

# Women in Ministry?

by Rose Murdock

Many people wonder if it's scriptural for women to be called into the ministry and particularly to preach or teach in the church or to a congregation. Many women called to ministry have been held back because of a misunderstanding of scriptures concerning women.

"Let the 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 any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

First of all, we know that Paul does not mean for women to never speak in the church because in 1 Corinthians 11:5 he talks about woman who pray or prophesy in the church. Well if women are allowed to pray or prophesy in the church then of course they are allowed to speak.

So if this doesn't mean they can't speak in church then what does it mean? He's talking about LEARNING here. When a woman, (actually a wife), is at church and learning she is not to ask questions or disrupt the service by talking. This verse is referring to when a woman is **learning** in church.

"Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." 1 Timothy 2:11-12

Again, this verse is referring to when a woman is learning in church and it is also referring to husband and wife. A wife should not disrupt the service by talking, asking questions or debating with her husband. It's important to understand that the Greek had no separate word for 'wife'. So the Greek word for 'woman' *gyne*, has been translated both as 'woman' and 'wife'. You have to read the scripture in context to understand who he is talking about. The same is true with the word 'man' and 'husband'. There was no separate word for husband so the Greek word *aner* was translated both as 'man' and 'husband'. In context, these scriptures are referring to husbands and wives and not all men and women in general.

History tells us that it was customary for the women and men to sit separately in churches in those days and oftentimes since the women were not as educated as the men they would call across the room to their husband to ask questions of them which was disruptive to the service. A woman, (actually wife), should not disrupt the service, but should learn in silence and should not argue or debate with her husband, particularly in a public or church setting.

People have taken God's structure concerning the home and husband and wife relationship and have tried to say that applies to the church. We know that in Christ there is no male or female.

"...there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28

## Covering the Head

"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. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven." 1 Corinthians 11:3-5

This literally means, 'the head of every wife is the husband'. It goes on here giving instructions for

women having their head covered and men having their head uncovered while praying or prophesying. As we read on down to verse 16 we see that this whole subject is a custom and not a scriptural mandate. Paul says 'if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom...' so he calls this whole practice of covering the head a custom and not a commandment from the Lord. It's advisable to consider the custom of the day or region you are in but remember that this is a custom and not a command.

### **Woman in Ministry**

In reference to women being in leadership positions in the church, or in ministry, we see references to that in 1 Corinthians 1:11 which speaks of "them which are of the house of Chloe." Chloe is a female. This reference is similar to several other references for churches in people's homes. 1 Corinthians 16:19 and Romans 16:5 talk about the church in Priscilla and Aquilla's house. Colossians 4:15 speaks of the church in Nymphas' house and Philemon 2 speaks of the church in Philemon's house. There is no indication that those of the house of Chloe were simply a family and not a church as in the three other home-churches mentioned.

When speaking about a church in a person's home, Paul would refer to the Pastor(s) or head of that church. So he's not speaking about her family living in her house but rather he is referring to her as the head of that church. Priscilla and Aquilla were a husband and wife who had a church in their home. They are always mentioned together in the Bible. You could say they co-pastored together. So because of these other scriptural references to female pastors and co-pastors you could say the scriptures in 1 Timothy 3 which discuss qualifications for leadership in the church apply in the female gender as well as in the male gender. Since we see this reference in the gift of Pastor, the other ministry gifts of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist and Teacher apply equally to women as well.

Yes, God calls women as well as men into the ministry. We should not confuse the natural order of the home with a spiritual call to ministry. For further information on this subject see "The Woman Question" by Kenneth E. Hagin. (<http://www.rhema.org/>)

**"The Lord gives the word [of power];  
the women who bear and publish [the news] are a great host."**

*Psalm 68:11 The*