

God Has Roles For All Of Us

Those who are called Christian need to know that God has roles for all of us. Men are limited in what they can say in the assembly too (I Corinthians 14:27,30). God has revealed that only certain older men can serve as pastors of His church (Titus 1:5, I Timothy 3:1). God has revealed that only certain older women may be pensioned by the church (I Timothy 5:9).

It is important to understand that the underlying theme of being a Christian is submitting to God in the roles He has given us, and understanding that submission in our roles does not make us unequal. All Christians are called to submit (*"submitting to one another in the fear of God"* Ephesians 5:21). Christian submission is in marriage (Ephesians 5:22), in the church (Hebrews 13:17), in our workplace (I Peter 2:18), our government (Romans 13:1), and most importantly, to God Himself (James 4:7).

A Christian is defined as one who has put on Christ (Galatians 3:26-28). No one can put on Christ without submission to others, and submission to God in the role He has given. Jesus

Christ teaches us this by His life:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

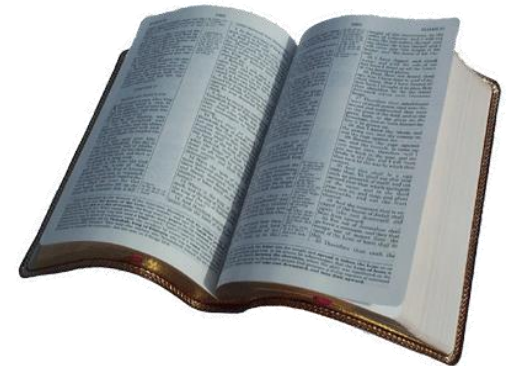
Philippians 2:5-7

No, women cannot be preachers within the church. They cannot serve as pastors (elders) or deacons. It is not because God is prejudiced, but because He has ordained roles for men and women, young and old. If nothing else, we can consider it as a test of submission to God for Grace.

"Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.'"

1 Peter 5:5b

The Role of Women in the Church



A Difficult Passage:

“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. 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.” I Corinthians 14:34-35

This is a passage that can be difficult to understand and even more difficult to practice for people in our society today. Is this passage meant only for the time in history it was written, or was Paul merely a “sexist” writer who sought to limit the opportunities women have within the church that Jesus built? With an open mind and an open heart, we can understand that neither of these points are true, but instead we can find God’s will for both men and women in His church.

Is it possible that the apostle Paul was merely a prejudiced against women? This is a problematic statement; if Paul’s writings were prejudiced, then the necessary conclusion is that the Holy Spirit, who inspired Paul to say these things, was prejudiced. We are

clearly told that *“no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”* in II Peter 1:20-21. This is the same apostle who proclaimed *“in truth I perceive that God shows no partiality”* in Acts 10:34. Clearly we must conclude that God has no bias, and that His apostles wrote without bias.

Is it possible Paul wrote this only because of the social expectations of the time? Paul did write in the first century, a time when women’s rights were severely limited. However, Paul had no problem making this extremely bold proclamation: *“there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* in Galatians 3:28. This profound statement clearly said that women and men were equal in the eyes of God, not to mention it leveled racial and class divides. The church Jesus built was not formed with respect to the ideas of the world; early Christian critics rightly claimed that Christianity *“turned the world upside down”* (Acts 17:6)

God’s Will in the Church

If we can conclude Paul wrote this passage with God’s direction (as well as a similar statement in I Timothy 2:11-14), then we must conclude that God’s will is that women are not to speak within the church. If we are truly seekers of God’s will, we would not try to find ways to avoid what God desires. Instead, we will try to find out how to apply this in our lives. Therefore, our next question is: what does this mean?

I Corinthians 14 was written to address the church when it assembled for worship. We can see this in verse 23 when Paul says *“therefore if the whole church comes together in one place”*. This assembly was the weekly one (Acts 20:7) for the taking of communion (I Corinthians 11:20). Sometimes we call this the worship assembly, or just the assembly. Therefore, we can conclude that God does not desire for women to speak to the assembly when it is gathered.