She is not to take a public place as teacher, nor to have authority over man.

The Apostle Paul who penned these works was no woman-hating bachelor. He was an inspired apostle of God, moved by the Holy Spirit and there are many references in his writings of women whom he held in high respect.

For example

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.

Romans 16:1-2, NIV

It seems that Phoebe was probably a rich woman who was going to Rome on business and it was to her that Paul trusted the responsible duty of delivering his "Epistle to Rome" to them.

Relationships

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, the Apostle Paul lays down a general principle on this subject:

Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

1 Corinthians 11:3, NIV

There are three relationships to note:

- 1. The relationship between men and women -- particularly husband and wife.
- 2. The relationship between man and Christ.
- 3. The relationship between Christ and God.

Let us consider these relationships in order of importance:

3. The relationship between Christ and God.

What do we know about Christ and God?

God was with him at all times (John 16:32), co-operating with him, helping him in all of his mighty works -- and in John 14:28 he states "my Father is greater than I".

God was the head or authority of Jesus. His was the final authority over the Son.

This represents the meaning of headship or final authority -- not a dictatorial authority but rather an authority of the closest, most intimate co-operation in being and in services.

2. The relationship between man and Christ

Examples of this relationship can be found in Ephesians 1:22, 5:3, Colossians 1:18 and in Colossians 2:19.

1. The relationship between men and women

God created Adam from "the dust of the ground" and breathed unto his nostrils the "breath of life" and when he requested a suitable helper, some one with whom he could speak to an equal terms, God created woman in a different way. He caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam and

took from him a rib and upon this rib built up the woman. Consequently Adam was able to say that she was "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh".

They had everything in common -- they thought and felt alike, they had the same joys and hopes, and were full of love and sympathy for each other. But the woman was made for the man -- not the other way around.

Each has their place in nature, and just as the one cannot change places with the other in nature, so we must not attempt to change places in the order which God has established from the very beginning in *his* order of worship.