

Women in the Ministry?

What does the Bible Say?

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A Modern Phenomenon

In the past century America has witnessed the emergence of women to various positions of prominence and authority. It is no longer unusual to find women serving in the fire department, carrying a gun as a police officer, or sitting behind a desk as a judge in a courtroom. Women serve in every branch of the military and even in local and national political office. This emergence of women to various positions of authority has not been confined to the secular realm, but has penetrated into the religious world as well.

Many churches now have women serving in a broad diversity of ministry offices, from deacon to pastor, and several denominations commonly ordain women as pastors, priests, or ministers. Even those churches which function with the traditional male pastor, now frequently designate their wives as “co-pastor.” Additionally, some women have become traveling evangelists, dragging their husbands and children along with them as they hold conferences and seminars, teach from behind church pulpits, and over their own regular radio and television programs.

While these practices are now commonplace and widely accepted in our society, the big question is, **are they scriptural?**

Is It Scriptural for Women to Serve in Ministry Offices?

Our answer **must** come from the Holy Scriptures. The Christian holds the Bible to be the authoritative Word of God, *so our beliefs and practices must not contradict its clear instruction.* **The Word of God alone** must be the basis for our faith and practice. For us to answer this question by mere logic, humanistic reasoning, philosophy or popular opinion would be to depart from the Christian standard.

What Does the Bible Say?

After careful study and sincere examination of the scriptures dealing with this subject we make the following observations and come to this conclusion.

1. WOMEN DO NOT SCRIPTURALLY QUALIFY FOR MINISTRY OFFICES.

The Scriptures reveal that five ministry *gifts* and *offices* were given by Christ to the church.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11).

These offices are often referred to as the “five-fold ministry” since they are five in number. They are the ministry offices of the **Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor** and **Teacher**. They were given by Christ to the church...

“For the perfecting of the saints, **for the work of the ministry**, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12).

Though a woman might attend Bible school or seminary, earn a degree and be licensed, appointed, certified or ordained to the ministry, **still she does not qualify** for these ministry offices **scripturally**.

The Original Language Speaks More Clearly

Absolutely fundamental to Koine Greek (the original language of the New Testament) is its system of agreement between nouns and their modifiers. Nouns in Greek can only be masculine, feminine, or neuter, and the articles which precede and modify them must agree in gender. In fact, at times the article will actually help determine the gender of the noun it modifies. It is, therefore, very significant that in each of the five-fold ministry offices listed in Ephesians 4:11, the Greek nouns and the articles that modify them are all in the masculine gender. This fact alone furnishes us with enough authority to state unequivocally, that these offices were intended by God to be occupied **by men only**.

Scriptural Qualifications

In 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Paul sets forth the qualifications God gave for the ministry office of a bishop or pastor (certainly these qualifications would apply to *every* five-fold ministry office). Notice the words in bold type in this passage emphasizing *who* God qualifies for ministry office.

“This is a true saying, if a **man** desire the office of a bishop, **he** desireth a good work.

A bishop then must be blameless, the **husband** of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

One that ruleth well **his** own house, having **his** children in subjection with all gravity;

For if a **man** know not how to rule **his** own house, how shall **he** take care of the church of God?

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride **he** fall into the condemnation of the devil.

Moreover **he** must have a good report of them which are without; lest **he** fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

In no uncertain terms, God declares in the Bible that **ministry office can be held only by a man!** Also, note the *masculine pronouns* used over and over...”**he**” and “**his.**” Honesty demands that we not inject “or she/her” into the sacred text.

Women simply do not qualify.

Furthermore, **he** must be **the husband** of one wife. (The Bible does not imply or inject, “or the wife of one husband.”) Obviously, only a man can be a husband, and what should thus be equally obvious is that only a man can meet God’s qualifications for ministry offices.

God Does Not Discriminate

God does not, here or elsewhere, treat women unfairly, or as though they were not equals to men. Men are not superior to women; women are not inferior to men. But while God does not discriminate against women, He did make them different, plainly revealing that He intended them to function *in different roles and with different responsibilities*. God created *two* separate and distinct sexes (*equal*, but separate and distinct).

“Male and female created He them” (Gen. 1:27).

Obviously, He intended that they function in **two separate and distinct roles**.

More Scriptural Qualifications

Titus 1:5-9 also sets forth God’s qualifications for ministry office:

“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

If any be blameless, the **husband** of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;

Holding fast the faithful word as **he** hath been taught, that **he** may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”

Again, we note the emphasis on the **masculine**. Just as in 1 Timothy, the one holding ministry office is to be *a man*, “*the husband of one wife*” (not the wife of one husband). This is not to suggest that a minister has to be married, but rather the emphasis is on the fact that he was married *only once* (i.e., not one who has been divorced). Also, we see the same usage of the masculine pronouns.

These Scriptures can only bring us to one conclusion: *women simply do not qualify to hold a five-fold ministry office*. Honest hermeneutics will allow no other interpretation!

2. WOMEN IN FIVE-FOLD MINISTRY IS A MODERN PHENOMENON, WITHOUT BIBLICAL PRECEDENT OR HISTORIC WARRANT.

No New Testament Basis

a. There are *no examples* of women serving in five-fold ministry offices *in the entire New Testament*. Multitudes of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are mentioned and named in the New Testament. *None were women*.

b. Jesus ordained twelve apostles to function in ministry. *None were women!* Certainly if Jesus intended for us to ordain women to ministry offices **He would have set the example** by ordaining at least one woman apostle! In fact, the Bible mentions *more than twelve apostles!* God also ordained as apostles James (the Lord’s brother) (Gal. 1:19), Paul (Rom. 1:1), probably Barnabas (1 Cor. 9:1-6; Gal. 2:9; cf. Acts 14:4,14), and several others (Rom. 16:7). **None were women.**

Furthermore, there is no evidence that women were among the 70 that Jesus sent out in ministry (Lu. 10:1,17). Thus *in the entire New Testament there is not one single example of a woman serving in five-fold ministry!* If we sincerely were to follow *the*

example of Christ, the pattern and practices of the early church, and the instructions of the New Testament, we would not ordain women into ministry office!

No Examples in Church History

Early church history lends no support to the modern views of qualifying women for ministry office. Actually, in the almost 2,000 year history of the church women never served in ministry office until the last century. Again, we must conclude that ordaining women to five-fold ministry offices is a **recent phenomenon**, (actually arising only in this century out of Feminism), and is **without scriptural precedent or historic basis**.

2. WOMEN SERVING IN ANY FIVE-FOLD MINISTRY OFFICE IS EXPRESSLY FORBIDDEN IN 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-12:

“Let the women 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.”

Here women are instructed to learn quietly in submission, and **they are not permitted to teach men or to exercise authority over them**. Other Bible translations make the sense of this prohibition even clearer:

“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.” (N.A.S.V.)

The Amplified version reads:

“Let a woman learn in quietness and entire submissiveness.

I allow no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to remain in quietness and keep silence (in religious assemblies).”

And the Living Bible says:

“Women should listen and learn quietly and humbly.

I never let women teach men or lord it over them. Let them be silent in your church meetings.”

Since any exercise of a five-fold ministry office is an exercise of spiritual authority (I Tim. 3:5; Heb. 13:7, 17), women simply are not permitted to exercise this authority over men. God designed in the order of His universe that woman was to be “an help meet” for the man, not an authoritative figure over the man (Gen. 2:18,20), and she is not the head of the man but he is to be her head (Eph. 5:22-24; I Cor. 11:3, 8-9). Violating these clear injunctions from Scripture invariably leads to spiritual deterioration, chaos, and confusion within the church (or the home). Nothing functions properly when it is out of Biblical order.

Godly Women in the New Testament

There are many examples in the New Testament of godly women who evangelized unbelievers and encouraged believers, including men. Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, even explained proper doctrine to the preacher, Apollos (Acts 18:26), and the woman at the well in Samaria was largely responsible for the evangelization of her community due to her own personal testimony of Christ (John 4:28-29, 39). However, **these women did not function in any authoritative five-fold ministry office** in the church, for such

would have contradicted the scriptural principles of proper role relationships, and violated God's prohibitions.

Amazingly, in spite the clarity of Paul's instructions, some have argued that these verses do not constitute a prohibition of women ministries, but instead are a "cultural limitation". They contend that this prohibition applied only to the unlearned women in a particular city and time, who were unqualified to teach due to their lack of education and the prevalent cultural sense of propriety that existed at that time.

However, the context of the verses clearly reveals that *such was not the case*. Paul's prohibition is linked not to custom or culture, **but to the very order of creation!**

Continuing from Paul's prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:11-12, verse 13 explains *why* the woman is forbidden to teach or hold an authoritative position over men:

"For (because) Adam was first formed, then Eve."

The prohibition is because God did not design for woman to be the head over man, but vice versa! God, in His divine scheme, never intended for women to function in roles He delegated to men. Though created equal, each sex was to function in the role God intended. **It violated divine order** for the women to usurp male authority in churches or homes. Is God unfair to women? Does this prohibition declare male superiority? Absolutely not! **No one sex is more important than the other.**

IS A KNIFE MORE IMPORTANT THAN A FORK?

No! Both are equally necessary, and we would be foolish to argue over which was more important or superior. Both are important and were fashioned to perform *equally essential functions!* However, neither can do as good a job as the other was made to perform. Did you ever try to eat spaghetti with a knife—or cut steak with a fork? They don't function well in those capacities because *that is not the purpose for which they were designed!* But when functioning in the roles for which they were intended **both perform excellently!**

The Same is True with Male and Female Roles

As it is with the order of man's creation (knives and forks), so it is with God's (men and women). Though this may not be a perfect analogy, yet it helps to make the point.

The Bible declares that women simply were not "formed" for the role of church leadership; they are, after all, the "weaker vessel" (I Peter 3:7). **God created the male and female equal but different.** Each was to function in the role and capacity for which God intended! For the woman to hold authority over the man, or for the man to submit to the woman, *is to depart from divine order.*

Paul's Prohibition in I Timothy 2 Linked to the Fall

As we continue in the context, Paul links the prohibition (I Timothy 2:11-12) not to "culture" but *to the nature of the fall!*

"And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (I Tim. 2:14).

Paul is not trying to lay the blame for the fall all on Eve (In fact, in Romans 5:12-ff he attributes the entrance of sin into the world directly to Adam and doesn't even mention Eve.) But Paul could be suggesting here that *woman*, being the weaker vessel and more emotional, was more susceptible to deception than was the man. Paul states plainly that

Adam wasn't deceived in the garden. He knew what he was doing! He sinned with his eyes open! He was persuaded by the woman, but not deceived by her or the serpent (cf. Gen. 3:17).

Thus, to discard the Bible's prohibition of women serving in five-fold ministry on the basis of "ancient culture" is to clearly disregard the entire meaning and context of the verse. **This prohibition is valid in any age and in any culture!** No other meaning could possibly be intended.

Yet Another Prohibition!

"In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matt. 18:16).

God repeats Himself in order to get the point across!

"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 (literally, to take a submissive, subordinate place) 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" (I Cor. 14:34-35).

One may argue the point from logic, reason, philosophy or popular opinion, but the Bible is clear! Women are out of place in any ministry position that gives them authority over men. **No woman can scripturally serve in a ministry that puts them behind a pulpit preaching to or teaching men.**

Any church that allows a woman pastor, co-pastor, associate pastor, evangelist, preacher, or teacher of men, clearly violates these biblical injunctions, and does so to their own peril. It is no light thing to so wantonly disregard God's own clear commands.

ANSWERING THE OBJECTIONS.

There are several passages of Scripture that objectors use in an attempt to justify their views allowing the ordination of women. We will mention the major objections here and refute them scripturally.

QUESTION 1: WHAT ABOUT GALATIANS 3:28?

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

Doesn't this passage declare the equality of women, and therefore justify their ordination into the ministry (as well as man's)?

ANSWER:

Many people do quote this verse in an attempt to justify women serving in five-fold ministry offices. In an effort to justify their unscriptural practices and beliefs, they resort to lifting this verse entirely out of its context, twisting its intended meaning to fit their own purposes, and actually using it to contradict everything God says in the New Testament on the subject.

Take It in Its Context

The context declares the intended meaning of the verse which is *justification by faith in Christ*, irrespective of social status, sex, or nationality. Male and female, rich and

poor, Jew and Gentile, all have equal access to God and are heirs together of God's gift of grace (cf. Eph. 3:6).

This verse teaches that *all are equal* in the sight of God. No one race, social status, or sex is superior. Gentiles are not inferior to Jews; the poor are not inferior to the rich, and; women are not inferior to men. Every believer has access by faith into the very same presence of God through the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:19), and all believers can equally receive the promise of the Holy Spirit and manifest spiritual gifts (Acts 1:13-14 with 2:1-4, 17; 1 Cor. 12:7; 14:26,31; cf. 1Cor. 11:5). So all believers are equally children of God regardless of sex, race, or social status.

No Contradictions

Obviously, Galatians 3:28 neither changes nor contradicts the qualifications for ministry God established in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, nor does it eliminate the prohibition of women serving in five-fold ministry office in 1 Timothy 2:11-12. God simply does not contradict Himself!

Are those who would justify women serving in ministry office on the basis of Galatians 3:28 trying to lead us to believe that God is confused, or, that He changes His mind from book to book or year to year? I ask you, would God *allow* women in ministry in Galatians 3:28 and then forbid it in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 3:1-7?

No, the teaching and instruction of God is consistent throughout the entire New Testament. *The Bible does not contradict itself.* The truth of the matter is, *the Galatians passage has absolutely nothing to do with the question of women serving in the ministry.* It deals, not with function, but with acceptance. The context of the passage declares the unconditional acceptance into the Abrahamic Covenant (Gal. 3:29) of anyone, all physical distinctions (Jew/Gentile, bond/free, male/female) having been removed. Those who remove this verse from its context in order to justify their unscriptural views exercise more than poor hermeneutics, they are guilty of grossly manipulating God's Word (2 Cor. 2:17; 2 Pet. 3:16).

Equal but Different

Though all believers are equal in God's sight and He is no respecter of persons, yet the roles and functions of male and female remain forever separate and distinct.

Obviously, male and female differences did not cease at the cross, and though equal, God ordained that the woman take a submissive and subordinate role in her relationship to the man (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18). She is to be a godly wife and mother (1 Pet. 3:1-5); chaste, virtuous, and a "keeper at home" (Prov. 31:10-31; Titus 2:4-5).

Her responsibility to the church is the same as that of the godly examples of other women in the New Testament; to pray, fast, intercede, seek first the kingdom, learn, mature in Christ, grow in faith, set a good example, support the ministry, exercise her spiritual gifts, serve the body in love, witness, visit the sick, trust God completely and love Him supremely. Women play a vital part in the church assembly, and Paul identifies several of them as his "fellow laborers" (Rom. 16:3-5; Phil. 4:2-3). Their shining quality in God's sight is their devotion, modesty, purity, and the manifestation of a meek and quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3:1-5).

The man's functions, while similar, do differ in certain aspects. He is to fast, pray, intercede, seek first the kingdom, and set a godly example for his wife and children. He is the "breadwinner" and the spiritual head of his house. He is to "love his wife as Christ loved the church" (Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19), and raise his children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). According to the New Testament, in the church assembly only men are permitted to function in five-fold ministry *if they qualify and are ordained by God* (I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; cf. Ja. 3:1).

QUESTION 2: WHAT ABOUT ACTS 10:34, WHICH STATES THAT "GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS." IF HE DOES NOT RESPECT PERSONS, WHY DOES HE FORBID WOMEN TO SERVE IN MINISTRY OFFICES?

ANSWER:

What desperate attempts a drowning man will make to cling to any straw that might support him. This is yet another example of lifting a verse out of its context in order to try to justify an untenable position. As someone once said, "A proof text out of its context is nothing but a pretext." The Acts 10 passage stating that God is no respecter of persons is quite clear when taken in its context. God had shown Peter a vision of animals previously considered unclean by Jews, and instructed him to "kill and eat" them (cf. Acts 10:9-16). When Peter refused to eat what was unclean, God responded, "What God has cleansed, that call not thou common" (vs. 14-15). Actually, through this vision God was preparing Peter to accept Gentiles into their fellowship. Previously, Gentiles had been considered unclean by the Jews, and no fellowship with them was allowed:

"And he said unto them, ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation: but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (Acts 10:28).

God had prepared the heart of Cornelius, a devout Gentile, with his family and friends to receive the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. When God sent Peter to the house of Cornelius the full realization of God's grace being extended to the Gentiles dawned upon him.

"The Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: he is lord of all" (Acts 10:34-36).

The apostle had then realized the full significance of the vision. He understood that the distinction between clean and unclean foods had an application to human beings, and that, contrary to Jewish belief, no people were to be thought of as common or unclean in the sight of God. When Peter said, "God is no respecter of persons," he was stating that **God shows no partiality** to any one people or nation. Any person who trusts Christ and does what is right, whether he be Jew or Gentile, is accepted by God! **God had extended saving grace to the Gentiles!** This is the meaning of Peter's statement in its context, as any honest interpreter would acknowledge. The Acts 10:34 passage has no reference whatsoever to women serving in ministry, and those who would seek to support their unscriptural views through this verse must look elsewhere.

Is God a "respecter of persons" because He forbids the woman to function in roles He intended for man? *Of course not!* Rather, **He is a respecter of order!** The divine

order He established must be followed in order for Him to bless. He is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33), but when women try to function in male roles, confusion is inevitable.

There is confusion in the home when a wife rejects her God **mandated** subordinate role to her husband and “wears the pants” in the family (cf. Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; 1 Cor. 11:3, 8-9). Even “secular” statistics have revealed that homes dominated by women make for unhappier marriages, more insecure children, and higher divorce rates. How can God bless a home, a marriage or a family, when either the husband or the wife refuse to submit to the roles in which God intended for them to function?

And there is confusion in the church when divine order is not followed. Paul wrote his epistles to the Corinthian church at least in part, *to correct their lack of order* in their exercise of spiritual gifts (cf. 1 Cor. 12:1; 1 Cor. 14:40). They had a zeal and enthusiasm for God, and undoubtedly the supernatural gifts flowed freely in their services (1 Cor. 12:7-10). However, Paul knew that unless divine order was followed the inevitable confusion would result in the spiritual decline of the whole church.

God does not respect persons (Eph. 6:9), but **He does respect and require ORDER** in the church assembly! Why else would He go through so much trouble to make it perfectly clear –

That women were not allowed to teach men (1 Tim. 2:11-12);

That women were to be silent and take a subordinate role to the men in the church (1 Cor. 14:34-35);

And that only **a man** could qualify and meet the conditions God laid out for service in ministry offices (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

The whole church is out of order when these prohibitions are violated. How can God really bless those who continually refuse to obey His word on this matter? (Lk. 6:46; Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 5:3).

QUESTION 3: WHAT ABOUT DEBORAH, MIRIAM, AND ANNA, WHO IN THE OLD TESTAMENT DISPENSATION SEEMED TO SERVE IN MINISTRY OFFICES?

ANSWER:

Indeed, these women and several others were greatly used of the Lord in the Old Testament dispensation, but not in a sense comparable to five-fold ministry in the New Testament.

Miriam

Miriam is once called a “prophetess” in Exodus 15:20. That verse and verse 21 following it describe the nature of her ministry as primarily that of *leading the Israelite women*. Moses was God’s leader of the nation as a whole, but other men ministered and “judged” under his authority (Ex. 18:21-26). Miriam’s task was fundamentally a ministry to the women.

A ministry to women by women is not inconsistent with New Testament teaching. Titus 2:3-5 instructs the older women in the Lord to teach the newer ones:

“The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, *teachers of good things*;

That they may teach *the young women* to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”

Clearly then, women are not only allowed but encouraged to teach other women (and undoubtedly children as well). Certainly the matters referred to in these verses could only be adequately taught by the wise counsel and example of a godly woman.

Miriam sinned when she became insubordinate to God’s will and incited Aaron against Moses. Objecting to Moses’ prominence and respected position, she obviously became a leader in the rebellion against his authority (since she was the one God punished, not Aaron). As a result of her involvement in instigating the rebellion, God smote her with leprosy. She was healed when she and Aaron repented and Moses prayed for her healing (Num. 12:1-15). While this might seem to be an extreme example, it does reveal that God will not deal lightly with anyone, male or female, who dares to disregard the order He personally established.

Deborah

Deborah served as a judge and was also called a prophetess. Her function was mainly advisor, offering counsel, and making judicial determinations in matters of disagreement among parties (Judges 4 and 5). However, *leadership* seemed to play a minor role in her ministry, and we might note that she called on a man, *Barak*, when need arose for military leadership to encounter the Canaanites in battle. Unquestionably she was a devout woman who was spiritually mature and blessed by God.

Anna

Anna, the aged prophetess, is mentioned only briefly in Luke 2:36-38. Her ministry was that of serving God in the temple “...with fastings and prayers night and day.” She was undoubtedly one of the godly remnant in Israel looking expectantly for the coming Messiah. Though a prophetess and a devout servant of God, nowhere do we find anything to suggest that she functioned in any role of leadership or authority.

No “Prophetess” in the New Testament

Nowhere in the entire New Testament dispensation do we find a woman functioning in the office of prophetess (since Anna lived before the cross and thus in the Old Testament dispensation). The only other time the word is used in the New Testament is in Revelation 2:20-ff, where Jesus *rebukes* the church at Thyatira:

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, *which calleth herself a prophetess*, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.”

Thus the only prophetess mentioned in the New Testament was this false one who ministered deception to the church at Thyatira. The four daughters of Phillip the Evangelist who prophesied (Acts 21:8-9) were not prophetesses, but exercised the simple gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 12:10: 14:1,26,31) as many other Spirit filled women do (Acts

2:17-18). Acts 21:8-9 in no way suggests that Phillip's daughters functioned in any five-fold ministry position.

Obviously, one cannot scripturally appeal to women in the Old Testament as a justification of the modern practice of women in five-fold ministry.

Question 4: Can women scripturally serve in the ministry office of a "deaconess"?

Answer:

Some have suggested that Romans 16:1 justifies women serving in such an office. The word translated "servant" in the King James Version (KJV) is in the Greek "kiakonos," which is used as a *servant, helper*, or official in the church. It simply means that Phebe *served* the church, perhaps through prayers, visiting those of her own sex, and helping in whatever capacity she could be useful. This verse in no way implies that there was an official office of "deaconess."

In fact, 1 Timothy 3:8-13 sets forth the qualifications of *a deacon* as an officer of the church:

"Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.

Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

As in the ministry office of a pastor, the deacon must have a grave and sober wife (vs.11). Obviously only men have wives and thus only men could scripturally qualify for the office of a deacon. Also, deacons can have been married to only one wife, and must *rule* their children and own houses well (verse 12). To rule the house is to be the head and authority of it – ***a role that can be scripturally fulfilled only by a man*** (Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18).

Thus, Scripture plainly demonstrates that there is no biblical position of "deaconess".

QUESTION 5: HOW FAR DO WE TAKE THE PROHIBITION IN 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35?

"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."

How far do we take this? Can women not speak at all in church? Are they forbidden to share testimonies, or make prayer requests, or to prophesy?

ANSWER:

This question can best be answered by seeing the subject as a whole, and noting what else the Bible has to say that bears upon this question.

We can qualify the prohibition in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 with 1 Corinthians 11:5. Here, the context deals with the church assembly and ordinances (vs.2; 17-ff), and reveals that *a woman is allowed to pray and prophesy in the church if she covers her head* as a symbol of her willing submission to the headship and authority of the man (vs.3-16), and as long as she does not try to teach or in any way usurp that authority (1 Tim. 2:11-12).

Although the Bible doesn't specifically state that women are allowed to share testimonies (of God's provision, healing, blessings, etc.) in the assembly, neither does there appear to be any apparent wrongdoing in it, especially when a special time for sharing testimonies is designated, and as long as all things are done "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40).

In our local assembly, the sisters in the Lord are encouraged to "stir up the gifts" within them (1Cor. 12:31; 14:1,39), to prophesy, give an utterance in tongues, interpret, or manifest any other gift with which God anoints them (Acts 2:17-18; 21:9; 1 Cor. 11:5; 14:1-ff), keeping in mind that *the purpose* of the vocal gifts (tongues, interpretation, gift of prophecy) is to edify, exhort, and to comfort the assembly (1Cor. 14:3), not to rebuke or teach it.

We also encourage the sisters to share their testimonies of God's faithfulness and blessings in their lives, under the command of Psalm 107:2, to "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so," and Isaiah 12:4, to "...declare His doings among the people."

QUESTION 6: WHAT ABOUT WOMEN MINISTRIES THAT HAVE TRULY BLESSED MULTITUDES OF PEOPLE?

Many people have been saved, filled with the Holy Spirit, inspired, and healed under the ministries of sincere and devoted women, both in the United States and on the mission field. Doesn't the fact that many people are being blessed by women ministries prove God's approval of them?

ANSWER:

Our purpose in writing this publication is not to call into question the motives or intents of women who serve in five-fold ministry. Our interest is to set forth *what is scriptural*. It seems that the Word of God has been set aside as our guide for faith and practice, and the church at large now condones "whatever works" and is done in the name of Christ (whether it's biblical or not doesn't seem to matter). Just because some people are blessed by women preachers is in no way an indication of God's approval of them!

Remember:

- a. God anoints the preaching of the Word! *The Word of God* is what blesses, inspires, and changes lives (Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 1:21). It's the *Word* that "will not return void" (Isa. 55:11). Jesus said in Mark 16:15-20 that "*signs*" (miracles) will follow *the preaching of the Word*. (No human vessel, man or woman, can take credit for what only God's Word will do if it's proclaimed!) If the Word of God is preached, people will be blessed by it!
- b. People were probably "blessed" by Judas Iscariot's ministry! "Signs and wonders" probably followed his preaching, and people could have been drawn to Christ through it! When Jesus told the twelve that one of them was not genuine, no one suspected Judas.

Certainly if his ministry had not borne fruit similar to that of the other eleven they would have suspected him immediately!

I know personally of cases where people were *saved, healed*, and drawn closer to Christ under the ministries of men who were later revealed to be impostors, adulterers, and in one case, a closet homosexual! How can this be? Did the fact that people were blessed under their teaching really demonstrate God's *approval* upon the ministry? **NO!** It simply *proves the point*...that **it's the Word of God** that produces faith in Christ, and has the power to transform lives (Rom. 10:17; Ps. 107:20).

c. It's out of order. Women simply do not qualify scripturally for five-fold ministry. Christ is calling His church *to return to the New Testament pattern*. He established its order. If people are blessed when things are out of order, how much more will they be blessed when all is in divine order?

Those who are serious about discipleship will want their own lives, their homes, and their churches to be in divine order. What shall be our guide in this order? Will we follow people's arguments, modern reasoning, or excuses without scriptural warrant? Shall we permit men's logic or popular opinion to guide us, rather than the Word of God? Will we jump on the modernists/feminists bandwagon and allow in our churches what God forbids? Instead of wrestling with what the Bible says on this subject, and instead of trying to justify a conflicting opinion, should we not instead willingly submit to the all wise counsel of God's eternal Word?

After all, doesn't God in His infinite wisdom know best?