

What Can a Woman Do?

Excerpts from letters...

- “I have recently decided to sing on our Praise Team, which involves me being up on the stage. For a lifelong Church of Christ girl, this is a big leap! After much prayer and study, I feel that it is OK for me to do this, but I can't articulate this to my dad (who is an elder in the church I grew up in). He goes back to the passages in Timothy and Corinthians about women's roles, and I have a hard time explaining my newfound freedom in Christ that I have. What is your view?!”

Excerpts from letters...

- “I am in my late 40's, happily married for 26 years, and a lifelong member of Churches of Christ. I have come to the sincere conclusion that it is time for us to begin hearing the voices of women in our assemblies: praying, reading Scripture, teaching; indeed, doing whatever God has gifted them to do. Do you believe I'm wrong for moving in that direction in my thinking?”

I. Arguments to Amplify the Role of Women

A. Women of NT prophesied

- Acts 2:18, Holy Spirit poured out...prophesied
- Acts 21:9, four daughters prophesied
 - No passage shows women prophesying in the assembly
 - No passage shows women usurping authority over a man
- Acts 18:26
 - A woman may teach a man
 - Took him aside
 - They explained [Lk.24:1-9]
- Col.3:16

A. Women of NT prophesied

- 1 Co.14:34-35
- 1 Tim.2:12 [Ac.4:18]
- Titus 2:3

Two restrictions on women

1. Not to 'speak' in the assembly
2. Not to usurp authority over a man

B. Phoebe

- Romans 16:1-2
 - Some claim she was a church official: deaconess
 - BUT: the word means servant
 - Mt.23:11, But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant
 - Only context determines when the word bears an 'official' meaning – 1 Tim.3:8, Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money
 - What are qualifications for a deaconess?

B. Phoebe

- Romans 16:1-2
 - Some claim that if the church was to *assist* her, she had authority over the church
 - Contrast *assist, help* – 2 Tim.4:17, But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully thru me, and that all the Gentiles might hear
 - Did Paul exercise authority over Lord?

B. Phoebe

- Romans 16:1-2
 - Some claim: if she was a helper of many, she must have exercised authority, discipline, and oversight.
 - But *benefactor* does not imply oversight.
 - Did she exercise authority over Paul??
Or did Lydia, Ac.16:15?

C. Junia

- Romans 16:7 – some claim that Junia was a woman and apostle ... in place of highest authority
 - Gender: both names are masculine [Junianus is a man's name, though not a common one]
 - Grammar: 'She' is mentioned in honor in circle of apostles = "They are well known to the apostles" (ESV).
 - Apostle: twelve apostles are not in the picture here. Word often means messenger (sent by a church) – Ac.14:14 [13:2-4]. 2 Co.8:23; Ph.2:25

D. “Since the law allowed women prophets,
women today may preach”

- Paul compared the role of NT and OT women –
1 Co.14:34, *as the law also says...*
 1. Miriam, Ex.15:20, woman (not men)...
 2. Deborah, Jg.4:5; 5:7, men came to her...
 3. Huldah, 2 K.22:14-20, men went to her...
 4. Anna, Lk.2:36-38. The temple...

E. Euodia and Syntyche, Ph.4:2-3

- “These women ‘labored’ with Paul – his ‘fellow-workers’; this means they were in a position of authority like the apostle.”
 - What proves too much, proves nothing –
 - 1 Cor.3:9, God’s fellow-workers . . .
 - Lk.8:1-3, women helped Jesus . . .

Were these women in a position of authority like that of God?

Devout women often helped preachers without assuming a position of authority

F. Gal.3:28

- There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
 - “If there is no distinction between male and female, women may do anything men do”
 - Paul speaks of spiritual status, not function
 - May a slave exercise authority over his master?
 - Interpretations make passages contradict
 - 1 Co.12:19, not “all one” in every way: 20-21, 28-30, different functions (duties)

G. Culture

- “Paul’s writings reflect Graeco-Roman culture where women were inferior to men. We know better.” This assertion –
 1. discards NT – exactly the result some want
 2. rejects Paul’s claims: his views of women are based on Lord’s revelation (1 Co.14:37)
 3. ignores Paul’s appeal to creation principles.
 - Gn.9, not based on Moses’ Law
 - a. 1 Co.11:2-3, 7-9, creation principle
 - b. 1 Co.14:34-38, timeless truth. (Mal.2; Mt.19)
 - c. 1 Tim.2:11-15, from the beginning...

I. Arguments to Amplify the Role of Women

II. A Summary of 1 Co.14

Tongues speakers (27-28) and prophets (29-33) receive partial restrictions in assemblies

Women – 33b-35

1. 34: prohibition: let [your] women keep silent [no if 28, 30]
2. 34: state: be submissive
3. 34: basis: as the law also says. V. 21. Gn.3:16?
4. 35: extent: if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home
5. 35: reason: shameful for women to speak in church