

Bible Studies

Women must be silent in Church.

Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

This is one of those problem verses in Scripture. If it is read literally it would effectively bar women from taking part in our services and limit them to the role of spectators.



In what context does Paul write this Command?

It is with regard to order in the church and more specifically regarding the use of Spiritual Gifts. Paul is not talking about preaching or teaching, although in other places he does.



The reason that we cannot take this verse on its surface value is found in 1 Corinthians 11v5.

What's the problem?

Forget the bit about head covering, in 11v5, Paul is say women may do exactly what he says they must not do in 14v34.

Is it conceivable that Paul would so blatantly contradict himself within so few chapters?

This being the case, the one thing that is clear, is that Paul did not intend to stop women from praying, prophesying or taking part in the church service. After all 'Women should remain silent in the churches', would also mean they could not sing.

Are there any clues in the verse / passage that may help us?

Yes there are. We do not know exactly what the problem was, but it is clear that something the women were doing was creating a problem of disorder. Paul would not have called for women to be 'submissive' if a lack of submission was not part of the problem. More over this problem was bad enough to be described by Paul as 'disgraceful'.



A Question of Language.

The 'inquire' bit suggests the talking was peripheral to the service not a part of it. In classical Greek the word used here for speak meant to *chatter*. But in the rest of the chapter it is used to mean *inspired speech*, ie tongues or prophecy. (16 times)

Who else is told to keep quiet and why? v28

Read verse 30

'*The first speaker should stop*', uses exactly the same Greek word, (sigao) as is used in verse 34 for *remain silent*.

Does this parallel help to clarify what kind of a problem there was?

The women are to be submissive. But again this is not the only time this word (*hypotasso*) is used. Paul also says that, *The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.* v32. Subject to control is also the word *hypotasso*.

What does submission mean?

This parallel suggests to me that Paul is dealing with the same kind of a problem.



Six Possibilities

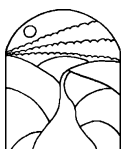
In the end we are left with six possible interpretations of these verse, they are as follows mark in the boxes which you think are most likely.

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1 **Paul** really did not let women speak in Church, in which case 1 Cor 11v5 would be the passage we should seek to interpret differently.

2 **Paul** did not write these words, they were a note added by a scribe in the margin, which were later incorporated into the text by accident. They are omitted in some early manuscripts.

3 **This** verse relates only to judging prophecy, therefore all Paul is saying is that Women may not judge prophetic utterances. re verse 29

4 **Paul** is referring to the habit the Corinthian women had got into of carrying on conversations with each other during Church. It is likely that the church meeting place was similar to a synagogue. The women were segregated at the back. We know that in the synagogues they did have a bad habit of nattering while the men performed the worship. In a synagogue, women took no active part, the very fact that in the church they could pray and prophecy was revolutionary.

5 **Alternatively** there could have been a '*passion for discussion*', Barrett, which was out of place in a public meeting. Especially if the discussion was causing disagreement between husband and wife. Those offending are told the place for such discussion is in the home.

6 **Paul** is trying to sort out a local problem of specific women who were disrupting the services. Bearing in mind the parallelism, it is possible that the group of prophets who were creating disorder, comprised these women. If so Paul is not talking about all women everywhere, but only those who are bringing disorder to the Church.

The 4 or 6 seem to be the most probable. 5 is possible, 3 is just possible, 1 and 2 are very unlikely.

How should we apply these verses to the church today?
What conclusion should we come to can women speak in Church today?

Paul, then says, that what he is teaching is part of the common practice of the Church. If this is so, then this verse has to be weighed against any NT passages that mention women role in the Church.

Some Cultural issues

Two other cultural issues must be taken into account here. Throughout the ancient world women were largely uneducated. This passage deals with how women should learn, not whether qualified women, should teach. When Jesus allowed Mary to sit at his feet (=learn), while he taught he did what Jews of the day would consider a sin. There are many Greek texts that called on women to be silent in public. These are just some examples of how revolutionary the NT was in its attitude to women. Secondly Corinth was famous for its immorality. Paul is famous for his teaching on not offending the weak. Women's activity in Church would have caused this kind of offense. (This could be part of the explanation of 11v5). Paul is concerned that any participation of the women that was over the top could cause offense and bring the church into disrepute.

How should we apply these considerations to the church today?

Bible Studies

Women must wear hats



Read 1 Corinthians 11v2-16

This is an offensive passage to many women, it makes Paul sound like a prude and a chauvinist all in one. It inspires two responses; Either we take it at face value and insist that women wear hats in church. When I was growing up all women wore hats in church. Ironically according to the passage the head covering gave women the freedom to participate vocally. Yet the churches that insisted on hats, were the same ones that discouraged women from speaking!

The response of most of us was to ignore this passage, because it said something that we could see no reason for, yet we could not refute. So we just pretended it did not exist.

Are women really one step further from God than men? I would suggest that this is one of the most misinterpreted passages in all of Paul's writings. I hope today to show you an interpretation you had never seen before.



What is a head?

Stupid question.

Is the way Paul uses the word 'head', in the next two verses the same?

Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. 1 Corinthians 11:3

Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved. 1 Corinthians 11:4-5

Obviously the second time, he meant a physical head, what we all have on our shoulders. But the first usage is as a metaphor.



What does head mean when we use it as a metaphor?

No, you are completely wrong, that's what the English word means when we use it as a metaphor, the Greek does not mean boss or chief at all, it means; origin or source, (eg. The head of a river,) starting point, crown, completion or consummation.

What is the Bible saying when it says that Man is the head of women?

What does it mean when it says Christ is the head of the Church?

Col 1v18, Eph 1v22,4v15

This fits the context of both passages better, and fits in much better with the Bible teaching of both the relationship within the trinity and the creation of man and women.

What Paul is saying is that man was created first and it was to fulfil his inadequacy that woman was created.

For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 1 Corinthians 11:8-9

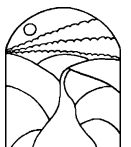


Paul even feels he needs to qualify this for he says;

In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. 1

Cor 11:11-12 This was radical teaching, it has taken up to this century to catch up with it.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:28 When cultural issues and the problems of the church in the first Century are accepted, I believe this is the fundamental NT teaching on the relative positions of men and women. In Christ the old destinations of sex, social status and race are no longer valid.



When it talks about a man or women dishonouring their head **does it mean their physical head or spiritual head?**

Incidentally the words used for man/women are the same words the Greek uses for husband/wife, so it's usage is not always clear.



Women is man's glory

Paul's argument here is hard to understand. It appears he is passing comment on Genesis 2. *Insofar as man is the result of God's creative work (Gen v26;2v7) and has his existence out of Christ (11v3) who is the image and glory of God. "he is the image and Glory of God" (11v7). And insofar as the woman has her existence out of the man (Gen 2:21-23; 1 Corinthians 11v3), she "is the glory of man" (11v7) Brauch.*

To me this seems to be Paul's way of saying that inappropriate dress is going to distract from worship and bring about 'impropriety in worship'. We should do nothing that detracts from God's glory.

What activities in Church might do this?



Cultural issues

What kind of head covering is Paul talking about? Recently it has been suggested that it is hair he is talking about. But this does not make sense of his argument from hair. v6. One thing is certain, he is not talking about the kind of hats we wear today. We know from records of the day that in public, both Jewish and Gentile women wore veils, We also know that during 1st century this was a practice that was beginning to wean. This veil covered the head hair and shoulders, it is unclear if it covered the face.

In Christ were women in church free from this kind of legalism?

I would say a resounding yes. But Outsiders coming in and the 'weaker brethren' inside the Church would have found this highly offensive. Remember Corinth was the Bangkok of the ancient world, famous for it's immorality. Anything in the Church that hinted of immorality was especially sensitive.

Bearing this in mind what would Paul have told the women?

1 Corinthians 8:9&13

Paul says, this is in accordance with the very nature of things, is it?

There is, to my knowledge, nothing in human genetics that makes wearing veils natural. Paul is speaking from a cultural point of view, within his culture this was the universal norm.



If this was the reason women had to wear veils is it binding to us today?

Are there situations where it would be right for a women to wear a hat?

Is there an equivalent to this in our modern day church?



The Theological argument.

The other reason Paul gives for women to wear a veil is theological
For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a [sign of] authority on her head. 1 Corinthians 11:10

(brackets indicate words not present in the Greek but added to explain the Greek)

Some have suggested that this is because of the fallen angels, ie. to protect a women from spiritual attack, it is not clear how a veil would do this.

Most likely it is so as not to offend the holy angles which are present in the worship of God.

What is the sign? many interpret it as a sign of her submission to her husband. I believe the sign of authority her new found freedom in Christ to minister the way she is now doing. If so the veil was not a restriction imposed upon her, but a mark of her freedom.



Since the question of a women's freedom is no longer an issue and since we are unlikely to mistake an unveiled women for a prostitute. I can see no scriptural reason for continuing this practice.

Bible Studies

Women must not teach.



Read 1 Timothy 2v9-15

Paul's Epistles are *occasional*, that means he did not simply sit down and as he had some spare time on his hands, decide to write to someone. He wrote for specific reasons. Usually to address something that was going wrong in the church. Often we only have clues as to what the problem was, we have the answers, but not the questions. It is very important that we try to understand what problem Paul was trying to address. If we don't, we will misunderstand the point he wants to make.

As we have already seen, there is a reason that women are told to be quiet in Church and it is because of a problem. We have to apply it to ourselves in light of this problem, where we have a similar problem, we may apply Paul's solution. But to teach from this verse that all women everywhere, must never speech in Church. Is to teach what the **Bible does not say**.

I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. 1 Timothy 2:12

Were women silent in Church?

	Name	Title
Acts 21v8-9	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Romans 16v1-2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Acts 16v14-15	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Philippians 4v3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Acts 18:26, Rom 16:3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Romans 16:7	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Unless, of course, we assume that when Philip's daughters prophesied, they did so only to themselves and that Priscilla & Junia, were men with women's names. We have to conclude that women were very active in the early church.



Where did Timothy learn his Bible knowledge? 2 Timothy 1v5, 3:15 Do women have a teaching role in Church? Titus 2v3-4

Take a quick look through the book of Timothy.

What kind of problems were there in the Church in Ephesus?

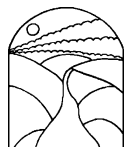
1 Timothy 4v1-3 *1 Timothy 7v1*
1 Timothy 5v11-13 *1 Timothy 6v3-6*

If we assume that the things Paul writes about indicate the problems, then there were two major areas of concern. Wrong family relationships and heresy, not just false teaching, but weird and wonderful stuff. Overlapping both of these is Paul's concern about widows. Not something we would expect Paul to concern himself with unless it represented a major part of the problem. Some of these widows were;

Getting into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to. 1 Timothy 5:13

Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan. 1 Timothy 5:15

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales. 1 Timothy 4:7



It is quite likely that it is because of a group of women (widows), that Paul gives his hard command, for they have been teaching what is contrary to good doctrine. Paul goes on to point out that in the Garden of Eden, it was the women who was deceived and the man who disobeyed. Perhaps by saying this he is hinting that there are women in Ephesus who are deceived as well as pointing out that it was Adam who was responsible before God.

On the basis of this data, at least two reconstructions of the situation in Timothy's congregation at Ephesus are possible: (1) It is possible that women in the church at Ephesus were the primary advocates and promoters of the heretical teachings which were upsetting accepted patterns of congregational and home life. (2) A second possibility is that the women in the church had been particularly influenced by the heretical teachers. Such a situation in the Ephesian church is addressed in 2 Timothy 3:6-9 where women, the special targets of those "who oppose the truth," (3:8) become "unable to acknowledge the truth" (3:7). Brauch, The hard sayings of Paul

It is possible that many women became so excited about their new freedom in Christ, that they took their participation to extremes that were damaging to the Church.

But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. 1 Timothy 2:15

This passage which sounds so frightening, becomes very simple when you discover that the Greek 'Childbearing' is in the singular and is a definite article. Ie. Saved through the childbirth, *Earle*. Paul is referring to Genesis 3 again. As a result of the curse, women becomes subservient to man (3v16). But the curse is to be broken by the women's offspring (3v15).

What Paul is effectively saying is that through faith in Christ the curse is broken and women are lifted to an equal status before God.

Does this passage say a women must be Quiet and Submissive? v11
Does this passage say a women may not preach in Church?

Again this passage is about how women learn. The submission Paul call for is to the Elders of the Church as the teachers and custodians of good doctrine. It is not a submission to obey their will, but acknowledging their sound teaching. Cf Heb 13:17

The word teach, seems to refer to the establishing and judging of doctrine, not passing it on to others. If so Paul is not saying that women may not 'teach' in Church, only that they may not be the final word on doctrinal matters.

'She must be silent' *en hesychia* is exactly the same phrase that is translated 'in quietness' in verse 11



Does have 'authority over a man,' v12, mean men should not obey their female boss at work?

No. Paul is talking about countering wrong teaching, not about the supposed innate superiority of men over women.



We have learnt that this verse was given in response to wrong teaching by a group of women and to their rejection of the authority in biblical matters of the eldership. Understanding this we discover as a Church, when we have women 'teacher' we are not going against this verse.



I do believe that this verse teaches that it is wrong for a women to be the final (earthly) authority within a church.

How much freedom should women have to minister?