

Questions Often Asked About the Role of Women

H.E. Phillips

The inspired scriptures will perfect a man unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Any work that is not authorized by the scriptures is not a good work (Eph. 2:10). Every question must be answered by the word of God.

This article is limited in content because of space. I shall limit the questions to a woman's role in public worship and service.

I want to lay down three principles from God's word which I believe will govern all questions relating to the woman's role anywhere, especially in the church.

1. God created man and woman and specified their relationship in the family, in society and in the church (Gen. 3:16). That relationship does not change through the ages.
2. The word of God is complete to furnish everyone unto all good works which God has ordained (2 Tim. 3:17; Eph. 2:10). God ". . . hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness . . ." (2 Pet. 1:3).
3. The following divine instruction to women is clear, complete and concise:
 - ▶ "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (1 Cor. 14:34-35).
 - ▶ "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (1 Tim. 2:11-12).

These two passages place the following obligations upon every woman everywhere.

1. Not to speak in the church (assembly).
2. To keep silence with all subjection.
3. Not to usurp authority over the man.
4. To be under obedience.

These verses do not permit any women to speak in the assembly of the church, or to usurp any position of a man. This applies to all churches and all situations in which a woman would usurp any authority over men.

Woman in Creation

Woman is man's equal, created from him, for him, and for his glory (Gen. 2:22; 1 Cor. 11:7-9), but she was created to be in subjection to man (1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:11-12; Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1). The man was created first (1 Tim. 2:13). Woman was created afterward

for a helper and companion to man (Gen. 2:19-25). She is to be in subjection to man; he will rule over her (Gen. 3:16). This applies to society as well as to the family relationship (1 Tim. 2:11-12).

Woman's Role in the Church

The role of women in the church has been undergoing some change in the wrong direction for more than a generation. I have received questions from women across the country seeking some justification from scriptures to engage in a leading role in the public worship, and in the activity of the church which is not permitted to them.

1. Are Women Authorized to Preach?

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: ... for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (1 Cor. 14:34-35). " ... But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (1 Tim. 2:11-12). These passages prohibit women teaching or usurping authority over the man. They are not permitted to be in any position in the assembly of the church that is usurping the authority of the man.

The context of the above statement indicates that "church" refers to the assembly of the saints for edification and worship. The apostle was discussing the spiritual gift of tongues to edify the church.

2. Can women attend business meetings and participate in the discussion?

A woman is not to usurp authority of man; she is not to take a ruling position in the affairs of the local church. These meetings are called "business meetings" because they are usually the means of conducting the "business" affairs of the church in the absence of elders. Their intended function is to make decisions concerning the affairs of the church. The Bible forbids women taking the lead in any affair of the local church. Women should not attend "business meetings" of the church.

3. Can women serve the elements of the Lord's Supper to the congregation?

A woman is not to be in any position that usurps the authority of a man because the New Testament forbids that. There is no teaching in God's word that is more direct, positive and specific than 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

Serving at the Lord's supper is a leading role of men, and women cannot do so scripturally. Any public direction or service before the assembly for worship by a woman is usurping the authority of the man.

4. Can a woman lead a public prayer?

No, if she is in an assembly of men and women. Leading a public prayer is the same in principle

as speaking before the assembly to preach or teach. Public prayer is talking to God, but it is also speaking before the assembly, otherwise, how would they be following the petition to God. She would be violating 1 Timothy 2:12.

5. Can a woman say "amen" audibly during the sermon or at the end of a public prayer?

Most people who pray with one "leading" the prayer say "amen" to themselves, or very softly. To say "amen" audibly, loudly, is attempting to speak a word before the assembly. Could she not quietly say "amen" to herself and accomplish exactly what the Lord would permit her to do?

6. Can a woman serve as an elder?

No man or woman can serve as an elder or deacon who is not qualified according to the scriptures. 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 give the requirements that will qualify a man to be an elder, and no woman can attain these qualities. An elder is to be a man and to have one wife. No woman can have one wife by God's law. An elder must rule his own house well (1 Tim. 3:4), and the woman can not scripturally be the head of the house (Eph. 5:22-25).

An elder is to have the oversight (1 Pet. 5:2). Elders are to rule over the flock (Heb. 13:7,17; 1 Tim. 5:17). A woman would violate 1 Timothy 2:12 to try to be an elder or a deacon.

7. Can a woman lead singing?

Many women have good singing voices. Some of them have good knowledge of the Bible and have a good vocabulary, but they are not permitted to speak in the church (assembly) over the man. Directing singing is taking a leading role in part of the public worship, and a woman is not permitted to do that.

In rare cases when very small numbers of saints meet, and only one or two men are present, a lot of help could come from one or two of the sisters, but even here a woman is not to "lead" singing if a man is present. He should try to direct the singing.

8. Can a woman make the announcements?

Any public speaking in the assembly for worship is a violation of 1 Timothy 2:12. She cannot speak or teach over the man, and cannot usurp the authority of the man. She should not be in the position of a man.

A woman should not try to circumvent the word of God by trying to take the role of leadership and rule in the church through her husband, father or brother. In some areas this is what disturbs churches which would otherwise be at peace. Let the women fulfill the role God

gave to them, and let the men treat the women as God requires them to do. This will strengthen both the home and the church.

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