

This week's Sweet Surprise addresses what some may consider to be a topic with a foregone conclusion i.e., squarely in the realm of women's rights, but as Christians, our focus should not be upon the fairness or unfairness of mankind, but rather upon the Word of God.

Here is what the Bible has to say on whether or not women should preach.

Should Women Preach?

by Professor Rev. James Pounder, PhD, EdD

A. There are scriptures that seem to oppose women preaching.

These are:

1. **1 Tim. 2:12-13**, *“But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”*
2. **1 Cor. 14:33-36**, *“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. **Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak;** but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; **for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.**”*

Lets deal with the second statement i.e., Paul’s message to the Corinthians ie., **1 Cor 14: 26-36.**

Basically here Paul was *talking particularly to the Corinthian church where they had a problem with women chattering in Church. The Greek in the original Bible translation uses the verb laleo which is better translated as chattering. If Paul has wanted to say that women should not preach, he would have used a different verb i.e. kerusso. So, obviously the women were gossiping in the Corinthian Church and Paul wanted to put a stop to it.*

I will deal with the first statement ie., 1 Tim 2: 12-23 when I have examined the general position of women in Scripture.

B. The overall message in the Bible is that women have many leadership roles to play including spiritual leadership.

Here are some examples:

1. **2 Kings 22: 13, 14** tell that King Josiah sent Hilkiah the priest saying, "Go ye, enquire of the Lord for me, and for the people" concerning the words of a book they had found. So Hilkiah went until Huldah, the prophetess, the wife of Shallum, and they communed with her, and she said unto them, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel." We see here that although Hulda was *a man's wife, she was a prophetess of the Lord* and God spoke through her to his people.
2. Also see **Judges 4th chapter**. *Deborah, a prophetess*, the wife of Lapidoth, judged Israel at the time spoken of in this chapter. *God not only spoke through this woman to His people, but He, through her, led the army to success.*
3. Another example of woman's leadership is that of Miriam, Moses' maiden sister, who was a prophetess, and who took part in leading the children of Israel out of Egypt. Aaron recognized Miriam's part in the great undertaking and said, "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by *us*?" (see **Exod. 15:20 and Num. 12:2**). *Note also at Christ's birth that a man and a woman both blessed him.* Simeon came by the Spirit into the temple and took Christ in his arms and blessed him. Also *Anna a prophetess coming in the same instant gave thanks to the Lord* and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem (see Luke 2: 27, 28, 38).
4. *A woman received the first message from Christ after his resurrection and delivered it. Mary lingered at the tomb. Christ spoke to her and said, 'Go tell my brethren' (John 20-17).*
5. In **Joel 2: 28-33**. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and *your daughters shall prophesy*, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the *handmaidens* in those days will I pour out my spirit."
6. In **Acts 2: 12-22** we find this: "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and harken to my words; For these are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day, But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and *your sons and your daughters shall prophesy*, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy," etc.
7. Peter quoted Joel's prophesy, and said it was fulfilled on that day. We see here that *God poured out his Spirit on men and women alike that both should prophesy in the new dispensation.*
8. **Acts 21: 8-9** speaks of Philip the evangelist, who *had four daughters, virgins, who prophesied.* In **Phil. 4:3**, Paul said, And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow *help those women which labored with me in the gospel*, with Clement also, and

with other fellow laborers whose names are in the book of life.” So Paul had both men and women in his company.

So, from the above we can see that throughout Scripture, women have had many leadership roles.

C. What did Paul really feel about women preaching in the Church?

In his message to the Corinthians, which people often use to argue against women preaching i.e., **1 Cor. 11:4, 5** (quoted above) we read, “Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. But *every woman that prayeth or prophesieth* with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head,” etc. This shows that **Paul accepted the fact that both men and women prophesied in his time. It is also interesting to note that prophesying for Paul included preaching!** (1 Cor. 14:3, “He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.”) We see here that “prophesy” covers the ground of preaching to an audience.

D. What about the the first statement at the top of this note i.e., 1 Tim. 2:12?

This is when Paul says, “I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, . . .” This should be seen in the same way as Paul’s statement to the Corinthian Church that women should not chatter. I feel that here he is addressing a specific problem that he was having to deal with in a specific situation i.e. some women were usurping authority or ruling over their husbands and others, and Paul was telling them that this had to stop.

To conclude, remember that:

- 1. Paul accepted that women were able to prophecy and that included for him preaching , and;**
- 2. there is no statement in the Bible that says that women should not preach.**
- 3. scripture is full of women taking leadership roles that include spiritual leadership (the above-mentioned are examples)**

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