

# God's Place for Women in His Church

The place of women in society is being widely discussed today. The influence of the "Women's Liberation" or "Feminist" movement is felt throughout the world. Most men and women would agree that there should be equality in employment and wages. Most would also agree that women should have the same rights under the law as men do. However, Christian men and women must oppose many of the ideas of the "Feminist" movement for they are contrary to God's will.

In the Lord's church today, there are some who question the place that women have. Some are saying that women have the right to lead public prayers, preach, and even serve as elders. They have been influenced by the "Feminist" movement or by denominations, especially the Pentecostals, which allow women to do everything that men do.

Christians want to follow the will of God. God's will for the place of women in His church is revealed in His Book, the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We must follow the Bible if we want to please God and be saved eternally. What does the Bible say? What is the role of women in the church?

There are some areas in which men and women are just the same before God. God's

love is the same for both (John 3:16). God is no respecter of persons in regard to salvation (Acts 10:34-35). Men and women must obey the same plan of salvation and will receive the same blessings (Galatians 3:26-28).

There are, however, areas in which God's plan for women differs from that for men. In the family, God has appointed man to be the head (Ephesians 5:23). Man is to provide for the physical and spiritual needs of his wife and children (Genesis 3:17-19; 1 Timothy 5:8; Ephesians 6:4). Women have a special place in God's plan that men do not have. Women are to be helpers to their husbands, teachers of their children and keepers of the home (Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:22-24; Titus 2:4-5). Men and women are different physically and psychologically. The place that God has appointed for each best suits them as God made them.

There are several Scriptures which deal with women's place in the church. In 1 Corinthians 11:3, the Apostle Paul wrote: *"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."* Man has a head to whom he must submit—Jesus Christ. Woman also has a head to whom she must submit—man. But even Christ has a head to whom He must submit—God the Father. Christ is not inferior to God because He submits to Him. Nor is woman inferior to man because she submits to him. The place that God has appointed for men and women has nothing to do with inferiority and superiority. It has to do with the purpose

for which God created them.

First Timothy chapter two is a very important passage which deals with women's role in the church. Paul is speaking of the public worship of the church when it assembles together (1 Timothy 2:1-2; 3:14-15). In verse one, Paul commands that prayers be made for all men. In the original Greek language in which Paul wrote, the word he uses for man is *ἄνθρωπος* (anthrōpos) which is the general word for human beings. It includes both men and women. Paul again uses this same word in verse four when he says that God *"would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth."* But in verse eight, when Paul speaks of leading in prayers, he uses a different word for man. It is the Greek word *ἀνὴρ* (anēr). This word is used only to refer to males. It does not include females! The command then is for men only to lead the public prayers of the church.

There is a clear contrast between verse eight where men are commanded to pray and verse eleven where women are commanded to learn in silence with all subjection. The word "subjection" comes from a Greek military term which means "to rank under." In verse twelve, Paul writes: *"But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."* Women are forbidden to have authority over men. They must not take a privilege which is not rightfully theirs. Preaching and public teaching of classes

where men are present are forbidden to women. Leading public prayers in assemblies where men are present is forbidden to women.

Paul gives two reasons why God has given the leadership in the church to men: (1) Adam was first formed, then Eve; and (2) Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression. Man has leadership over woman because God created him first. Man was not created for woman, but woman was created for man (Genesis 2:18-24). Second, Adam was not deceived in the temptation in the Garden of Eden, but Eve was (Genesis 3:6). Woman is different from man. Satan took advantage of her more trusting nature to deceive her. Adam sinned also, but he was not deceived! He knew what he was doing and deliberately went into the sin with Eve.

Women have many wonderful areas of service to God. Bearing children is not a curse brought on by the fall in Eden, but a blessing God gave women in the beginning (Genesis 1:28; 3:16). Women also have the privilege of being teachers, not of men, but of other women and children (2 Timothy 1:5; Titus 2:3-5). Christian women, like Priscilla, may assist their husbands in teaching others privately (Acts 18:24-26). Godly Christian women teach others by their example (1 Peter 3:1-2).

Peace prevails in the church and God is pleased when both men and women serve Him in the role He has created for them.

Women are not suited to be elders, deacons, preachers or public leaders in the worship of God. But their work of being good mothers and teachers of children and other women is just as important. Let us humbly submit to God's will!



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