

***A WOMEN’S RIGHT TO PREACH***  
***(Is It Biblical?)***

*Dennis McBride - June, 1995*  
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***TABLE OF CONTENTS***

<b><i>Topic</i></b>	<b><i>Page</i></b>
1. Introduction	1
2. Primary Texts	1
3. Primary Arguments	
• From Natural Qualifications	2
• From Superior Ability	3
• From Intellectual and Moral Pursuits	3
• From Historical Precedence	5
• From Galatians 3:28	8
• From Joel 2:28-29 & Acts 2:17-18	10
• From 1 Corinthians 11:4-5	14
• From 1 Corinthians 14:34-35	19
• From 1 Timothy 2:11-15	26
• From Slavery as a Model for the Role of Women	35
• From Biblical Precedence	39
• From the Early Church Fathers	47
4. Conclusion	48
5. Summary of Key Principles	49
6. Bibliography	51

# ***A WOMAN’S RIGHT TO PREACH: IS IT BIBLICAL?***

*Dennis McBride ~ 1998*

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## ***INTRODUCTION***

The role of women with respect to teaching and preaching in the local church has long been a topic of discussion and debate, with views ranging from her full involvement to total prohibition. The contemporary trend is toward equal ministry roles for men and women, as evidenced by the ever-increasing number of women attending seminaries and being ordained to the pastorate.

I believe that women’s ministries in general, when conducted within biblical parameters, are vital to the overall spiritual health of the church. Further, I believe that church leaders should encourage women to minister their spiritual gifts, and should provide opportunities for them to do so.

More specifically, I believe that Scripture permits women to pray or prophesy within biblical guidelines and with a proper attitude of submission (1 Cor. 11:3-4; Acts 21:9), to witness to women or men in public, to pray with believers or non-believers in a non-leadership role, and to teach children and other women (Titus 2:3-4; 1 Tim. 5:16).

However, I also believe that Scripture does not permit women to preach or teach in the corporate gathering of the local assembly, to hold authoritative leadership roles in the church (e.g., Pastor or elder), or in any other way to exercise authority over men. This paper is a response to the most common arguments from those who believe otherwise.

As a matter of procedure, for each argument I give a brief summary, its main points, my responses, and the key principles. In most cases I also include documented representative quotes. I provide a complete bibliography at the end of the study.

## ***PRIMARY TEXTS***

These are the primary texts used to support a woman’s right to preach. I will consider each text as it appears in the various arguments below.

- ***Joel 2:28-29*** - “It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”
- ***Acts 2:17-18*** - “‘And it shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even upon My bondslaves, both man and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy.’”
- ***Galatians 3:28*** - “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
- ***1 Corinthians 11:4-5*** - “Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head. But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved.”
- ***1 Corinthians 14:34-35*** - “Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.”

- *I Timothy 2:11-15* - “Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression. But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.”

## **PRIMARY ARGUMENTS**

### **I. ARGUMENT FROM NATURAL QUALIFICATIONS**

#### **a. Summary of the argument**

***By God’s design, women are naturally well suited for public speaking in general, and pulpit preaching in particular. Therefore, they should not be prevented from or criticized for ministering in those capacities.***

#### **b. Representative quote**

“The first and most common objection urged against the public exercises of women is that they are unnatural and unfeminine. . . . [However] we cannot discover anything either unnatural or immodest in a Christian woman, becomingly attired, appearing on a platform or in a pulpit. By nature she seems fitted to grace either. God has given to woman a graceful form and attitude, winning manners, persuasive speech, and, above all, a finely-toned emotional nature, all of which appear to us eminent natural qualifications for public speaking” (Catherine Booth, *Female Ministry: Woman’s Right to Preach the Gospel*, p. 5).

(*Note:* Catherine Booth was the wife of General William Booth, founder of The Salvation Army. She was theologically astute, articulate, and one of the primary voices for women’s ministries in her day. I quote extensively from her book because for more than 100 years it has stood as the definitive word on female ministry for millions of Salvationists and others committed to equal ministry roles for men and women.)

#### **c. My responses**

- 1) In the quote cited above, Mrs. Booth is addressing not only the role of women in the pulpit, but also women in public speaking roles in general, which was a significant issue in her day. Her rationale for both roles is the same.
- 2) If a woman’s right to preach were simply a matter of natural abilities such as form, attitude, manners, persuasive speech, or a finely-toned emotional nature, this argument would carry weight. But the issue is one of biblical role distinctions and spiritual qualifications, not natural abilities or physical appearance. Despite the many wonderful graces and abilities God has given women, my only concern here is whether or not He has given her the right to preach.
- 3) Mrs. Booth’s comment that “we cannot discover anything either unnatural or immodest in a Christian woman, becomingly attired, appearing on a platform

or in a pulpit” misses the point. The question is whether or not the practice is *biblical*, not whether it’s natural or modest.

- 4) Even among men, natural abilities do not determine the right to preach.

***Key Principle:***

- The right to preach is not based on natural abilities, but on biblical authority, spiritual qualifications, and God’s sovereign design for His church.

**2. ARGUMENT FROM SUPERIOR ABILITY**

***a. Summary of the argument***

*Some female preachers are more effective communicators than some of their male counterparts. Therefore, it makes no sense to silence the more effective for the sake of the less.*

***b. My response***

While it may be true that the communication skills of some women preachers are superior to some male preachers, the right to preach isn’t determined by superior performance. God can use weak and faltering messengers like Moses (Ex. 4:10-16), as well as eloquent messengers like Apollos (Acts 18:24). The Holy Spirit’s power and blessing are the keys to truly effective preaching, not superior communication skills.

***Key Principles:***

- Biblical guidelines, not superior communication skills, must decide the question of a woman’s right to preach.
- The Holy Spirit’s power and blessing are the keys to truly effective preaching.

**3. ARGUMENT FROM INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL PURSUITS**

***a. Summary of the argument***

“Why should woman be confined exclusively to the kitchen and [to other domestic duties], any more than man to the field and workshop? Did not God, and has not nature, assigned to man his sphere of labour, ‘to til the ground and to dress it?’ And, if exemption is claimed from this kind of toil for a portion of the male sex, on the ground of their possessing ability for intellectual and moral pursuits, [women] must be allowed to claim the same privilege for some; nor can we see the exception more unnatural in the one case than in the other, or why God in this solitary instance has endowed a being with powers which He never intended her to employ” (Booth, *Female Ministry*, p. 5).

***b. Main points and responses***

- 1) ***Women should not be restricted to domestic duties any more than men should be restricted to the field or workshop.***

***Response:***

Writing more than 100 years ago, Mrs. Booth addressed a social climate in which women's roles were considerably more narrow than today. Therefore, her comments about women being confined exclusively to domestic tasks, or being restricted in their intellectual and moral pursuits, do not necessarily apply to our modern culture.

However, even in Scripture women aren't confined exclusively to domestic duties. The Bible portrays domestic duties as woman's *primary* role, but not her *only* role. It gives examples of godly women whose pursuits went beyond the home--in some cases augmenting her domestic duties (e.g., the Proverbs 31 woman); in others no direct correlation between her work outside the home and her domestic duties is evident (e.g., Deborah: a judge, Lydia: a business woman). Similarly, Scripture gives examples of a variety of roles for men beyond farming or shop work (e.g., educators, pastors, fishermen, and businessmen).

- 2) ***Whether a woman works inside or outside the home, God expects her to develop their natural capabilities fully.***

***Response:***

I wholeheartedly agree. I'm simply clarifying the parameters within which those capabilities are to function within the local church.

- 3) ***Intellectual and moral pursuits are as appropriate for women as for men.***

***Response:***

Mrs. Booth's contention that women, like some of their male counterparts, have the right to break out of their original sphere of labor and pursue intellectual and moral interests, relates more to a woman's role in society than to the pulpit. Many intelligent and morally refined men aren't gifted, qualified, or called to preach. The freedom for intellectual and moral pursuits is a separate issue from the right to preach.

- 4) ***Why would God give women the intelligence and ability to preach if He never intended her to do so?***

***Responses:***

- a) Mrs. Booth's question of "why God in this solitary instance has endowed a being with powers which He never intended her to employ" implies that preaching is the only expression available to a woman for the intelligence and communication skills God has given to her. Clearly that is not the case. Many opportunities are available for godly women to minister their spiritual gifts and natural abilities.

- b) It is not a woman's communication skills that God limits, but only the context in which she can exercise them.
- c) Having the *ability* to do something doesn't guarantee the *right* to do it.

Scripture is replete with examples of people who had the ability to do things God didn't permit them to do. For example:

- Saul had the ability, but not the right, to offer a sacrifice (1 Sam. 13).
- Women had the ability, but not the right, to pray and prophesy with their heads uncovered (1 Cor. 11).
- The Corinthians had the ability, but not the right, to exercise their spiritual gifts freely in the corporate assembly (1 Cor. 14).
- Many men have the ability, but not the right, to serve as leaders in the church (1 Tim. 3).

Similarly, a woman may have the ability and opportunity to pursue a public preaching ministry, but that doesn't guarantee her God's permission or authority to do so. God gives every good and perfect gift and has the right to govern them as He pleases. That's why His Word, not natural abilities or opportunities, must be the final authority in this matter.

***Key Principles:***

- I do not deny a woman's intelligence or her ability to preach.
- However, having the ability to do something and having God's permission to do it are two different things.
- Only when women minister within their God-given parameters can they truly develop their capabilities fully (both for the glory of God and the benefit of their fellow Christians).

**4. ARGUMENT FROM HISTORICAL PRECEDENCE**

***a. Summary of the argument***

“Who would dare to charge the sainted Madame Guyon, Lady Maxwell, the talented mother of the Wesleys, Mrs. Fletcher, Mrs. Elizabeth Fry, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Whiteman, or Miss Marsh with being unwomanly or ambitious. . . . Yet these were all more or less public women, every one of them expounding and exhorting from the Scriptures to mixed companies of men and women.

“If the Word of God forbids female ministry, we would ask how it happens that so many of the most devoted handmaidens of the Lord have felt themselves constrained by the Holy Ghost to exercise it? Surely there must be some mistake somewhere, for the Word and the Spirit cannot contradict each other. Either the Word does not condemn women preaching, or these confessedly holy women have been deceived. Will anyone venture to assert that such women . . . have been deceived with respect

to their call to deliver the Gospel messages to their fellow-creatures?" (Booth, *Female Ministry*, pp. 6, 17-18).

"When the true light shines and God's words take the place of man's traditions, the doctor of divinity who shall teach that Paul commands women to be silent when God's Spirit urges her to speak, will be regarded as we should regard an astronomer who should teach that the sun is the earth's satellite" (Booth, *Female Ministry*, p. 4).

**b. Main points and responses**

- 1) ***Surely all the godly women who have preached over the years can't be mistaken about their calling.***

***Response:***

I disagree. They most certainly *can be* mistaken. And if my conclusions are correct, they *are* mistaken. For example, a man may feel "urged" or "called" by the Holy Spirit to be an elder in a church. Further, he may desire to serve in that capacity. Although it is a good thing he desires to do (1 Tim. 3:1), he must also meet the objective qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9. If he doesn't meet those qualifications, God has not called him to be an elder, no matter how strongly he may desire to serve. Similarly, if Scripture doesn't permit women to preach, the Holy Spirit will never urge them to do so, regardless of how strongly a woman may feel called to that ministry.

- 2) ***If God's Word forbids women to preach, how is it that the Holy Spirit prompts them to do so? Are the Spirit and the Word somehow at odds on this issue?***

***Responses:***

- a) The answer to both questions is no. The Holy Spirit *never* prompts a Christian to behave contrary to God's Word, and the Spirit is *never* at odds with the Word. However, being "urged by the Holy Spirit" is very subjective, so if there is a conflict between His apparent urging and what Scripture teaches, those involved must search the Scriptures more diligently to understand God's will more clearly. And Scripture, which is God's objective and authoritative counsel, must have the final say in the matter.
- b) One of the challenges in resolving this issue is that some of the Bible passages addressing it are not easy to interpret. But it is every Christian's responsibility to be a diligent student of the Word and to yield to its authority as he or she gains more understanding. That is especially true of anyone desiring to be a preacher or teacher (James 3:1).
- c) However, we should not assume that every woman who preaches does so from convictions shaped by a careful study of the applicable Bible passages. Often their reasons are far more subjective (e.g., "God has called me to preach."). Sometimes, as in The Salvation Army, the

organization's policy that its women officers must preach may be the primary factor.

- 3) ***Many godly women have preached the Word with apparent success, which is clear evidence of God's blessing and approval. God does not bless disobedience.***

***Responses:***

- a) This appears to be a strong argument because some women apparently have been used mightily of God in public preaching ministries. However, the apparent success of a preaching ministry is not the key issue here. Ministering within biblical parameters is the issue, and therein is true success.

Even when the Lord is pleased to honor His Word through preaching, that doesn't mean He is pleased with the preacher, or that He is honoring disobedience. That's clear from Philippians 1:15-18, which speaks of men who preached simply to cause the Apostle Paul grief, yet Paul rejoiced because the gospel was being proclaimed. If God can honor His Word through sinful men with impure motives, surely He can honor it through godly women with pure motives. But it is always best to minister within biblical parameters, and never to presume upon God's grace.

- b) A woman's right to preach isn't determined on the basis of how many women do it, or who those women are.

Equally godly and gifted women as those listed by Mrs. Booth disagree with her position and would never minister from the pulpit. However, God's will in this matter isn't determined by majority vote, personal experience, or subjective call (i.e., feeling "compelled by the Holy Spirit" to preach). It's determined by divine revelation alone.

- c) Questioning the behavior of sincere women who feel called to preach can seem judgmental or divisive. However, Christians doing something doesn't automatically make it a scriptural thing to do. Paul rebuked even godly Peter for inappropriate behavior (Gal. 2:11-14).

Additionally, questioning a woman's right to preach doesn't automatically impugn the motives of women preachers. Certainly motives are important, but our discussion concerns methods, not motives. Sometimes Christians with the best of motives will do something unwise or unstudied. Questioning their behavior doesn't necessarily question their motives.

I hasten to add, however, that motives and overall doctrinal integrity are key factors in evaluating whether or not a preacher's ministry is of the Lord. For example, some of today's most well known television preachers (both male and female) proclaim Christ but represent theological systems that are novel or clearly unbiblical. Therefore,



even though their audiences may number in the millions, they should not be preaching.

***Key Principles:***

- Majority vote, personal experience, or a subjective "call" doesn't determine God's will in this matter. It's determined by divine revelation alone.
- Because Christians do something doesn't necessarily make it a Christian thing to do.
- The Lord will honor His Word despite the messenger.
- To question the right of women to preach doesn't necessarily impugn the motives of women preachers.

**5. ARGUMENT FROM GALATIANS 3:28**

***Galatians 3:28*** - "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

***a. Summary of the argument***

***Since there is no distinction between male and female in Christ, neither should there be any distinction in the pulpit (or any other ministry for that matter). To prohibit women from preaching is to elevate men over women, thereby violating their equality in Christ.***

***b. Representative quote***

"In Galatians 3:26-28 Paul reminds us that we have all been baptized into Christ and there is no longer 'Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female'; for we are 'all one in Christ Jesus.' Paul is speaking of three different dominant-submissive categories, all of which have been nullified by our being baptized into and clothed with Christ.

"The baptized Greek, clothed with the all-sufficiency of Christ, is as much a son of God as is the previously preferred Jew. Similarly, the emancipated slave of early America, once clothed with Christ, met all qualifications for any church office--contrary to the convictions of many church teachers of that era. Any dissection of this passage that offers less to women than other categories would suggest a prejudiced exegesis. The passage goes on to affirm the purpose of Christ's coming: 'to redeem those under the law [Greek, slave, female] that we [all] might receive the full rights of sons' (v. 5)" (Austin H. Stouffer, "The Ordination of Women: YES", *Christianity Today*, February 20, 1981, p. 13).

***c. Responses***

- 1) In Galatians 3:28 Paul illustrates unity in Christ by contrasting it with three prominent points of diversity of his day (i.e., Jew & Greek = nationality/religion; slave & free = social status; male & female = gender).
- 2) Paul's point is the *spiritual* equality of believers, not their *functional* equality.

(The right to preach and teach is a matter of function, not spiritual equality or inequality.)

- a) The context of this verse is salvation, not spiritual gifts or spiritual ministries.

“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise” (vv. 26-29).

- b) All who are in Christ come to Him through faith and are spiritual equals. However, not everyone functions the same within the Body of Christ because the Holy Spirit distributes gifts and responsibilities according to His sovereign will (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11). Everyone's role is important, but everyone's role isn't the same. That's the principle Paul argues in 1 Corinthians 12.
- c) That point is commonly misunderstood. For example, in the representative quote above, Mr. Stouffer rightly says that Christ came to redeem those who are under the law that all who believe might receive the full rights of sonship (Gal. 4:5). But then he confuses freedom from the Law and equal rights as sons (which is the point of the passage) with equal roles in society and the church (which is *not* the point of the passage).

Mr. Stouffer's comments (that “the baptized Greek, clothed with the all-sufficiency of Christ, is as much a son of God as is the previously preferred Jew. Similarly, the emancipated slave of early America, once clothed with Christ, met all qualifications for any church office--contrary to the convictions of many church teachers of that era. Any dissection of this passage that offers less to women than other categories would suggest a prejudiced exegesis”) would be correct and more consistent with Paul's point if they read “The baptized Greek, clothed with the all-sufficiency of Christ, is as much a son of God as is the previously preferred Jew. Similarly, the emancipated slave of early America, once clothed with Christ, *is as much a son of God as is his Christian master*. Any dissection of this passage that offers less to women than other categories would suggest a prejudiced exegesis.”

- 3) A brief discussion of biblical authority and submission is appropriate at this point because God applies it even to spiritual equals.

- a) Authority and submission doesn't imply personal superiority or inferiority. It's a functional distinction intended to maintain harmony and order within human institutions such as society and the family. The church is no exception:

**Hebrews 13:17** - "Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."

**1 Peter 5:1-2** - "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God."

- b) Jesus Himself submitted to the Father without diminishing His nature, character, or personal value in any way (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3; Phil. 2:5-11). Therefore, God does not violate spiritual equality or diminish His high calling for woman when He places her under man's authority in the church. On the contrary, He shelters her by providing an environment in which she can achieve her highest spiritual potential without undue vulnerability.

**Key Principles:**

- Galatians 3:28 speaks of spiritual equality, not functional equality.
- The right to preach and teach is a functional distinction within the Body of Christ.
- Authority and submission doesn't imply personal superiority or inferiority.
- Christ Himself demonstrated the importance of authority and submission.

**6. ARGUMENTS FROM JOEL 2:28-29 & ACTS 2:17-18**

**Joel 2:28-29** - "It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days."

**Acts 2:17-18** - "'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even upon My bondslaves, both man and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy.'"

**a. Summary of the arguments**

According to the Apostle Peter, Acts 2:17-18 is the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-29, which says that women as well as men will prophesy (i.e., preach). Women did, in fact, prophesy at Pentecost, and Scripture indicates that they will continue to do so throughout the church age.

**b. *Representative quotes***

- 1) “God had promised in the last days to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, and that the daughters, as well as the sons of mankind, should prophesy. And Peter says most emphatically, respecting the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, ‘This is that which is spoken of by the prophet Joel,’ etc. (Acts 2:16-18). Words more explicit, and an application of prophecy more direct than this, does not occur within the range of the New Testament” (Booth, *Female Ministry*, p. 10).
- 2) “It seems truly astonishing that Bible students, with the second chapter of the Acts before them, should not see that an imperative decree has gone forth from God, the execution of which women cannot escape; whether they like or not, they ‘shall’ prophesy throughout the whole course of this dispensation; and they have been doing so, though they and their blessed labours are not much noticed” (Booth, *Female Ministry*, p. 8).

**c. *Main points and responses***

- 1) ***In Acts 2:17-18 Peter quotes from Joel to explain the phenomena that occurred on the Day of Pentecost, and declares that the Day of Pentecost was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (cf. Joel 2:28-29).***

***Response:***

- b. Some aspects of Joel’s extended prophecy were not fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (e.g., verse 30, which speaks of blood, fire, pillars of smoke, the sun turning dark, and the moon turning to blood). Therefore, I believe that Pentecost was only a partial fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, which will be completed after Israel’s future repentance and restoration in connection with the Second Coming of Christ (Zech. 12:10; 13:1).
  - a. Pentecost was a *pre-fulfillment* of Joel’s prophecy rather than its *fulfillment*. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon some of the “sons and daughters” of Israel at that time, but a time is coming when He will be poured out upon *all* of Israel.
- 2) ***Joel says that women as well as men would prophesy, and women as well as men did prophesy.***

***Response:***

I agree that according to Joel’s prophecy women as well as men were to prophesy, and that some women did, in fact, prophesy in the early church (that’s clear from 1 Corinthians 11:4-5, which we’ll examine later).

- 3) ***The phrase “last days” (Acts 2:17) doesn’t refer to Pentecost only but to the entire present age. Therefore women as well as men will prophesy throughout the church age.***

**Responses:**

- a) I disagree that women will prophesy throughout the church age (see my response to “4)” below.
- b) I agree that “last days” isn’t limited to Pentecost, and that it could refer to the entire church age. However, I do not think that is the case in this context. I agree with those who teach that Joel’s prophecy refers to a time “immediately preceding the return of Christ, when all the particulars (e.g., v. 20 and Rev. 6:12) of the prophecy will come to pass. Peter reminded his hearers that, knowing Joel’s prophecy, they should have recognized what they were seeing as a work of the Spirit, not a result of drunkenness” (Dr. Charles Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible*, pp. 1646-47).
- c) Pentecost was a foretaste of what is to come--a partial fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, which will be completed “after Israel’s future repentance and restoration (Zech. 12:10; 13:1) in connection with the second advent of Christ. . . . The Holy Spirit will then be poured out on all classes in Israel who belong to the believing remnant (Joel 2:32)” (*Ryrie Study Bible*, p. 1355).

**4) To prophesy is to preach.**

A “prophet” need not be a foreteller of future events, but is “a person gifted for the exposition of divine truth” (Harper’s Greek Lexicon).

“The scriptural idea of the terms preach and prophesy, stands so inseparably connected as one and the same thing, that we should find it difficult to get aside from the fact that women did preach, or, in other words, prophesy, in the early ages of Christianity, and have continued to do so down to the present time to just the degree that the spirit of the Christian dispensation had been recognized” (Booth, pp. 11-12, citing Phoebe Palmer).

**Response:**

I *disagree* that “prophesy” in Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17 is synonymous with preaching.

- a) Joel mentions prophecy in connection with dreams and visions, which implies that it had a revelatory element to it (i.e., God was revealing something directly to the prophet). That’s the character Paul gives prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14:29-33:

“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace” (emphasis added).

- b) The Greek word translated “prophecy” is *prophemi*, which literally means “forth” (*pro*) to speak (*phemi*), or “to speak forth.” It comprised a predictive element (to speak forth in relation to time--prior to an event) and a preaching element (to speak forth to a group of people, to preach, to proclaim, etc.). It was God speaking through individuals for the purpose of edification, exhortation, and consolation (1 Cor. 14:3).
- c) New Testament prophets didn’t always speak predictively; they often reiterated and applied prior revelation. But New Testament prophets always had a predictive element to their ministries even though every prophecy they delivered wasn’t necessarily predictive.

For example:

- Agabus “indicated by the Spirit” (i.e., predicted) a great famine (Acts 11:28), and Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21:11).
  - Ananias disclosed the future ministry of Paul (Acts 22:12-15).
  - Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the New Testament writers recorded past, present, and future elements of God’s redemptive plan.
  - Paul referred to Scripture as “the Scriptures of the prophets” (i.e., prophetic writings - Rom. 16:25).
- d) The revelatory and predictive elements of New Testament prophecies are what distinguish them from teaching and preaching. Prophets received direct revelation from God; teachers reiterate what has already been revealed.

“In such passages as 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:20, the ‘prophets’ are placed after the ‘Apostles,’ since not the prophets of Israel are intended, but the ‘gifts’ of the ascended Lord, Eph. 4:8, 11; cf. Acts 13:1; . . . ; the purpose of their ministry was to edify, to comfort, and to encourage the believers, 1 Cor. 14:3, while its effect upon unbelievers was to show that the secrets of a man’s heart are known to God, to convict of sin, and to constrain to worship, vv. 24, 25.

“With the completion of the canon of Scripture prophecy apparently passed away, 1 Cor. 13:8, 9. In his measure the teacher has taken the place of the prophet, cf. the significant change in 2 Pet. 2:1. The difference is that, whereas the message of the prophet was a direct revelation of the mind of God for the occasion, the message of the teacher is gathered from the completed revelation contained in the Scriptures” (W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 492).

- e) However we define *prophecy* in Joel and Acts, we must remember that Acts is a book of transitions. In chapter two Peter explains the initial prophetic utterances prompted by the coming of the Holy Spirit in partial fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, but he does not give guidelines for prophetic utterances in the church. Those are given in the epistles,

which are not transitional, but normative and instructional for the church.

For example:

- 1] In 1 Peter 4:10-11, Peter says, “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God.” “Utterances of God” refers to Scripture (cf. Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2). Nowhere are Christians instructed to expect, seek, or teach new revelations.
- 2] In the Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy & Titus) great emphasis is placed on elders knowing, teaching, and guarding the “faithful Word which is in accordance with the teaching” (Titus 1:9). However, nothing is said of prophecy or additional revelations.
- 3] I believe there are no prophets and no gift of prophecy today.

***Key Principles:***

- Joel prophesied that women as well as men would prophesy, and women as well as men *did* prophesy.
- Joel doesn’t indicate that prophecy will continue throughout the church age.
- Pentecost was only a partial fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy--a foretaste of what is to come in fullness in connection with Christ’s Second Coming.
- Joel and Peter don’t comment on the role of prophecy in the church. Paul does that in the passages we will examine later.
- In the New Testament, prophecy and preaching are not synonymous.
- New Testament prophecy has a revelatory element to it; preaching doesn’t.
- All New Testament prophets had a predictive element to their ministries.
- Teachers and preachers have replaced prophets in the church.
- Teaching and preaching have replaced prophecy in the church.

**7. ARGUMENTS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 11:4-5**

*1 Corinthians 11:4-5* - “Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head. But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved.”

**a. *Our interpretive task***

- 1) The Bible is God’s Word and therefore will never contradict itself when rightly interpreted. Therefore, if there is an apparent contradiction, we must explore the biblical data more carefully and allow the clearer statements of Scripture to shed light on the more obscure statements.

- 2) Regarding a woman's right to preach, we face an apparent contradiction between Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 11:4-5 (a woman should cover her head when praying or prophesying), 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (women are not permitted to speak in the church), and 1 Timothy 2:12-13 (women are not permitted to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet).
- 3) Obviously, if praying and prophesying involve verbal communication, a woman can't do it and remain silent at the same time. Resolving this apparent contradiction is the key to understanding whether or not a woman has the right to preach, and any conclusions we draw must harmonize all three passages.
- 4) Toward that end we must determine whether 1 Corinthians 11:4-5 is the key to understanding the other two passages, or if they are the key to understanding this passage. The differences of opinion among commentators will be evident as I discuss each passage.
- 5) My conclusion is that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:12-13 are the clearer statements and therefore shed light on 1 Corinthians 11:4-5.

***b. Main points, representative quotes, and my responses***

- 1) ***First Corinthians 11:4-5 “seems to prove beyond the possibility of dispute that in the early times women were permitted to speak [i.e., prophesy] to the ‘edification and comfort’ of Christians, and that the Lord graciously endowed them with grace and gifts for this service. What He did then, may He not be doing now?” (Booth, Female Ministry, p. 8).***

***Response:***

I agree that in the early church women were permitted to speak to the edification and comfort of Christians within certain parameters. I disagree that they were permitted to do so from the pulpit or pew in the corporate assembly (as I discuss below).

- 2) ***This passage shows the equality of men and women when praying or prophesying in the public assembly. Whatever kind of praying or prophesying men did, women did the same. And Paul never forbade the practice; he merely gave guidelines for its proper exercise.***

- a) “Verses 4 and 5 are parallel and reveal the equality of men and women in the church. In the Old Testament era, not the woman but the man received the sign of the covenant (e.g., Gen. 17). He served as representative for the woman. But in the New Testament era, male and female are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28). That is, both man and woman are equal before the Lord.

“This becomes evident when Paul ascribes the religious functions of praying and prophesying to both man and woman. Both men and women know that their prophesying consists of teaching and



preaching God’s revelation or exhorting and counseling others from the Scriptures” (Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, p. 369).

- b) “Whatever may be the meaning of praying and prophesying in respect to the man, they have precisely the same meaning in respect to the woman. . . . The only difference marked by the Apostle was that the man had his head uncovered, because he was representative of Christ; the woman had hers covered because she was placed by the order of God in subjection to the man; and because it was the custom both among Greeks and Romans, and among the Jews in express law that no woman should be seen abroad without a veil.

“This was and is the custom through all the East, and none but public prostitutes go without veils; if a woman should appear in public without a veil, she would dishonour her head--her husband. And she must appear like those woman who have their hair shaven off as the punishment of adultery” (Dr. Adam Clarke, cited in *Female Ministry*, p. 7).

**Responses:**

- a) We have already seen that Galatians 3:28 speaks of spiritual equality, not functional equality.
- b) I agree that whatever praying or prophesying means for men in 1 Corinthians 11:4-5, it means the same for women.
- c) I also agree that Paul did not prohibit praying and prophesying, but merely regulated it.
- d) However, I disagree that the context of 1 Corinthians 11:3-4 is the local assembly.

1] It is not conclusive that Paul had the public assembly in mind. His point is that whenever and wherever it is appropriate for men and/or women to pray or prophesy, they should do so with the proper symbols of submission so the male/female distinctions aren’t blurred. In chapter 14 he gives guidelines for the appropriate use of tongues and prophecy when the church gathers for worship, and there forbids women to participate (see also 1 Tim. 2:12).

2] “Paul does not establish the setting as the official service of worship in the church. It is likely he was referring to praying or prophesying in places other than the church gathering. That would certainly fit with the very clear directives in 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:12. . . .

“The New Testament places no restrictions on a woman’s witnessing in public to others, even to a man. Nor does it

prohibit women from taking non-leadership roles of praying with believers or for unbelievers. Likewise there are no prohibitions against teaching children and other women (cf. Titus 2:3-4; 1 Tim. 5:16). Women may have the gift of prophecy, as did Philip's four daughters (Acts 21:9), but they are not to prophesy in the meetings of the church where men are present." (MacArthur, *Different by Design*, p. 39).

- 3] "It is only necessary to combine the relevant passages to get the composite truth. Women may pray and prophesy within the boundaries of God's revelation, and with a proper sense of submission. And it is critical that their deportment in so doing reflects God's order. Certainly they must not appear rebellious against God's will" (John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, p. 257).
- 4] "This verse assumes that women will pray and prophesy in the presence of others but that would not have to be the public assembly. For women to lead the public assembly would violate other passages which Paul wrote" (Betty Price, *Women, Current Events and the Word of God*, Logos Bible Institute class syllabus, p. 31).
- 5] "The fact that the work of the prophets was for the benefit of the churches does not imply that their prophetic utterances were made or should be made only in the churches. On the contrary, the Scripture teaches other possibilities. . . . Of special importance is Acts 21:11f., where the activities of Agabus are not pictured as taking place in a meeting of the congregation. This leads us to the conclusion that Paul in ch. 11 speaks of a praying and a prophesying (of women) in public rather than in the meetings of the congregation" (F.W. Grosheide, *The New International Commentary: Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. 251-52).
- 6] "It is quite essential to note that no modifier is attached to the participles to denote a place where [praying and prophesying] were exercised. So we on our part should not introduce one. . . . By omitting reference to a place Paul says this: 'Wherever and whenever it is proper and right for a man or for a woman to pray or to prophesy, the difference of sex should be marked as I indicate' . . . .

"An issue has been made of the point that Paul speaks of a woman as prophesying as though it were a matter of course that she should prophesy just as she also prays, and just as the man, too, prays and prophesies. Paul is said to contradict himself when he forbids the woman to prophesy in 14:34-36. The matter becomes clear if we observe that from 11:17 onward until the end of chapter 14 Paul deals with the

gatherings of the congregation for public worship and with regulations pertaining to public assemblies.

“The transition is decidedly marked: ‘that ye come together,’ i.e., for public worship, v. 17; ‘when ye come together in church’ (*ecclesia*, no article), v. 18; and again: ‘when ye assemble together,’ i.e., for public worship, v. 20. In these public assemblies Paul forbids the women, not only to prophesy, but to speak at all, 14:34-36 and assigns the reason for this prohibition just as he does in 1 Tim. 2:11, etc.” (R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, pp. 436-37).

**d. Additional considerations**

- 1) I disagree with those who maintain that Paul is addressing a specific cultural situation in Corinth that doesn’t apply to the church in general.

The woman’s head covering may have been a cultural symbol of her submission to male headship, but the principle of authority and submission that it symbolizes is universal.

“The principle of women’s subordination to men, not the particular mark or symbol of that subordination, was Paul’s focus here. While covering the head appears to have been a customary symbol of subordination in Corinthian society, the principle of male headship is not a custom but an established fact of God’s order and creation, and it should never be compromised” (MacArthur, *Different by Design*, p. 41).

- 2) Some commentators maintain that the context of 1 Corinthians 11:4-5 is the public assembly, and prophesying refers to the broad sense of speaking forth for God, which could simply be a word of praise or a song, not preaching or teaching (1 Chron. 25:1; Ps. 68:24-26; Luke 2:36-38). But that position is weak because Paul addresses men as well as women, and there is no reason to suppose that prophesying on the part of men was restricted to praise or song.
- 3) Some, like Dr. Charles Ryrie, believe that “in the light of what he says in 14:34-35, it is doubtful that Paul approved of those activities by the women at Corinth. He simply acknowledges that these were unauthorized practices” (*Ryrie Study Bible*, p. 1741). But if that were the case, it seems that Paul would have stopped the practice all together rather than merely regulating it.
- 4) One additional view that attempts to harmonize Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy teaches that he permitted women to pray and prophecy in public services as long as they did so with the appropriate symbol of submission, but did not permit them to teach or exercise authority over a man. That view recognizes a difference between prophecy and preaching or teaching (see my discussion on pages 10-12 above).
  - a) Commenting on 1 Timothy 2:12, Susan Foh says, “Teaching does not include praying and prophesying (1 Cor. 11:2-16). The teaching

forbidden to women is habitual teaching, as suggested by the infinitive in the present tense [lit., “I do not permit a woman to be a teacher”]” (*Women & the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism*, p. 124).

- b) If my conclusions are correct that women are not to be teachers in the public assembly of the church, and that the gift of prophecy has ceased (as I discussed earlier in this study), neither women nor men have a prophetic ministry today. Therefore, the only thing remaining to determine is to what extent women may pray in public worship services. In that regard Paul assigns the leadership role to men (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1-8), but there is New Testament precedence for women participating in prayer meetings (e.g., Acts 1:13-14 records a prayer meeting where women and men were present [including the apostles] and “all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer” - v. 14).

***Key Principles:***

- The context of 1 Corinthians 11:4-5 is not the local assembly. Paul doesn’t address corporate worship until verse 17.
- First Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:12-13 are the interpretive keys that unlock the meaning of 1 Corinthians 11:4-5.
- Both men and women prayed or prophesied in Paul’s day.
- Paul regulated the practice but did not prohibit it.
- In this passage Paul addresses the issue of male headship, which is rooted in creation, not culture.
- In this passage Paul does not denote a place where praying and prophesying were appropriate.
- Paul’s point is that *whenever and wherever* it is appropriate for men or women to pray or prophesy, they should do so in the appropriate manner.
- In 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15, Paul says that the church service was not an appropriate place for women to pray or prophesy.
- Although women are not permitted to teach or exercise authority over men, they may participate in public prayer meetings.

**8. ARGUMENTS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35**

***1 Corinthians 14:34-35*** - “Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.”

**a. Note**

The points listed below represent various views of this passage as it relates to a woman’s role in the church. They are not listed in any particular order and may not directly relate to each other.

**b. Main points, representative quotes, and my responses**

- 1) ***Whatever the specific issue is in this passage, Paul isn't prohibiting women from every form of speaking in the church service. That would contradict 1 Corinthians 11:4-5, where he permits them to pray and prophesy within certain guidelines.***

***Responses:***

- a) I agree that Paul doesn't preclude women from ever speaking in the assembly. The context of chapter 14 is tongues and prophecy in the public worship service, which he forbade women to practice, along with asking inappropriate questions (as I'll discuss in more detail later).
- b) Even if Paul *were* requiring complete silence from women, this passage would not contradict 1 Corinthians 11:4-5.
- 1] We've already seen that the context of 1 Corinthians 11:4-5 may not be the public church service. If that's the case, Paul can prohibit women from speaking in the church in this passage without contradicting other passages.
- 2] Also, interpreting this passage on the basis of 1 Corinthians 11:4-5 violates the principle of allowing a clearer or more specific passage of Scripture to shed light on a vague or more general passage. In this passage the context of the public church service is clear; that is not the case in the early verses of chapter 11.

- 2) ***Similar to the subject of veils in chapter 11, Paul is addressing a cultural issue unique to the early church, and his solution isn't intended to apply throughout the entire church age. That's why he specifically says "Let your women keep silence in the churches" (KJV, emphasis added).***

"It is believed that these rigorous strictures were occasioned by the fact that many in the Corinthian church were recent converts from paganism, and that the new freedom which they enjoyed in Christ had led to certain extravagances which were unseemly and irreverent. It is at least possible that a similar reason afforded occasion for these admonitions to Timothy [1 Tim. 2:11-15], who pastored a church hewn out of the heathenism of Ephesus. We cannot accept the idea that even at Corinth the stipulations [Paul gives] were to be applied in every case" (J. Glenn Gould, *Beacon Bible Commentary: 1 Timothy*, p. 576).

***Responses:***

I disagree that Paul is addressing a cultural issue unique to the early church, with no long-term application intended.

- a) The King James Version translates verse 34, "Let *your* women keep silence in the churches" (emphasis added), which some see as

referring to the Corinthian women only. But newer translations rightly render it, “Let *the* women keep silent in the churches” (emphasis added).

b) That Paul meant all women in all churches is clear from the plural “churches” in verse 33 (“As in all the *churches* of the saints”).

c) Additionally, verses 33-34, which in the NASB read:

“For God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak.”

Are better rendered:

“For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, let the women remain silent in the churches” (NIV).

d) Also, Paul bases the role of women on God’s Law (1 Cor. 14:34) and the order of creation (1 Cor. 11:1-16; 1 Tim. 2:12-14), not cultural considerations.

“‘Law’ in verse 34 points to the first five Old Testament books instead of the whole Old Testament (as in v. 21). The apparent reference of Paul’s statement is to Genesis 3:16. ‘He shall rule over you’ was God’s pronouncement of Adam’s authority over Eve, and consequently the same order has prevailed between the sexes since that time. Such decorum is the only one that accords with the will of God. Subordination with equality is what He has prescribed (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3)” (Robert L. Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, p. 159).

e) Obviously the role of women in the church was an issue in the Corinthian culture, but Paul’s solution went far beyond that culture, giving God’s standard for all churches in every culture.

3) ***Paul’s prohibition in this passage is against wives passing judgment on their husbands’ prophecies.***

“Obviously, Paul is not restricting women from speaking when they worship God. Rather he is saying that they should respect their husbands in accordance with the Law. . . . The Corinthian women at worship are not told to be silent in respect to praying, prophesying, and singing psalms and hymns. They are, however, forbidden to speak when the prophecies of their husbands are discussed (v. 29). They are asked to observe the creation order recorded in the Law and to honor their husbands. Telling the women three times to be silent, Paul instructs them to respect their husbands at public worship and to reserve their questions for the privacy of the home. . . .

“In the privacy of one’s home, the wife may learn from her husband. But in the worship service, a wife who questions her husband about spiritual truths runs the risk of dishonoring him in the presence of the rest of the congregation. To the point, no pastor wishes to be publicly criticized by his wife in a worship service; if she does, she undermines his ministry and is a disgrace to him. Paul wants the women to honor and respect their husbands in harmony with the Scriptures” (Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: I Corinthians*, pp. 512-13).

***Response:***

- a) I disagree that Paul is instructing wives not to pass judgment on their husbands’ prophecies.
- b) “This [argument] has against it (i) the extreme difficulty of being so far removed from v. 29 that one wonders how the Corinthians themselves could have so understood it; (ii) the fact that nothing in the passage itself even remotely hints of such a thing; and (iii) the form of v. 35, ‘if they wish to learn anything,’ which implies not ‘judging’ their husbands’ prophecies but failing to understand what is going on at all” (Gordon D. Fee, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 704).

**4) *Paul may be restricting only women who chatter or ask inappropriate questions during the worship service, which says nothing about women exercising their spiritual gifts. Paul’s solution was for those who were out of line to ask their husbands (or other men in their extended family) at home rather than disrupting the service.***

- a) The heart of this passage is the Greek verb *lalein*, which is translated “to speak” but may mean something different from mere speaking. That being the case, using this word in a prohibition does not imply that absolute silence is enjoined, but rather an improper kind of speaking.
- b) “The Greek verb (*lalein*) is used nearly three hundred times in the [New Testament]. It’s meaning often is modified by the context--as in this passage. Schleusner’s Lexicon lists many meanings, among which are: ‘I answer, I return a reason, I give rule or precept, I order, decree.’ Greenfield gives, with others, these meanings: ‘to prattle--be loquacious as a child; to speak in answer--to answer, as in John 19:10; harangue, plead, Acts 9:29. To direct, command, Acts 3:22.’ Liddel and Scott’s Lexicon says, ‘to chatter, babble; of birds, to twitter, chirp; strictly, to make an inarticulate sound, opposed to articulate speech: but also generally to talk, say.’

“Parkhurst . . . tells us that . . . ‘*lalein*’ . . . is *not* the word used in Greek to signify to speak with premeditation and prudence, but . . . to speak imprudently and without consideration, and is that applied to one who lets his tongue run but does not speak to the purpose, but says nothing. Now unless Parkhurst is utterly wrong in his Greek . . .

Paul's fulmination is not launched against speech with premeditation and prudence, but against speech devoid of those qualities. It would be well if all speakers of the male as well as the female sex were obedient to this rule.

"[The context] shows that it was not silence which was imposed upon women in the Church, but only . . . such questionings, dogmatic assertions, and disputations which would bring them into collision with the men, ruffle their tempers, and occasion an unamiable volubility of speech" (Booth, *Female Ministry*, pp. 9-10).

### **Responses:**

I disagree that the Greek word *lalein*, translated "to speak" in verses 34 and 35, refers to imprudent and thoughtless speech.

- a) I agree that *lalein* has various shades of meaning depending on its context, and that its precise meaning in 1 Corinthians 14 must be consistent with Paul's development of thought.
- b) The definitions cited by Mrs. Booth favor the meaning she wishes to assign to *lalein*, but don't favor the context.

1] For example, Mrs. Booth cites Parkhurst's claim that *lalein* means to speak "imprudently and without consideration, and [applies] to one who lets his tongue run but does not speak to the purpose, but says nothing" (p. 10). Deferring to Parkhurst's credibility as a lexicographer, she applies his definition to the text, apparently unaware that within the immediate context of chapter 14 Paul uses *lalein* with reference to:

- Speaking in tongues (vv. 4, 5, 6, 13, 18, 23, 27, 39)
- Speaking to God (v. 2)
- Speaking mysteries (v. 2)
- Speaking to men for edification, exhortation, and consolation (v. 2)
- Speaking by way of revelation, knowledge, prophecy, and teaching (v. 6)
- Speaking into the air (v. 9)
- Speaking as a barbarian (v. 11)
- Speaking with the mind (v. 19)
- Speaking with the lips of strangers (v. 21)
- Speaking to oneself and to God (v. 28)
- Speaking as a prophet (v. 29)

2] If all those uses of *lalein* fall into the category of speaking "imprudently and without consideration, and apply to one who lets his tongue run but does not speak to the purpose, but says nothing," Parkhurst is correct. However, if that is the case,



Paul's logic disintegrates and the entire chapter becomes meaningless. If, however, Parkhurst is incorrect (as he clearly is in this instance), Mrs. Booth's conclusion that his definition of *lalein* must apply in verses 34 and 35 is equally unfounded.

3] W.E. Vine summarizes: "The command prohibiting women from speaking in a church gathering, vv. 34, 35, is regarded by some as an injunction against chattering, a meaning which is absent from the use of the verb everywhere else in the New Testament; it is to be understood in the same sense as in verses 2-6, 9, 11, 19-19, 21, 23, 27-29, 39" (*Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 590).

4] A better choice is that verse 34 prohibits women from speaking in tongues and prophesying in the corporate worship service. Verse 35 prohibits them from asking inappropriate or disruptive questions (as some apparently were doing).

Rather than simply rebuking them, Paul gives the appropriate alternative: "If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church." That corrects the problem and places on husbands the responsibility of knowing God's Word and instructing their wives as God intended.

c) Commentator Gordon Fee adds:

"The most commonly held view [of vv. 34-35] is that which sees the problem as some form of disruptive speech. Support is found in v. 35, that if the women wish to learn anything, they should ask their own husbands at home. Various scenarios are proposed: that the setting was something like the Jewish synagogue, with women on one side and men on the other and the women shouting out disruptive questions about what was being said in a prophecy or tongue; or that they were asking questions of men other than their own husbands; or that they were simply 'chattering' so loudly that it had a disruptive effect.

"The biggest difficulty with this view is that it assumes a 'church service' of a more 'orderly' sort than the rest of this argument presupposes. If the basic problem is with their 'all speaking in tongues' in some way . . . in such disarray how can mere 'chatter' have a disruptive effect? The suggestion that the early house churches assumed a synagogue pattern is pure speculation; it seems remote at best" (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 703).

5) ***Here Paul does not refer to the same speaking as in 1 Corinthians 11:4-5.***

"Taking the simple and common-sense view of the two passages, viz., that one [1 Cor. 11:4-5] refers to the devotional and religious exercises in the Church, and the other [1 Cor. 14:34-35] to inconvenient asking of questions,

and imprudent or ignorant talking, there is no contradiction or discrepancy, no straining or twisting of either. If, on the other hand, we assume that the Apostle refers in both instances to the same thing, we make him in one page give the most explicit directions of how a thing shall be performed, which in a page or two further on, and writing to the same Church, he expressly forbids being performed at all” (Booth, *Female Ministry*, p. 8).

***Response:***

I disagree that Paul has two kinds of speaking in mind (in the sense that Mrs. Booth outlines above). He is, however, referring to two different settings (this passage refers to the local assembly, whereas 1 Cor. 11:4-5 does not).

6) ***Those who would disallow women preaching in the assembly should be as diligent to adhere to the rest of chapter 14, but that isn't always the case.***

“If any one still insists on a literal application of this text, we beg to ask how he disposes of the preceding part of the chapter where it occurs. Surely, if one verse be so authoritative and binding, the whole chapter is equally so; and therefore, those who insist on a literal application of the words of Paul, under all circumstances and through all time, will be careful to observe the Apostle’s order of worship in their own congregations.

“But, we ask, where is the minister who lets his whole Church prophesy one by one, and he himself sits still and listens while they are speaking, so that all things may be done decently and in order? But Paul as expressly lays down this order as he does the rule for woman, and he adds, ‘The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord’ (v. 37)” (Booth, *Female Ministry*, p. 12).

***Responses:***

I agree that those who insist on a literal application of the prohibitions against women should also apply the rest of the chapter. However, even if some church leaders aren’t consistent in their application of the text, that has no bearing on its meaning.

- a) The entire chapter is just as authoritative and binding as verses 34-35, and I believe that a literal application of every passage is necessary unless Scripture itself indicates otherwise. In the case of tongues and prophecy however (the issues addressed by Paul in chapter 14), I believe that both gifts were temporary and ceased with the passing of the apostolic era. Therefore, modern application isn’t an issue.

(As I have already explained, I believe that “prophecy” as used by Paul throughout 1 Corinthians had a revelatory element to it [cf. 1 Cor. 14:30] and therefore shouldn’t be limited to preaching only. But even if we do limit it in that way, Paul’s prohibition against women prophesying in the public assembly still stands.)

- b) However, the broader principles of exercising spiritual gifts appropriately and maintaining order in worship services still apply because they transcend tongues, prophesy, and the specific Corinthian situation.
- c) Also, the role of women in the church still applies because Paul bases it on God's Law (1 Cor. 14:34) and the order of creation (1 Cor. 11:1-16; 1 Tim. 2:12-14), not cultural considerations.
- d) Admittedly there are many today who believe that tongues and prophecy still exist in the church. I would expect those people to adhere closely to all of Paul's instructions in chapter 14. But, ironically, most denominations promoting modern tongues and prophecy also promote women in the pulpit, in blatant contradiction of Paul's instructions for them to remain silent.

***Key Principles:***

- First Corinthians 11:4-5 is not the interpretive key to this passage.
- Paul does not prohibit women from ever speaking in a church service, but only from tongues, prophecy, and asking inappropriate questions.
- The principles Paul teaches here apply to every congregation in every age.
- Paul bases his teaching in this passage on God's Law and the order of creation, not on a situation unique to the Corinthian church.

**9. ARGUMENTS FROM 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-15**

**1 Timothy 2:11-15** - "Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression. But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint."

**a. Note:**

The points listed below represent various views of this passage as it relates to a woman's role in the church. They are not listed in any particular order and may not directly relate to each other.

**b. Main points, representative quotes, and my responses**

**1) *The context of this passage is the home, not the church. Therefore it has nothing whatsoever to do with women speaking in public services.***

- a) "[This passage] is primarily an injunction respecting her personal behaviour at home. It stands in connection with precepts respecting her apparel and her domestic position; especially her relation to her husband" (Rev. J.H. Robinson, cited in *Female Ministry*, p. 12).

- b) “This prohibition refers exclusively to the private life and domestic character of women, and simply means that an ignorant or unruly woman is not to force her opinions on the man whether he will or no. It has no reference whatever to good women living in obedience to God and their husbands, or to women sent out to preach the Gospel by the call of the Holy Spirit” (Booth, *Female Ministry*, p. 13).

**Responses:**

I disagree with those who teach that the context of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is the home, not the church, and that Paul’s instructions simply govern a woman’s domestic position, especially in relation to her husband, but have nothing to do with her role in the church.

- a) The language of the text indicates that Paul has men and women in mind, not just husbands and wives.

Admittedly, the Greek words translated “men” and “women” in this passage are the same words used elsewhere by Paul and others for “husband” and “wife.” But no English translation I’ve seen translates them as such in this passage because the context gives no indication that Paul is limiting his comments to husbands and wives.

On the contrary, in verse eight Paul instructs *men* to pray, and he uses the Greek word that refers to men in contrast to women, not men in the generic sense, or husbands only (*aner* for males, not *anthropos* for mankind).

In verse nine he begins a series of instructions for women, which he contrasts to men by use of “likewise” (i.e., “Just as I’ve instructed men to pray, likewise I instruct women to adorn themselves properly, etc.”). Paul changes subjects as he moves from verse eight to verse nine (i.e., men to women; prayer to proper adornment), but he doesn’t change contexts (church to home or vice versa).

Therefore, if Paul’s instructions to women in verses 9-12 refer exclusively to the home, his instructions to men in verse eight must also apply exclusively to the home. But Paul doesn’t restrict prayer to the home or to husbands only--neither does he restrict proper clothing and quiet submission to the home or to wives only.

- b) The language of the chapter indicates that Paul has the local assembly in mind.

1] “The Greek phrase translated ‘in every place’ [1 Tim. 2:8] refers to an official assembly of the church (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 2:14; 1 Thess. 1:8)” (MacArthur, *Different by Design*, p. 112).

2] “The discussions in this chapter refer to the general worship service, as indicated by the references to teaching as well as praying” (Homer A. Kent, Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 102).

3] “It must be remembered that the first-century church had no special buildings for meeting, and consequently met in various homes of Christians. But regardless of the meeting place, [these directives were] to be followed” (Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 103).

c) Even if the context of this passage were the home, the principle of woman’s submission is based on creation, and confirmed by the Fall (vv. 13-14), not on domestic, cultural, or even ecclesiastical considerations. Therefore, the principle transcends the home and most certainly applies in the church as well. We know that’s the case from Paul’s parallel teaching in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, where clearly the church service is in view.

“The Fall resulted not only from direct disobedience of God’s command, but also from a violation of the divinely appointed role of the sexes. Eve acted independently and assumed the role of leadership; Adam abdicated his leadership and followed Eve’s lead. That does not mean Adam was less culpable than Eve, or that she was more defective--both were wrong. We’re all vulnerable in different ways. . .

“Christians affirm the leadership of men in the church because it is established by Creation and confirmed by the Fall. The headship of man, then, was part of God’s design from the beginning. The tragic experience of the Fall confirmed the wisdom of that design. No daughter of Eve should follow her path and enter the forbidden territory of rulership intended for men” (MacArthur, *Different by Design*, p. 142).

2) ***The context is the church, but Paul is addressing a cultural issue unique to his day. He does not intend for the prohibition to extend to every church in every age.***

a) Paul’s prohibition against women teaching was appropriate because most women of that day were inferior to men in education and understanding. If such women “publicly raised questions regarding doctrines and cases of conscience and disputed these points with the men who led the worship services, it would not only be indecorous but also hinder the spirit of worship. Their discussions on such matters with their husbands would be in order in their own homes (cf. 1 Cor. 14:35)” (Roy S. Nicholson, *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary: 1 Timothy*, p. 585).

b) Paul’s refusal to let women teach in public services may have been due to the frequency with which contemporary women were falling under the influence of false teachers (Donald Guthrie, cited in *Wesleyan Bible Commentary: 1 Timothy*, p. 585).

***Response:***

I disagree that Paul is addressing a cultural issue only (see my response to main point “2)” under my discussion of 1 Cor. 14:34-35 above).

- 3) ***The context is the church, but if taken literally and applied to the entire church age, women would never be permitted to speak in a church service. What then of those churches that forbid women to preach but permit them to pray, testify, and/or sing in public services? How can they condemn the first while condoning the second?***

***Response:***

I agree that Paul does not require absolute silence from women in church services, but I disagree that permitting women to pray, testify, or sing violates this passage.

a) Paul didn’t forbid all talking in the church. Verse 12 explains what Paul meant by women remaining silent in the church: “I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man.” In 1 Corinthians 14:35 he also prohibits inappropriate or disruptive questions.

b) “The Greek word translated ‘allow’ (*epitrepo*) is always used in the New Testament to speak of permitting someone to do what they want. Paul’s choice of words implies that some women in Ephesus desired to teach and have authority. . . .

“Paul’s use of the present infinitive *didaskein* translated ‘to teach’ could better be translated ‘to be a teacher.’ By using the present infinitive instead of the aorist, Paul does not forbid women to teach under any circumstances, but to fill the office of a teacher” (MacArthur, *Different by Design*, p. 138).

- 4) ***The context is the church, but Paul doesn’t forbid all teaching by women, but only teaching that usurps the authority of a man.***

a) The Greek word translated “authority” refers only to abusive or destructive authority. Therefore women can teach and exercise authority over men as long as it isn’t abusive or destructive (Aida Besancon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, pp. 87-88).

b) “This passage should be rendered ‘I suffer not a woman to teach *by* usurping authority over the man.’ This rendering removes all the difficulties and contradictions involved in the ordinary reading, and evidently gives the meaning of the Apostle” (Rev. Dr. Taft, cited in *Female Ministry*, p. 13).

c) “No one will suppose that the Apostle forbids a woman to ‘teach’ absolutely and universally. Even objectors would allow her to teach her own sex in private; they would let her teach her . . . children, and, perhaps, her husband too. If he were ignorant of the Saviour, might she not teach him the way to Christ? She might indeed! . . .

“The ‘teaching,’ therefore which is forbidden by the Apostle, is not every kind of teaching . . . but it is such teaching as is domineering, and as involves the usurpation of authority over the man. This is the only teaching forbidden by St. Paul in the passage under consideration” (Rev. J.H. Robinson, cited in *Female Ministry*, p. 12).

**Responses:**

I disagree that Paul forbids only teaching that usurps the authority of a man, or authority that is abusive or destructive.

- a) According to Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, Dr. Taft’s conclusion (i.e., that the phrase “I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man” should be rendered “I suffer not a woman to teach *by* usurping authority over the man”) is incorrect. The Greek word translated “or” means “not even” or “nor”, but not “by.”
- b) The phrase “exercise authority over” translates the Greek word *authentain*, which appears only here in the New Testament, so there are no other passages from which to formulate a precise definition.

However, in extra-biblical usage (usage outside the Bible) it’s common meaning is “to have authority over” (cf. Dr. George Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992], pp. 141-42). It doesn’t designate a particular kind of authority (i.e., abusive or destructive), but is more general in nature. Paul uses it to forbid women to exercise any type of authority over men in the church, including teaching.

- c) As we’ve already seen, Paul gave similar instructions to the Corinthians: “As in all the churches of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says . . . it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in church” (1 Cor. 11:33-35, NIV).

- 5) ***The context is the church, but the Greek word translated “authority” simply means “author” or “originator.” Therefore Paul is simply saying he doesn’t allow a woman to proclaim herself author of man (R.C. Kroeger and C.C. Kroeger, I Suffer Not a Woman, p. 192).***

**Responses:**

- a) I disagree that Paul is simply forbidding a woman to proclaim herself author of man. (This view is answered with my definition of authority above.)
- b) This view is foreign to the context.

- 6) ***The context is the church, but Paul isn’t requiring any more of women than any teacher would require of any pupil (male or female). And, the present***

***tense of verse 12 indicates that Paul did not have a permanent prohibition in mind.***

“In verse 11 most people wrongly assume that Paul’s emphasis is on silence and submission. Actually, Paul is emphatically commanding that women be taught (*manthaneto* is imperative). The quietness and ‘full submission’ (again, to the church body or teacher) is what any teacher would ask of his pupils. Verse 12 is not stated imperatively; rather Paul returns to the indicative mood in the present tense.

“A legitimate rendering of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 thus would be: ‘I command that women learn [be taught] in quietness and full submission [to the teaching authority]’ (v. 11). ‘I am [presently] not permitting a woman to teach and she is not to exert evil influence over a man’ (v. 12)” (Austin H. Stouffer, “The Ordination of Women: YES”, *Christianity Today*, February 20, 1981, p. 14).

***Response:***

I disagree that Paul is simply requiring the same of women as any teacher would require of any pupil (male or female).

- a) In verse 11 Paul commands that women be taught, which elevated their status over Judaism, but he also emphasizes *the manner* in which they are to receive instruction. “Quietly . . . with entire submissiveness” modifies “receive instruction.” The entire statement is an imperative.
- b) Stouffer and others stress that the present tense of verse 12 isn’t necessarily a general principle for all time, and can be translated “I am not *presently* permitting a woman to teach or to have authority over men.”

However, others disagree:

- 1] “[‘I do not permit’] is a present, active, indicative [form of the verb] to allow, to permit. The present tense emphasizes the continual action and points to an abiding attitude” (Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, p. 621).
- 2] “When Paul says, ‘I do not permit,’ he issues as much of an imperative as one can have in the first person singular ‘I’ form. Also, the present tense does not mean he limits the prohibition to that time only. Rather, it indicates the kind of action, so he means ‘I am continually not permitting.’

“Further, the word translated ‘permit’ in the King James Version is quite strong as used in the Greek world, and in the New Testament Paul employs it in 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 16:7. It is especially strong with the negative” (George Knight, “The Ordination of Women: NO”, p. 16).



7) ***Women who prophesy (i.e., preach) in assemblies assume no personal authority over others and therefore do not violate this passage.***

“Women who speak in assemblies for worship under the influence of the Holy Spirit, assume thereby no personal authority over others; they simply deliver the messages of the Gospel, which imply obedience, subjection, and responsibility, rather than authority and power” (Booth, p 6).

***Responses:***

I disagree that women who preach in public worship services assume no personal authority over others.

- a) No church leader or minister of the gospel assumes *personal* authority over others. However, Scripture is clear that all who minister the Word do so with great authority--delegated by Christ Himself. Additionally, Scripture itself is inherently authoritative, and those who teach and preach it must apply its authority in calling their hearers to obedience. Therefore, it is inconsistent to argue for a woman’s right to preach while maintaining that she would do so without exercising authority in the church.

Ministers of the Word are to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction” (2 Tim. 4:2); “[hold] fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that [they] may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9); and “speak and exhort and reprove with all authority”, letting no one disregard them (Titus 2:15).

- b) “The public teacher of God’s people does not only tell others what they need to know, but in the capacity of such a teacher he stands before his audience to rule and govern it with the Word” (R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon*, p. 564).

- c) Despite any disclaimers by Mrs. Booth or others, woman preachers historically have exercised significant authority in their respective churches. For example, in Mrs. Booth’s own organization, The Salvation Army, women officers who oversee a Salvation Army church or installation are called “commanding officers” because they do just that: they command! And they do so with authority.

Case in point: Currently the General and international leader of The Salvation Army is a woman, and every Salvation Army officer in the world (both male and female) is under her authority.

8) ***The context is the church, but women who preach or teach with their elders’ permission do not violate this passage because they are under the authority of men, not exercising authority over men.***

**Responses:**

- a) That scenario is foreign to the context, which speaks of *receiving* instruction with submission, not *giving* it with submission.
- b) If Scripture forbids women to preach, elders do not have the authority to disregard its teaching.

**1 Corinthians 14:37** - "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment."

- c) The responses to "7)" above apply here as well. All who minister the Word do so with authority.

**9) *The context is the church, but Paul is simply prohibiting women who were not properly instructed from teaching.***

"It has been pointed out that the sentence, 'I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man,' appears timeless in English, as if he were saying, 'I would *never* allow a woman to teach . . .' (1 Timothy 2:12). However, in the Greek there is a present active verb here which can be translated, 'I am not presently permitting a woman to teach or to have authority over men.' Paul was apparently prohibiting those who were not properly instructed from teaching. The teacher must first be taught. But the verb tense cannot necessarily be made into a general principle for all time" (J. Oswald Sanders, *Paul the Leader*, p. 165).

**Response:**

I disagree that Paul is simply prohibiting women who weren't properly instructed from teaching. That view isn't consistent with the context.

- a) Why would Paul single out women when presumably there were plenty of improperly instructed men as well?
- b) The context is much broader than a certain class of women. It addresses all women, as verses 13-15 clearly indicate.
- c) Regarding the verb tense of "permit", see "6) b)" above.

**10) *The context is the church, but we don't know why Paul imposed these restrictions on the church at Ephesus.***

"But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence, must be regarded as a demand imposed upon the church at Ephesus for reasons unknown to us. No universal teaching which would bind the Church for all time can be properly based upon it" (J. Glenn Gould, *Beacon Bible Commentary: 1 Timothy*, p. 576-77).

**Response:**

- a) I disagree that we don't know why Paul imposed these restrictions on the church at Ephesus. (This study presents what I believe are his reasons.)
- b) If Mr. Gould is correct and we don't know Paul's reasons for imposing these restrictions, how can he know that they are not universal?

**11) *The context is the church, and perhaps Paul is eliminating women from consideration for the office of elder.***

Commenting on 1 Timothy 2:12, Susan Foh says, "Teaching does not include praying and prophesying (1 Cor. 11:2-16). The teaching forbidden to women is habitual teaching, as suggested by the infinitive in the present tense [lit., "I do not permit a woman to be a teacher"]].

"Teaching and exercising authority over men may describe one function, that of an elder. Several commentators propose such an interpretation. Lenski defines teaching as the public teaching of Scripture with the capacity to rule and govern one's listeners with that word. Paul's use of [teach] gives some support to this claim (Col. 1:28; I Tim. 4:11; 6:2b; II Tim. 2:2).

"The qualifications for elders, one of which is aptness to teach, follow immediately in chapter 3. Paul may intend to eliminate women from consideration for the office of elder before listing the requirements for that office" (*Women & the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism*, pp. 124-25).

**Response:**

I agree that in this context Paul may be distinguishing the role of women from the role of elders and thereby eliminating women from consideration as elders. However, Paul's prohibitions apply to all women, not simply to those who would aspire to eldership.

***Key Principles:***

- The context of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is the local assembly.
- Paul does not require absolute silence from women during a church service, but He does forbid them to be teachers and to exercise authority over a man.
- Paul's prohibitions are based on the order of creation and the Fall.
- Everyone who preaches or teaches God's Word exercises authority over his or her hearers.

**10. ARGUMENT FROM SLAVERY AS A MODEL FOR THE ROLE OF WOMEN**

**a. Summary of the argument**

The passages of Scripture instructing slaves to be subject to their masters (e.g., 1 Pet. 2:13-14) are adaptations of the principle of authority and submission to the existence of slavery in that culture. They are not intended to condone, mandate, or perpetuate slavery, but simply to apply Christian principles to an institution of the time. As the ignorance and prejudice that kept men and women in bondage to others disappeared, the need for those principles disappeared as well.

The relationship between slaves and masters parallels that of wives and husbands. In fact, some of the passages addressing slaves and masters also address wives and husbands. As with slavery, those passages are simply cultural adaptations of authority and submission to accommodate the role expectations of that day. They are not intended to condone or perpetuate the subservience of women, or restrict them from leadership in the church indefinitely. To the extent that women's roles change and their contributions to society and the church are recognized and appreciated, the need for those principles diminishes.

**b. *Representative quotes***

- 1) “There are several comparable elements that suggest [a parallel between male and female and master and slave relationships]. We have seen, in Galatians 3:28, the distinctions between slave and free and male and female, although they continue to exist, are superseded by equality in Christ in the church.

“The instructions in Paul's letters prominently modify the relations between slaves and masters, and between husbands and wives, as in Ephesians 5:22-33. Similarly Paul places restrictions on both slaves and women by instructing slaves to obey their masters and women to be subservient to their husbands and to refrain from exercising equality in the authoritative offices of the congregation.

“What is of great significance is the parallelism between the grounds on which the apostle supports his instructions to both slave and women. In 1 Timothy 6:1 he urges slaves to respect their masters ‘so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered.’ In Titus 2:5 he requires women to be subject to their husbands ‘so that no one will malign the word of God’” (Clarence Boomsma, *Male and Female, One in Christ*, p. 48).

- 2) “Paul, ever careful not to upset the delicate cultural fabric of his day, encouraged women to continue to submit. What is new is how they are to submit: as to the Lord” (Austin H. Stouffer, “The Ordination of Women: YES”, *Christianity Today*, February 20, 1981, p. 13).
- 3) “Those who today will admit slavery is wrong but still maintain that husbands must have authority over their wives are inconsistent. If they were consistent with their method of interpretation, which does not take enough account of cultural differences, it is likely that, had they lived one hundred fifty years ago, they would have had to have opposed the abolitionists as subverters of the moral order--as many Bible-quoting white slave owners and their allies did. Many of the traditions which today use Scripture to subordinate women once did the same for slavery before that idea was anathema in our culture” (Craig Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, p. 207-8).

- 4) “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him . . . Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect . . . Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands . . . Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives” (1 Peter 2:13-14, 18; 3:1, 7).

“[In that passage] Peter makes an interesting point about the position of women. He argues that we as Christians should submit ourselves to every man-made institution, and goes on to list several of those authorities ‘instituted among men’--kings, governors, masters. Then in 1 Peter 3:1 he states that in the same way wives should submit to their husbands, because--it is implied--female submission is ‘instituted among men.’

“In other words, Christians are expected to operate within the parameters placed around them by society. If slavery is an unchangeable part of the society, then servants are expected to obey their masters--until slavery is no longer ‘instituted among man.’ As we earnestly seek a true biblical role for women, God forbid that we withhold any gift he desires her to exercise for even one day longer than society requires!” (Stouffer, “The Ordination of Women: YES”, p. 14).

**c. Responses**

- 1) I disagree that all distinctions between male and female have been superseded by equality in Christ (Gal. 3:28).

Galatians 3:28 speaks of spiritual equality, not equality of function (see my more detailed discussion above).

- 2) I disagree that it is inconsistent to admit slavery is wrong while maintaining that husbands have authority over their wives.

a) Marriage was instituted by God, slavery was not.

1] **Genesis 2:24; 3:16** - “For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. . . . Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

2] Although there are some scriptural similarities between the male/female and master/slave relationships, one significant difference is that “the existence of slavery is not rooted in any creation ordinance, but the existence of marriage is” (John Piper and Wayne Grudem, “An Overview of Central Concerns: Questions and Answers,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, p. 65).

b) Those who used the master/slave passages in the New Testament to oppose abolitionists were wrong, but that doesn’t constitute guilt-by-

association for those who appeal to the same passages in support of authority and submission within marriage. Nor does it mean that God's will is for submission within marriage to go the way of slavery.

Boomsma and others place great significance on the parallelism between the grounds on which Paul supports his instructions to both slaves and women (i.e., that God's name and Word would not be slandered - 1 Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:5).

However, "It is necessary to ask whether Paul groups together regulations for members of the household not because the relationships are parallel, but for mere convenience since all deal with the membership of many households of that day. As a matter of fact, it would appear that these relationships have quite different bases. Paul is quite willing for the slave's status to change to one of freedom (compare Philemon and also 1 Cor. 7:21). He never insists that slavery is instituted by God and therefore to be perpetuated. Paul is simply giving directions on how slaves and masters should live if they are in that situation" (Knight, "The Ordination of Women: NO", p. 17).

- c) The basis for Paul's teaching is different for women and children than for slaves.

"We face a different situation concerning children. Paul grounds his word to children in the permanent word of the Ten Commandments (Eph. 6:1-3). And, likewise, when we ask about the basis for the uniform teaching on the role relationship of husband and wife in marriage, we find it is God's activity in Creation [as evidenced by Paul quoting Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5:31, and the specific correlation of Genesis 2 with headship in 1 Corinthians 11]" (Knight "The Ordination of Women: NO", p. 17).

- d) Regarding a woman's role in the church, the basis for Paul's teaching isn't that God may not be slandered (although that certainly is implied), but that the Law, the order of creation, and the fall require it (cf. 1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:13-14).

- 3) I agree that Christians are expected to operate within the parameters placed around them by society (e.g., if slavery is an unchangeable part of the society, then servants are expected to obey their masters--until slavery is no longer 'instituted among man').

But Paul's instructions regarding a woman's submission in marriage and in the church aren't simply concessions to the role expectations of his society, and therefore subject to change as society changes.

- a) Regarding authority and submission in the church, I have discussed that point in the sections on 1 Corinthians 11:4-5, 14:34-35, and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 above.

- b) Regarding authority and submission in slavery, as long as slavery exists in a society, Christian slaves are to be submissive to their masters as God commands (and masters are to treat their slaves with fairness and respect). If slavery is done away with, the principles are no longer applicable.
- c) Regarding authority and submission in marriage, as long as marriage exists in a society, Christian wives are to be submissive to their own husbands as God commands (and husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church).

However, unlike slavery, marriage and its corresponding authority and submission, were instituted by God, and therefore cannot be done away with. Even if a society was to outlaw marriage, Christians in that society would have to obey God rather than man.

- 4) Using slavery as a model for the role of women has a domino effect on other relationships. For example, if we abolish submission of wives to their husbands because it parallels slavery, to be consistent we must also abolish submission of children to their parents, because it is taught in the same passages.
  - a) *Ephesians 5:22-6:9* - “**Wives**, be subject to your own **husbands**, as to the Lord. . . . **Husbands**, love your **wives**, just as Christ also loved the church. . . . **Children**, obey your **parents** in the Lord. . . . **Slaves**, be obedient to those who are your **masters** to the flesh . . . as to Christ. . . . And, **masters**, do the same to [your **slaves**]” (emphasis added).
  - b) *Colossians 3:18-4:1* - “**Wives**, be subject to your **husbands**, as is fitting in the Lord. **Husbands**, love your **wives** . . . **Children**, be obedient to your **parents** in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. . . . **Slaves**, in all things obey those who are your **masters** on earth. . . . **Masters**, grant to your **slaves** justice and fairness” (emphasis added).

**Key Principles:**

- The basis for Paul’s teaching is different for women than for slaves, therefore the relationships are not parallel.
- A major flaw in the slave/master argument is that slavery is not rooted in any creation ordinance, whereas marriage is.
- Authority and submission within marriage is not a concession to society’s standards; it is God’s design for marriage in any society.
- If we abolish submission of wives to their husbands because it parallels slavery, to be consistent we must also abolish submission of children to their parents.

**11. ARGUMENT FROM BIBLICAL PRECEDENCE**

**a. Summary of the argument**

Whatever else Paul may have had in mind when he penned the restrictions in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2, he wasn't forbidding women to lead and preach in the church. We know that because elsewhere he not only acknowledges that certain women did, in fact, minister in those capacities, but he also commends them for doing so.

**b. Examples**

**1) The example of Phoebe**

**Romans 16:1-2** - "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well."

a) Mrs. Booth comments: "I would draw attention to the fact that Phoebe, a Christian woman whom we find in our version of the Scripture (Romans 16:1) spoken of only as any common servant attached to a congregation, was nothing less than one of those gifted by the Holy Spirit for publishing the glad tidings, or preaching the Gospel. The manner in which the Apostle (whose only care was the propagation of evangelical truth) speaks of her, shows that she was what he in Greek styled her, a deacon or preacher of the Word" (*Female Ministry*, p.10).

b) The phrase "a helper of many" (v. 2) refers to one who is a leader in the congregation.

"In verse 2, the word translated 'help' further elucidates [Phoebe's] function. Cognate terms from the same root are applied to those who exercised leadership in the churches, for example, 'those . . . who are over you in the Lord' (1 Thessalonians 5:12). In Romans 12:8 the same word is rendered 'leader,' and in 1 Timothy 5:17 it is applied to 'the elders who direct the affairs of the church.' Thus the term used by Paul could indicate that Phoebe not only fulfilled the function of a deacon but also had some administrative role" (Sanders, *Paul the Leader*, pp. 168-69).

**Responses:**

a) Without doubt Phoebe was a very special lady whom Paul commended in a special way.

1] The Revised Standard Version says, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the Church at Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord as befits the saints" (emphasis added).

2] If Paul had called Phoebe an overseer or elder, or commended her for faithfully preaching the Word, that would be a different story. But he commended her in a more general way, using the



same term that is commonly used of every faithful servant of the Lord, regardless of their specific ministry.

- 3] The Greek word translated “deaconess” in the RSV is *diakonos*, the same word translated “deacon” elsewhere (cf. 1 Tim. 3:8-12). Paul commended Phoebe as a woman who served the Cenchrean church--perhaps as a deaconess--and specifically calls her a deacon (because *diakonos* has no female form in the Greek language).

However, the nature of her ministry is speculative since Paul isn’t specific. To argue from *diakonos* that she was a preacher of the Word in a local assembly, or perhaps in several churches, not only stretches the text, but also reads an implication into the word that isn’t necessarily there.

- 4] “Even if for argument’s sake we say that Phoebe is a ‘deacon,’ the apostle’s prohibition is not overturned. The very distinction in the New Testament between the official deacon and elder (or bishop) is that an elder holds the teaching or ruling office, while the deacon is in the serving office, one not inherently involving teaching or ruling. Thus even if we grant that Phoebe is a church deacon, the New Testament has still not placed her in the ruling or teaching office” (Knight, “The Ordination of Women: NO”, p. 19).

- 5] Admittedly Paul sometimes uses *diakonos* with reference to himself and others who did preach and teach in local assemblies (1 Cor. 3:5), but he also uses it of those for whom we have no record of any such ministry (cf. Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7; 1 Tim. 3:11).

- c) I disagree that “a helper of many” (v. 2) refers to a leader in the congregation.

George Knight comments: “An appeal to the usage of the feminine word *prostatis* (NASB and RSV: ‘a helper of many’) is often made to attempt to establish Phoebe as a leader in the congregation.

“The argument often proceeds from this word to a verb with the same root (*proistemi*) and the similar masculine noun (*prostates*). It usually insists that since the masculine noun and the verb are directly associated with leadership, the feminine noun must be also. As a matter of fact, New Testament Greek lexicons and classical Greek lexicons consistently indicate that this is not the case, and that the feminine noun indicates one who is a ‘helper’ or ‘patroness’ but not a leader.

“Paul Jewett, although contending that the word means more than that she was only a deaconess, candidly admits that ‘in this passage, *prostatis*, literally ‘a woman set over others,’ should hardly be taken to

mean that Phoebe was a woman ‘ruler.’ Rather the meaning would seem to be that she was one who cared for the affairs of others by aiding them with her resources” (cited in “The Ordination of Women: NO”, pp. 18-19).

- d) Since Romans 16:1 is general in nature, we can’t know the specific nature of Phoebe’s ministry. We do know that Paul trusted her explicitly, knowing she would never make inappropriate requests. Certainly she would have understood any parameters Paul may have placed on women in ministry (e.g., 1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-15). To argue for the absence of parameters based on Paul’s gracious commendation of her faithful service is to go beyond what the text actually says.

## 2) *The example of Priscilla*

**Romans 16:3-4** - “Greet Prisca [Priscilla] and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.”

- a) Both Priscilla and her husband Aquila were fellow workers with Paul, and, according to Acts 18:26, both instructed Apollos in the gospel (“They took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately”).
- b) “Priscilla (verse 3) appears to have been more dynamic than her husband Aquila, but together they functioned as a husband-wife pastoral team, conducting a church in their homes at Corinth and Rome.

“That she exercised a teaching ministry is explicitly cited in Scripture (Acts 18:26), for she and her husband took the eloquent Apollos to their home and thoroughly explained the way of God. There is no suggestion that in doing so Priscilla was acting contrary to Paul’s teaching. She shared with Aquila the title and task of ‘fellow worker.’ Paul described the indebtedness of ‘all the churches of the Gentiles’ to their joint ministry (verse 4)” (Sanders, *Paul the Leader*, p. 169).

### ***Responses:***

- a) I agree that Priscilla shared ministry responsibilities with her husband Aquila, although the precise nature and extent of her ministries are not known.
- b) I agree that she exercised a teaching ministry of some sort because on one occasion she assisted her husband in thoroughly explaining the way of God to Apollos (Acts 18:26). However, that meeting took place in private and therefore did not violate Paul’s prohibition against women teaching or exercising authority over a man in the public meeting of the assembly (1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-15).

- c) I do not see any biblical support for Sanders' view that she appears to have been more dynamic than her husband was. But even if that were true, it would have no bearing on the issue at hand.
- d) Sharing the title of "fellow worker" with her husband does not mean she functioned in the same role as Aquila, but that they both were outstanding in whatever roles they filled.

### 3) *The example of Junias*

**Romans 16:7** - "Salute Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the Apostles; who also were in Christ before me" (KJV).

The NASB reads, "Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are *outstanding among the apostles*, who also were in Christ before me" (emphasis added).

- a) Junias was a woman, and was also an exemplary apostle.
- b) "Ancient commentators concluded that Andronicus and Junias were a married couple. Junias is not found elsewhere as a man's name. Of Junias, Chrysostom wrote, 'Indeed to be apostles at all is a great thing. But to be even among these of note just consider what a great encomium this is. But they were of note owing to their works, to their achievements. Oh! how great is the devotion of this woman, that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle'" (Sanders, *Paul the Leader*, p. 169).

#### **Responses:**

- a) This is a difficult passage to interpret precisely because Junias could have been either a male or female name, and the phrase "outstanding among the apostles" is ambiguous.

- b) R.C.H. Lenski concludes:

"This is Junias, a man, not Junia (Julia), a woman, wife or sister of Andronicus. . . . Chrysostom may exclaim in admiration because of a woman apostle: such an apostle would be strange indeed. So also there is no difficulty regarding 'my kinsmen,' which Paul applies to Jews in general in 9:3, and certainly uses in this sense here in v. 10 and 21. . . .

"These two men of Paul's own nationality at one time suffered with Paul as true soldiers of the Lord in his great campaign. Of course, when, where, how we do not know. In fact, they stand out as men of note not only in Paul's estimation but in the estimation of all the apostles ['Outstanding among the apostles (or, "in the sphere of the twelve in Jerusalem")]' (*The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, p. 905-07).

- c) William Hendriksen agrees that both are men, but understands them to have been apostles in the looser sense of the word (i.e., messengers, which is the literal meaning of “apostle”).

“Extend greetings to Andronicus and Junias, fellow-countrymen of mine . . . men who are apostles, and as such, of note, and who were Christians even before I was” (*New Testament Commentary: Romans Chapters 9-16*, p. 505).

- d) John MacArthur and others view Junias as the wife of Andronicus and explain “outstanding among the apostles” in this way:

“It seems likely that the meaning here is that Andronicus and Junias performed outstanding service in the Lord’s work while working among, and possibly under, some of the ordained apostles, such as Paul and Peter. That interpretation is supported by Paul’s remark that those two believers were in Christ before me, that is, were converted to Christ before he was.

“At the time of Paul’s conversion, most converts were still living in or near Jerusalem, where several of the Twelve were leaders in the church. If, therefore, Paul’s two kinsmen were converted before he was, it is likely that they lived in Jerusalem and performed their outstanding service among the apostles in that city” (*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Romans 9-16*, p. 365).

- e) John Murray doesn’t comment on the gender of Junias, but shares MacArthur’s conclusion regarding their supposed apostleship:

“Of note among the apostles’ may mean that they were apostles themselves. If so then the word ‘apostles’ would be used in a more general sense of messenger (cf. II Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). Since, however, the term has usually in Paul the more restricted sense, it is more probable that the sense is that these persons were well known to the apostles and were distinguished for their faith and service.

“The explanation is ready at hand; they were Christians before Paul and, no doubt, were associated with the circle of apostles in Judea if not in Jerusalem” (*The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 229-30).

- f) I conclude that there seems to be no compelling reason from the verse itself to regard Junias as a female apostle, despite Chrysostom’s comment to the contrary.

#### 4) *The example of Philip’s daughters*

**Acts 21:9** - “Now [Philip the evangelist] had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses.”

Clearly, these women prophesied.

**Responses:**

- a) I agree that these women prophesied. But we have no record of the context in which they exercised their prophetic gifts.
- b) My only interest here is in whether or not they preached or prophesied in the public assembly, and there is no clear indication that they did.

5) ***The example of Euodia and Syntyche***

***Philippians 4:2-3*** - “I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.”

“Euodia and Syntyche . . . apparently held positions of leadership so influential in the church that their disagreement endangered its unity. Although not condoning their estrangement, Paul commended them most warmly. They ‘contended at [Paul’s] side in the cause of the gospel,’ sharing the common task and ministry. He identified them with Clement and the other fellow workers in the proclamation of the gospel” (Sanders, *Paul the Leader*, p. 170).

**Responses:**

- a) I agree that these ladies ministered in significant ways and were apparently held in high esteem by Paul and others in the church at Philippi.
- b) To have shared Paul’s struggle in the cause of the gospel speaks very highly of their loyalty and commitment, but does not necessarily mean they taught, preached, or held positions of authority over men in the church.

1] Many of those who affirm a woman’s right to preach assume that when Paul commends a woman as a fellow-worker, he is indicating that she did the same things he did (i.e., evangelize, preach, teach, and administrate in the local church). But Christian ministry is very broad, and Paul was concerned with more than preaching the gospel (He taught the whole counsel of God, and his epistles cover virtually every aspect of ministry and church life).

2] If Paul is specific about a person’s ministry (e.g., 2 Tim. 4:1ff), we can draw specific conclusions. But when he uses more general terms, we must be careful not to read more into his words than he intended to convey.

- c) Paul's commendation of Euodia and Syntyche is gracious but general, and indicates that "they exerted themselves and eagerly co-operated in the interests of the gospel with the apostle, and also with Clement and the other fellow labourers whom Paul had at Philippi" (Jac. J. Muller, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians*, p. 139). Beyond that, we should not speculate.

6) ***The example of the women gathered with the apostles on the Day of Pentecost***

**Acts 1:14; 2:1, 4** - "These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers."

"We are in the first of these passages expressly told that the women were assembled with the disciples on the day of Pentecost; and in the second, that the cloven tongues sat upon them *each*, and the Holy Ghost filled them *all*, and they spake as the Spirit gave them utterance. . . . The tongues were only emblematical of the office which the Spirit was henceforth to sustain to His people. The Spirit was given alike to the female as to the male disciple" (Booth, *Female Ministry*, p. 16).

***Responses:***

- a) I agree that the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to every believer--male and female alike (cf. Rom. 8:9).
- b) I agree that women did prophesy in the early years of the church.
- c) Further, it is likely that women spoke in tongues in the early years of the church, although Paul forbade them to do so in public worship services (cf. my conclusions regarding 1 Cor. 14:34-35 above).
- d) However, a careful study of Acts 1:14 and 2:1,4 will not support the conclusion that women were with the disciples on the Day of Pentecost, that they spoke in tongues and prophesied along with the disciples, and that they thereby officially initiated their own prophetic office.

For example:

- 1] Acts 1:14 doesn't expressly say that the women were assembled with the disciples on the Day of Pentecost. It says they were among the 120 people gathered together with the disciples in an upper room sometime *prior to* the Day of Pentecost (cf. vv. 12-26).
- 2] Chapter two begins, "And when the day of Pentecost had come, they [the twelve disciples, not the 120 - cf. 1:26] were all together in one place." Also, it was the disciples whom

Jesus said would be “baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5).

- 3] Verse 2 adds that “suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.” Perhaps the disciples were gathered in the temple area rather than in a private house--the language of the text allows for either. It had to be someplace where the crowd could hear the noise and assemble (v. 6). Note also Luke 24:53, which says that the disciples were continually in the temple after Jesus’ departure.
- 4] When some mockers accused the tongues-speakers of being drunk (v. 13), Peter took his stand with the eleven (again indicating that it was only the disciples speaking in tongues) and said, “Men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give heed to my words. For *these men* are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day” (vv. 14-15, emphasis added).
- Peter explained that “these men” (the disciples with whom he stood) were not drunk. He made no mention of women or men other than the disciples.
  - Unfortunately the King James Version blurs verse 15 somewhat by translating it “For *these* are not drunken, as ye suppose” (emphasis added). “These” leaves room for more than the twelve disciples speaking in tongues and being accused of drunkenness. But the word Peter uses is *outoi*, which is a masculine plural pronoun that the New American Standard text rightly translates as “these men” (see also the NIV).
- 5] Whether or not women spoke in tongues and prophesied on the Day of Pentecost perhaps isn’t as significant to this discussion as some of the other points I’ve explored, but careful exegesis is always important. Conclusions drawn from inaccurate or incomplete interpretive procedures simply add confusion to the issue.

***Key principle:***

- I do not wish in any way to diminish the godly character or significant contributions of the women mentioned above--or of countless other faithful women throughout history who have rendered exemplary service to the Lord. I simply point out that the examples cited above, which are used in support of a women’s right to preach, give no clear example of a women in the role of pastor, elder, preacher, or teacher, in a local congregation.

**12. ARGUMENT FROM THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS**

**a. Summary of the argument**

1) The writings of some of the Church Fathers tell of dynamic women who prophesied (preached) in the early church.

2) For example:

**a) Justin Martyr**

“Justin Martyr, who lived till about A.D. 150, says, in his dialogue with Trypho, the Jew, that ‘both men and women were seen among them who had the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit of God, according as the prophet Joel had foretold, by which he endeavoured to convince the Jews that the latter days were come’ (cited by Booth, p. 11).

**b) Irenaeus**

“Dodwell, in his dissertations of Irenaeus says, ‘that the gift of the spirit of prophecy was given to others besides the Apostles: and that not only in first and second, but in the third century--even to the time of Constantine--all sorts and ranks of men had these gifts; yea, and women too’” (cited by Booth, p. 11).

**c) Eusebius**

“Eusebius speaks of Potomania Ammias, a prophetess, in Philadelphia, and others, ‘who were equally distinguished for their love and zeal in the cause of Christ’” (cited by Booth, p. 11).

**b. Response**

Like the argument from biblical precedence, this argument appeals to the record of godly women who served the Lord with distinction. However, none of the sources cited relate the context in which these women ministered, and therefore do not directly support the view that women preached and/or held leadership positions in the early church.

**Key principle:**

- None of the sources commonly cited in support of this argument directly support the view that women preached and/or held leadership positions in the early church.

**CONCLUSION**

Of necessity I have dwelt on the few prohibitions Scripture places on women in ministry, and have concluded that women are not to preach or teach in the corporate gathering of the local assembly, or hold authoritative leadership roles in the church (e.g., Pastor or elder), or in any other way to exercise authority over men.



Those prohibitions must be taken seriously, but they should never overshadow the myriad of other ministries available to women, and in which godly women have served faithfully throughout church history (including, but not limited to, praying or prophesying within biblical guidelines and with a proper attitude of submission [1 Cor. 11:3-4; Acts 21:9], witnessing to women or men in public, praying with believers or non-believers in a non-leadership role, and teaching God's Word to children and other women [Titus 2:3-4; 1 Tim. 5:16]).

It is my sincere prayer that every Christian woman will experience the joy and satisfaction that comes with ministering her spiritual gifts within biblical guidelines to the glory of Christ and for the edification of His church.

### ***SUMMARY OF KEY PRINCIPLES***

1. ***Argument from Natural Qualifications:***
  - The right to preach is not based on natural abilities, but on biblical authority and God's sovereign design for His church.
2. ***Argument from Superior Ability:***
  - Biblical guidelines, not superior communication skills, must decide the question of a woman's right to preach.
  - The Holy Spirit's power and blessing are the keys to truly effective preaching.
3. ***Argument from Intellectual and Moral Pursuits***
  - I do not deny a woman's intelligence or her ability to preach.
  - However, having the ability to do something and having God's permission to do it are two different things.
  - Only when women minister within their God-given parameters can they truly develop their capabilities fully (both for the glory of God and the benefit of their fellow Christians).
4. ***Argument from Historical Precedence:***
  - Majority vote, personal experience, or a subjective "call" doesn't determine God's will in this matter. It's determined by divine revelation alone.
  - Because Christians do something doesn't necessarily make it a Christian thing to do.
  - The Lord will honor His Word despite the messenger.
  - To question the right of women to preach doesn't necessarily impugn the motives of women preachers.
5. ***Argument from Galatians 3:28:***
  - Galatians 3:28 speaks of spiritual equality, not functional equality.
  - The right to preach and teach is a functional distinction within the Body of Christ.
  - Authority and submission doesn't imply personal superiority or inferiority.
  - Christ Himself demonstrated the importance of authority and submission.

6. ***Argument from Joel 2:28-29 & Acts 2:17-18:***
- Joel prophesied that women as well as men would prophesy, and women as well as men *did* prophesy.
  - Joel doesn't indicate that prophecy will continue throughout the church age.
  - Pentecost was only a partial fulfillment of Joel's prophecy--a foretaste of what is to come in fullness in connection with Christ's Second Coming.
  - Joel and Peter don't comment on the role of prophecy in the church. Paul does that in the passages I will examine later.
  - In the New Testament, prophecy and preaching are not synonymous.
  - New Testament prophecy has a revelatory element to it; preaching doesn't.
  - All New Testament prophets had a predictive element to their ministries.
  - Teachers and preachers have replaced prophets in the church.
  - Teaching and preaching have replaced prophecy in the church.
7. ***Argument from 1 Corinthians 11:4-5:***
- The Context of 11:4-5 is not the local assembly. Paul doesn't address corporate worship until verse 17.
  - First Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:12-13 are the interpretive keys that unlock the meaning of 1 Corinthians 11:4-5.
  - Both men and women prayed or prophesied in Paul's day.
  - Paul regulated the practice but did not prohibit it.
  - Paul addresses the issue of male headship in this passage, which is rooted in creation, not culture.
  - Paul's point is that *whenever and wherever* it is appropriate for men or women to pray or prophesy, they should do so in the appropriate manner.
  - In this passage Paul does not denote a place where praying and prophesying were appropriate.
  - In chapter 14 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15, Paul says that the church service was not an appropriate place for women to pray or prophesy.
  - Although women are not permitted to teach or exercise authority over men, they may participate in public prayer meetings.
8. ***Argument from 1 Corinthians 14:34-35:***
- First Corinthians 11:4-5 is not the interpretive key to this passage.
  - Paul does not prohibit women from ever speaking in a church service, but only from tongues, prophecy, and asking inappropriate questions.
  - The principles Paul teaches here apply to every congregation in every age.
  - Paul bases his teaching on God's Law and the order of creation.
9. ***Argument from 1 Timothy 2:11-15:***
- The context of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is the local assembly.
  - Paul does not require absolute silence from women during a church service, but He does forbid them to be teachers and to exercise authority over a man.
  - Paul's prohibitions are based on the order of creation and the Fall.
  - Everyone who preaches or teaches God's Word exercises authority over his or her hearers.
10. ***Argument from slavery as a Model for the Role of Women:***
- The basis for Paul's teaching is different for women than for slaves, therefore the relationships are not parallel.

- A major flaw in the slave/master argument is that slavery is not rooted in any creation ordinance, whereas marriage is.
- Authority and submission within marriage is not a concession to society's standards; it is God's design for marriage in any society.
- If we abolish submission of wives to their husbands because it parallels slavery, to be consistent we must also abolish submission of children to their parents.

**11. *Argument from Biblical Precedence:***

- The examples commonly cited in support of this argument give no clear example of a woman in the role of pastor, elder, teacher, or preacher in a local congregation.

**12. *Argument from Early Church Fathers:***

- None of the sources commonly cited in support of this argument directly support the view that women preached and/or held leadership positions in the early church.

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