

Fellowship Hall SS Class
Role of Women in Church
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Introduction

An emotional and divisive problem – collision between:

- recent cultural changes toward feminism
- traditional biblical interpretation

Two dangers we should seek to avoid:

- (1) being moved from biblical position by culture
- (2) holding to traditional view if not biblical

My Position:

I hold that the traditional biblical interpretation re/ the role of women in the church is basically biblical, namely:

That the role of women in the church is basically the same as that of men, with two exceptions:

- women are not to rule over (adult) men
- women are not to teach (adult) men

Primary Passage: 1 Timothy 2:11-12

"Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." (NASB)

"A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she must be silent." (NIV)

Context: Paul's instructions (chs 2-3) to his associate Timothy (who was apparently in charge in the church at Ephesus) regarding the proper functioning of the church (3:14-15):

Prayer (2:1-10)

objects of (1-7)

men's conduct in (8)

women's conduct in (9-10)

Authority and Office (2:11-3:13)

restrictions on women (2:11-15)

qualifications for overseer/elder (3:1-7)

qualifications for deacon/deaconess? (3:8-13)

Apostolic Authority of These Instructions (3:14-16)

Content: Paul limits the authority of women over men in the area of teaching and ruling, using the paired opposites "learn/teach" and "submission/authority"

Paul's Argumentation: Genesis 2 and 3

In 1 Tim 2:13-14, Paul gives two biblical arguments for his position of vv 11-12, one from creation, the other from the fall:

"Adam was formed first, then Eve."

This argument has been commonly ridiculed by more radical feminist interpreters, as though mankind should then be subject to the fish, birds and animals, since they were created before Adam & Eve.

If there is anything to biblical Xy, it is foolish to argue with an apostle whom God inspired to write much of the NT.

Paul, though writing to a trusted associate, surely intended to give Timothy material which he could pass on to Xns in Ephesus and by which later Xns elsewhere could learn how they too "should conduct themselves in the church of God." We should thus try to understand his argument. It appears to be condensed, as are many of the arguments of Jesus and the rabbis.

Paul is summarizing Genesis 2, the closeup picture of human creation, in which the account of Genesis 1 (which might otherwise have been understood to indicate the creation of man and woman was simultaneous) is expanded to show that Adam was created earlier.

Paul's point, I suggest, is not that merely being created earlier implies greater authority. Rather, note what transpires between Adam's creation (2:7) and Eve's (2:21-23):

Adam is commissioned to care for the garden and he is warned about eating from the forbidden tree (2:15-17);

Adam names the animals and God allows his names to stand, so that Adam has authority over the animals under God (2:18-20).

Since none of the animals were suitable to be Adam's helper, Eve is created (2:21-23) from Adam's side rather than as a totally separate creation, probably so as to be included within the commission/covenant given to Adam. That this was done **after**, rather than **before**, the commission was given and animals named implies that Eve is subordinate to Adam in authority, being in a sense his descendant.

Paul thus argues that in creation, before the fall, the Adam/Eve relation includes an authority structure that is generalizable to later generations and to church authority.

"Adam not deceived but woman was."

Paul here picks up on Eve's admission – "the serpent deceived me" – given at God's inquest in Gen 3:8-13.

As above, I suspect Paul is making use of the whole context:

- Eve apparently didn't ask Adam's advice before eating, though he seems to have been nearby (3:6, "with her").
- Adam listened to Eve's advice (3:17) and ate, though he was not deceived by the serpent.

Thus Eve taught Adam (by word and deed) and Adam learned from her. Eve took the initiative rather than leaving it to Adam.

Paul thus argues that in the fall, the creation-ordained authority structure was violated by Eve's action, and that the effects of this violation continue even in the church to this day.

Continuation of Disabilities

The curses given as a result of the fall in Gen 3:14-19 continue to this day, though some mitigation has occurred though modern technology, spread of Xy:

All humans:	death
Man:	resistance of soil
Woman:	difficult childbirth

The divisiveness of the authority matter in marriage ("the battle of the sexes") seems to be a part of this curse, as noted by Susan Foh, who compares the structure of Gen 3:16 to that of 4:7:

"Unto your husband shall be your desire, and he shall exercise dominion over you."
(3:16)

"Unto you [Cain] is its [sin's] desire, and you should have dominion over it." (4:7)

This phenomenon, though often characterized as unfair, is a feature of numerous other biblical situations, in which the sin of an ancestor is visited upon his/her descendants:

Reuben - loses firstborn status to Joseph and family priesthood to Levi as result of his incest (Gen 49).

Eli - family eventually loses high priesthood as result of his failure to discipline sons (1 Sam 2:27-36).

Saul - does not pass kingship to sons (1 Sam 15).

I suggest the disallowing of women to serve as leaders over men continues to some future time, probably the millennium or eternal state, since the other curses of Gen 3 end at these times.

Agreement with Biblical Practice:

That this is not just a peculiar interpretation of isolated passages, note that the data of OT and NT practice does not support the idea of equal opportunity for men and women in positions of teaching/authority over men.

New Testament Practice

No Apostles Women

Jesus certainly had women who helped in his ministry, but none of the 12 were women.

Women certainly were eyewitnesses of his resurrection, but none listed in Paul's list, and apparently not believed by the men.

Broader use of "apostle" might include Junia, Rom 16:7 (unless this is Junias, a poss nickname for Junianus); even with feminine name, this may mean "outstanding in opinion of apostles."

No Scripture Writers Women

(not writer of Hebrews, who uses masculine to refer to self in Heb 11:32)

Clearly Women Prophesied: Anna, daughters of Philip, etc.

Some argument whether this authoritative or not, teaching or not; I think it is, but this is a matter of God's charismatic initiative, not a regular office (see below for OT distinction).

No Specific Indication of Change from OT Situation

Main suggestion is 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."

But context is sonship & inheritance, not office

in OT, Gentiles, slaves, females not normally heirs, but in Christ this is changed.

Old Testament Practice

Regular Offices: standard arrangements for succession

No priests women

No Levites women

No kings women (except Athaliah, 2 Kings 11, an usurper)

Charismatic Offices: chosen by God's Spirit

Several prophets:

Miriam: listed as leading Israel with her brothers (Mic 6:4); as prophet (Ex 15:20) leading women in dancing and tambourine playing.

Deborah also called prophet (Jdg 4:4)

Isaiah's wife (Isa 8:3)

Unnamed false prophets (Ezk 13:17-23)

Huldah: sought for consultation rather than speaking in public (2 Kings 22:14ff)

Noadiah (Neh 6:14)

One judge:

Deborah: clearly leading and being consulted in public, but in a context where men not doing what they should (Jud 4-5).

No Scripture writers appear to be women

but important utterances are recorded:

Miriam (Ex 15:20): singing Moses' song

Deborah (Jud 5): own song

Hannah (1 Sam 2): ditto

similarly in NT w/ Mary (Luke 1)

Conclusions

For virtually every command in Scripture, situations are recorded in which it has not been followed, either by way of violation or by way of exception: e.g.

Human sacrifice:

forbidden in general (Deut 12:31)

commanded in case of Abraham and Isaac (Gen 22)

app carried out for Jephthah and daughter (Jdg 10)

Eating Showbread:

forbidden to non-priests (Lev 24:5-9)

eaten by David et al (1 Sam 21:1-6)

approved by Jesus (Mark 2:25-27)

It is not unreasonable to see the exceptions under OT and NT practice above in this light.

It appears that our suggestion re/ Paul's teaching on the role of women in teaching men or having authority over them fits the tenor of Scripture better than the claim that there should be no such distinction does.