

Lesson 5: A Biblical View of Gender and Leadership



Consider the following two passages as we begin...

1st Corinthians 11:5 NKJV

But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.

1st Corinthians 11:34-35 NKJV

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.

Hmmm. We have a term for verses like this. They are in _____.
Before we go too much further, we need to understand this concept.

When statements/positions are in tension, there are two possibilities to explain it.

First, one or both statements are _____ or _____.

Second, one or both statements are _____.

Obviously in scripture, we would like the second option to be true, but let's be as objective as possible in our analysis...

Starting off, I don't know of a single, clear _____ in scripture, so my assumption is that my understanding is flawed, not the Word.

Example #1 of Tension in Scripture - Romans vs James on Works

Romans 4:1-2 NKJV

*What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?
2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.*

James 2:21,26 NKJV

Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?²⁶ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Can you feel the tension? These two passages both discuss salvation, but they are referring to two different kinds of works.

Paul is discussing works that _____ salvation. Do these exist?

James is discussing works that _____ your faith is real. Do these exist?

A casual reading of James shows that James does NOT disagree with Paul and does NOT believe you can earn salvation by your works!!!

Example #2 of Tension – Resurrection Spices and the Sabbath

Mark 16:1 NKJV

Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.

Luke 23:55-56 NKJV

And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid.⁵⁶ Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

So, did the women buy spices before the sabbath or after? _____.

The key to understanding this timeline? _____.

If you want to read more, check out the Bible study,

Reconciling the Resurrection Accounts, on the church website.

Back to the Main Event – Women, Leadership and Speaking in Church!

What do we know so far...

Paul (who wrote both 1st Corinthians and 1st Timothy) gives direct instructions on how men and women are to be differently adorned when in private prayer or giving public prophesy.

To prophesize is to speak _____ - _____.

This is kind-a... the exact opposite of _____.

First clue in resolving the tension is that silence may not mean _____.

**Paul also endorses and celebrates women teaching in the scriptures.
So we have these passages in tension too.**

1st Timothy 2:11-12 NKJV

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.

Acts 18:24-26 NKJV

Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. ²⁵ This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

**Pause for a moment and consider how _____ - _____
this paragraph in Acts 18 would feel in the ancient world...**

Nevertheless, Paul, relayed through the historian Luke, directly and carefully includes Priscilla as one of the teachers and mentors in the life of Apollos.

Priscilla helped _____ Apollos,

who was already _____ in his knowledge of the scriptures.

One last simple, but critical, question... **What exactly is _____?**

1st Corinthians 11:34-35 NKJV

Let your women keep silent in the churches...

³⁵ *...for it is shameful for women to speak in church.*

Acts 2:46-47 NKJV

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

When is it church and when is it not church?

When does church begin in the first century, book of Acts world?

What we call church is a medieval _____ oriented around a building and a service schedule.

The New Testament church is defined not by a schedule or a building...

Colossians 1:24 NKJV

I now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.

**What is the church? _____ are the church.
It is not a building.**

**When does church start? When you are _____,
it starts for you. It is not a weekly schedule.
It is a relationship and a lifestyle.**

We have the Necessary Keys to Unlock These Texts...

These texts are best understood as Paul addressing two different problems in two different church contexts and offering Apostolic guidance on what to do.

1st Timothy 2

Quick background... Paul is writing to Timothy who is organizing churches and setting up pastors in Ephesus. A city with an intense culture of goddess worship. The Greeks there built a temple to Artemis, and the Romans renamed her Diana. The temple itself was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

In light of history, we know that gentile women raised in temple service believed it was their right to rule the city and its inhabitants. So consider what Paul wrote in light of this knowledge.

1st Timothy 2:12 KJV

But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

1st Timothy 2:12 NIV

I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.

The verb here for taking _____ (to usurp or in the Greek “authenteo”) is a violent and dominating action. It is certainly something that no one, no woman and no man should attempt in God’s church. This is what Paul instructs against in 1st Timothy.

1st Corinthians 14

This passage is addressing a differently problem than 1st Timothy in Ephesus. The gentile Corinthian church had numerous problems including division and fighting. Paul’s instructions in 1st Corinthians 14 appear directly related to asking questions and avoiding shameful interactions.

Since teaching and prophesying are clearly not the issue for Paul, this must be connected to resolving church fights. **He teaches here that public church fights between men and women are to be avoided if at all possible.** I firmly agree.

A Gnostic Warning...

Be warned of the evils of Greek Gnostic philosophy and its influence in the early church. Gnostics had a very anti-female worldview believing that men were inherently more Spiritual and valuable, and that women were more carnal and of much less spiritual worth. Paul writes strongly against Gnosticism in the book of Colossians, spending most of the book directly destroying Gnostic ideas.

Gnostics grew very influential in the early Roman Catholic church, which is the basis for the belief that priests must be men and should not marry.

One Last Note...

If you doubt Paul's views on women and leadership, you have another problem to resolve. In the midst of Paul's closing salutations in Romans, we find:

Romans 16:7 NKJV

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles...

Not just a female apostle, but one that is better than _____.

What are we to conclude?

Are there limits on the roles of women in the church?

God can work in and through men and woman and that males and females should be in submission to leadership and obey those that have rule over them. Do not usurp or grab authority. Do not attack Godly leadership. Do not hold an attitude towards those trying to save your soul. **God gave us leaders to equip the saints, to feed the body of Christ, and to guide us into maturity and unity. We should allow and celebrate Godly authority in our lives!**

It is certainly God's plan for men to generally lead in homes and in churches, but God can raise up and call women as well to leadership roles. We should look at these opportunities in a balanced way and celebrate the call of God when we see it.