

I Corinthians 14:26-40  
*On Women Speaking in Church*  
Mark DeYmaz / March 27, 2011

**I. Exegesis vs. Eisegesis**

- A. We are to take meaning out of the text (exegesis), not read meaning into the text (eisegesis)
- B. To properly exegete a passage, or interpret the word of God, we must not only read words, but pay attention to the ...
  - 1. Historical context in which those words, a passage, were written;
  - 2. Grammatical construction;
  - 3. Literary context of the passage
    - a. That is, what precedes and follows the passage ...
    - b. ... the whole of the discussion.
  - 4. And one more thing; we must always ...
    - a. Interpret the more difficult passages in light of the easier ones.
    - b. Why?
      - 1) Since we believe in the inherent, inspired word of God (2 Tim 3:16; I Pet 1:20, 21), we know that God would not contradict Himself;
      - 2) Therefore, we yield to the teaching of simpler verses to help us understand and clear up any seeming contradiction or confusion in other verses speaking of similar truths.
      - 3) For example;
        - a) (John 3:16) Whosoever believes will be saved
        - b) (Mark 16:16) He who believes and is baptized will be saved
        - c) So, which is it?
          - 1> John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, would not leave out a prerequisite such as baptism if it was, in fact, essential for salvation; right?
          - 2> So we can conclude, by appealing to the simpler verse (3:16), that faith alone saves and that baptism is an act of obedience (Matt 28:19) following one's conversion to Christ;
          - 3> The seeming confusion then is cleared up.

**I**

**I. The Context of I Corinthians 11-14**

*Bookended by 10:31 and 14:40 (whatever ... to the glory of God / all properly, in order)*

- A. Order in the worship service (i.e., flow and expectations)
  - 1. In this section, Paul is providing specific instructions for the proper interaction of men and women in a worship service.
  - 2. *Why?* There are at least six reasons ...
    - a. So, again, that all will be done to the glory of God (I Cor 10:31)

b. So that no one, whether non believing Jews and Greeks, or believers themselves (i.e., the church of God), might be offended (Gr., *caused to stumble* or *led into sin* – Gr., *a <no> proskope* <an occasion of stumbling or falling>) (I Cor 10:32)

c. So that, like Paul, believers would not seek their own profit (Gr. *one's own advantage, personal gain*) and maintain a soft heart towards one another (I Cor 10:33);

1) As he writes in Phil 2:4 – do not merely look out for their own interests, but also for the interests of others

2) In fact, Paul begins I Cor 11:1 by adding the additional thought, “be imitators of me just as I also am of Christ.” *In what manner did Paul imitate Christ?*

a) Philippians 2:1-4 (vs 3) – “Do nothing from empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself.”

b) Philippians 2:5-11 (vss 5-7) – “Have this attitude in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who although he existed in the form of God He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped (forcibly held, i.e., it's my right) ... He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant ...”

d. So that believers will not be contentious in the service (I Cor 11:16)

e. So that there will be no confusion, but rather peace in the service (I Cor 14:33)

f. So that (I Cor 14:40) all things will be done in a proper (Gr. *decent*), and orderly manner (Gr. *by arrangement, with expected regularity*)

#### B. Unity in the worship service

1. Paul is calling the church to worship God together as one ...

2. ... in order to present a clear, consistent and credible message of faith, hope and love to all those who enter the assembly.

### III. The Confusion re. Women in I Corinthians 11 and 14

*For the past 2,000 years, in an undeniably male dominated Church, two specific passages in this section have long-confused our understanding of the proper role of women in the church.*

A. First, let's recognize plainly in the text what, today, we otherwise take for granted: namely, that women are there, in the first place, part of the body: that is, they are expected in the worship service, and expected to be part of the interaction.

B. Second, we must keep in mind that mankind (i.e., men and women) are equally created in the image of God, albeit created uniquely male and female (Gen 1:26, 27; 5:1, 2)

- C. Paul affirms this equality or the fact that God is no respecter of gender in Galatians 3:28, i.e., that both the males and females are one in Christ Jesus, where he states that ...
  - 1. Jews are not better than Gentiles;
  - 2. Freeman are not better than slaves;
  - 3. Males are not better than females.
- D. Within marriage, Paul instructs husbands and wives to *mutually* submit themselves to one another (Eph 5:21; Gr. *to subject one's own will and needs to the will and needs of the other*)
- E. And Peter, too, makes it clear that wives (and, by implication, women in general) are *fellow heirs* of the grace of life (I Pet 3:7), which Paul also affirms in Eph 1:1-14.
- F. In light of these clear, simpler, passages, no one can deny the equality of men and women before God and in the church.
  - 1. To say so in no way denies the uniqueness of male and female;
  - 2. To say so is not to imply that within the church (as within marriage, as within the Trinity itself), specific roles and responsibilities are not to be clarified, assigned to and embraced by members based on such things as need and gifting, etc.
    - a. This is true when we function w/in our own genders  
*i.e., me, Harry and Anthony*
    - b. This is true when we function together with both genders, as well.

#### **IV. Two weeks ago, I tried to bring clarity to I Corinthians 11**

- A. And, more specifically, to just what was and was not intended by Paul in discussing the issue of head coverings within the church
- B. Today, I will not again preach that message but invite you to view it online.
- C. However, I do want to remind you that in wearing their hair long, and/or in covering it with a veil, Paul was instructing women in the church ...
  - 1. To distinguish themselves from the immoral women of Corinthian society, and more specifically, the priestesses (prostitutes) at the temple of Aphrodite who wore their hair short and/or did not wear veils;
  - 2. To acknowledge their femininity, i.e., their unique creation as females, made in the image of God and distinguishable from males;
  - 3. To honor God in respect of His authority in their lives, so as not to be seen as independent of Him (I Cor 11:10)
  - 4. And, in the case of marriage, to glorify (honor) their husbands (i.e., so as they might be seen as respectable men married to moral women)
- D. Now, re. I Cor 11:3, remember Paul teaches that ...
  - 1. God is the head of Christ
  - 2. Christ is the head of every man (male and female)
  - 3. The man is the head of a woman, i.e., *the husband is the head of his wife* (for a man is not the head of a woman simply because he is a man; right?).

- a. Gr., *kephale*: head ... as in an ordained order of responsibility
  - b. Christ words in Luke 22:25-26 can help us understand just what and what is not implied in this term ...
    - 1) In this world, He said, those who have authority (Gr.. *exousia*: power) Lord it over others;
    - 2) But in His kingdom, the leader (Gr., the *one who is the chief or ruler*) must see himself as the servant (Gr., *diakoneo*, a waiter of tables)
4. Now, it is significant that Paul used *kephale*, and not *exousia* to describe the roll of a man in regards to a woman and/or a husband as head of his wife
- a. Likewise, Peter (I Pet 3:7) instructs husbands to live with their wives in an understanding way, as with someone who is weaker (in physical strength or power)
  - b. To be clear, the Greek word translated *weaker* in the NASB is never used in classical Gr. to imply moral weakness; only of those who are potentially powerless to help or defend themselves.
  - c. And I believe the concept of responsibility in caring for women in general applies to men with women outside of marriage, as well
  - d. In fact, in Ephesians 5:23, where Paul again states that the husband is the head of his wife, here is how he further clarifies what he means:
    - 1) He is to see himself as her savior – i.e., nourishing and cherishing her, cleansing her by the washing of the word in order that she might become holy and blameless, without spot or wrinkle, just as Christ also does for the church (vss 23, 29);
    - 2) He is to love his wife as Christ loves the church (vs 25)
    - 3) He is to give himself up for his wife as Christ did the church (vs 25)
    - 4) He is to love his wife as he loves himself, i.e., his own body (vss 28, 33)
- E. Clearly, then, Paul is not using the term “head” here to imply a man is somehow to dominate a woman, nor a husband his wife at home or in the church; quite the opposite!
- F. But the most significant verses to pay attention to in I Cor 11 - as we seek to accurately exegete I Cor 14 in regard to the role of women in the church – are vss 4 and 5 in which Paul clearly states an affirmation of and expectation that both men and women will be praying and prophesying in the worship service.
- 1. To be clear, the same Gr. term *propheteuo* is used in both vss 4 and 5
  - 2. It means to declare divine revelation as in both foretelling the future and/or in proclaiming divine truth to one’s own generation, i.e., preaching/teaching the word of God.

3. Paul would not here affirm a woman to serve in this roll, as a prophet, in the church and then restrict her from speaking in the church, would he?
4. Remember, God does not contradict himself; so it is only we who are confused and in need of further clarification of this seeming contradiction in His word, which brings us to ...

## V. I Cor 14:26-40

### *Observations*

A. vs 26 - He is speaking to *Adelphoi* (Gr. *brethren, those belonging to the same womb*; i.e., fellow believers in the church at Corinth, men and women alike) as has already been clearly established in the letter

B. vs 39 - He encourages the entire church, again, both men and women, to desire earnestly to prophesy and to not forbid one another from speaking in tongues (in keeping with his expectations as already expressed in I Cor 11:4, 5)

C. vs 40 - He restates the overarching theme, i.e., that these two things, along with everything else being done in the worship service (i.e., psalms, teaching, revelation, and interpretation), must be done properly and in an orderly manner so as not to confuse the message or cause others to stumble.

### *Now ...*

- D. There are in fact three restrictions in this passage re. who can speak and under what circumstances in a worship service. Note: Two are aimed at both men and women in general; and then one at women (specifically, women who are wives as will see in a moment).
  1. vs 27 - If anyone speaks in a tongue ...
    - a. Only two or three at most (27a); and only ...
    - b. With interpretation (27b).
    - c. In fact, if there is no one present who is gifted in interpretation, Paul says Gr., *let him keep hushing*) in the assembly (28) -
      - 1) Notice, *he* must keep silent? (Gr. *sigato, let that one <him; 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular>*)
      - 2) This is the same word used in the next two instances, as well
  2. vs 29 - (Paul eludes) the same thing goes for prophesying ...
    - a. Only two or three at most; and then ...
    - b. Let the others who are assembled judge the prophesy/message so they may be exhorted
      - 1) Gr. word used for exhorted is *parakaleo*, is the same word used of the Holy Spirit (He is a counselor, teacher, consoler, who edifies, exhorts, instructs, etc.)
      - 2) And when we think of judging a message, we think silently, right?
      - 3) But in eastern culture, there was (is) an expected questioning and discussion of the message within the assembly for the purpose of learning (instruction) and

encouragement or exhortation, as Paul makes clear in vs. 31

4) In fact, the word *diakrino* (judge) can also imply *to oppose, strive with dispute, contend, etc., for the purpose of discerning truth*

5) Examples from Scripture of such interaction in the assembly include ...

a) Jesus at 12 years of age (Luke 2:46, 47)

b) Jesus in the synagogue (Luke 4:16-30)

c) Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:4-7a)

d) Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19:8-9a)

- c. vs 30 - If (Gr.) *anything may be being revealed* to another who is sitting, let him (that first one; Gr. *protos*) keep silent (again, Gr. *sigato*, let him keep hushing, same as above)
- d. vss 31, 32 - So (essentially) all of you take turns, and subject your spirits to another, as prophets. *Why?*
- e. Vs 33 - Because (literally in Greek) *“God is not a God of turbulence but of peace as is the rule and expectation in all the ecclesia of the saints.”*
3. vs 34 – It’s from within this context, of prophets submitting to one another and of the striving to judge truth through discussion in the assembly, that Paul then states that wives (not women in general, as in context; Gr. *guniakes*) must keep silent in the church (this time, the word is used in its plural form, *sigatosan*, i.e., *let them keep hushing*).
- a. Wives are not permitted to talk in the assembly, i.e., to jump into the discussion (i.e., the judging of the prophet’s message for the purpose of learning), but to (Gr.) *be being* subject to their husbands, as the law (Gr. *nomos*, presumably of God) requires
- b. vs 35a - If any of them, i.e, wives, (Gr.) *are willing to be learning*, let them inquire of their own husbands at home
- 1) Now, you wouldn't be at home with another man, not your husband; this argues for the translation of the word as wives not women in general;
- 2) As does the fact that Paul never subordinates a woman to a man outside of marriage
- c. So, vs 35b - It is not proper of a wife to be speaking in the assembly (i.e., in the context of judging the prophesy/message)
- 1) To do so a wife might potentially shame her husband
- 2) Her speaking might send mixed signals if somehow she is not on the same page as her husband re. the message, or worse yet, the two could end up arguing in front of others
4. vs. 36 – (speaking to their pride) What? Do any of you (men or women) presume to think that the word of God originated with you, or that it has come to you only? (Gr., *katantao*; *kata* – denoting motion i.e., *from the higher to the lower, down from*; *anti* - *as over or against*

*something or someone else)*

5. Eugene Peterson in **The Message** translates the passage (vss 34-38) this way:

Wives must not disrupt worship, talking when they should be listening, asking questions that could more appropriately be asked of their husbands at home. God's Book of the law guides our manners and customs here. Wives have no license to use the time of worship for unwarranted speaking. Do you—both women and men—imagine that you're a sacred oracle determining what's right and wrong? Do you think everything revolves around you?

6. This passage, then, is not forbidding speaking by a man or a woman in the church, but restricting just how and when men and women are to speak in the church; and in the case of women, it is specifically speaking to those who are married.

#### **V. Four Frequently Asked Questions**

*Based on this passage, the preponderance of Scripture and my understanding of it, here is what I believe in response to four frequently asked questions concerning the role of women in the church.*

1. Does Paul forbid women from speaking or teaching a message (i.e, prophesying) in the church?

*No*

2. Do I believe women are free biblically to serve as pastors and teachers within the church?

*Yes*

3. Do I believe that every church should or must employ a woman in the pulpit?

*No*

4. Do I believe that a church is free to consider a woman who is gifted and qualified to serve in such a role?

*Yes*

*Yes*

5. Do I believe a woman can serve as a senior pastor?

*Yes*

6. Do I believe this is normative for the church?

*No*

7. Do I believe that a married woman can serve as a senior pastor only with the support and encouragement of her husband?

*Yes*

*As applied to men?*

1. Does Paul forbid men from speaking or teaching a message (prophesying) in the church?

*No*

2. Do I believe men are free biblically to serve as pastors and teachers within the church?

*Yes*

3. Do I believe that every church should or must employ a man in the pulpit?

*Yes*

4. Do I believe that a church is free to consider a man who is gifted and qualified to serve in such a role?

*Yes*

5. Do I believe a man can serve as a senior pastor?

*Yes*

6. Do I believe this is normative for the church?

*Yes*

7. Do I believe that a married man can serve as a senior pastor only with the support and encouragement of his wife?

*Yes*