

What About Women?

- Does the Bible say a woman can't be a teacher?
- Does God want women to say nothing in church?
- Is a woman supposed to be submissive to every man in her life?
- Should a woman tell a man how to be saved?
- Can a woman express an opinion in a discussion and still line up with God's perfect will?
- If a woman is teaching, should a man leave the room?
- Is it wrong for a man to learn from a woman?

Following are some of the passages of scripture which have shaped my thinking in this area. And believe me, this "shaping" has not come without a good deal of personal confusion and pain. I have banged my head up against this wall over and over again. But ultimately I always come back to one thing: my heart longs to choose to do things God's way.

Here's the simple truth, before I go into detail:

**God does not want women to exercise authority over men
in the context of the life of a church.**

Could there be exceptions to this? Sure. If no man will step up and do what needs to be done, God may just raise up a woman. In the Old Testament, Deborah was moved by God to lead the nation of Israel. She obeyed God, but even in doing so she was 100% aware that this was not the way it should have been done. Men had dropped the ball. It was shameful that a woman would have to pick it up.

Why would God require such a thing, though? Can't women be just as educated as men? Aren't women just as capable as men of leading? Making decisions? Foreseeing difficulties and protecting people from them? Being kind and understanding, yet firm? Don't mothers show these characteristics as they raise children? Don't women in the business world (at least in our day and age) have positions of

responsibility equal to or even better than men? Why would a woman be able to lead in the "real" world, but not in the church family?

These are legitimate questions, to my mind. So, here are some scriptures, and a few of my thoughts:

Judges 4&5: I've already mentioned Deborah. She lived at a time in Jewish history when government was in the hands of judges who were raised up by God. She was one of the judges of Israel, meaning, she counseled people on what the will of God would be in their different challenging circumstances. When it was time for Israel to go to war, Deborah told a man named Barak that God wanted him to lead the nation. He said he would only go if she went, too. She went, but she warned Barak that he was taking second best. A woman named Jael was used by God during that war to kill the enemy. She drove a tent peg through his skull. Barak was part of the victory, but drew shame down on himself for hiding behind the skirts of a woman. Yes, two women were used to deliver Israel. But it was second-best.

I Samuel 25: A woman named Abigail steps around her husband's evil schemes and takes care of the future King David and his men. She risks her life to do it. In doing so she saved the life of her husband and her household. It was the right thing to do. Her husband is struck dead by God and eventually King David steps in to be her protector and husband in thankfulness for what she had done. Was she right to usurp her husband's authority to do this? Yes. The "rule" of authority is the right way to do things, but exceptions do exist. God does not expect anyone to watch people die just so a "rule" will be kept. That is legalism. The important thing here is that Abigail believed in the One, True God. Her evil husband did not. She acted in faith. Would she have led her household to do this if her husband had been a man of faith? No, of course not. She had no choice but to do second-best.

These two women are exceptions for exceptional reasons. Otherwise, almost everywhere else in the Bible you see the norm: men are the

leaders. Men are the Kings. Men are the priests. Men wrote the books of the Bible. Men are the apostles. Men are the heads of the 12 tribes. Men are the prophets (there were some women prophetesses - but no books of the Bible were written by them).

A good point to note here is that although men were the choice of God to lead, very few of them were actually qualified to do so. They were sinners. They were dysfunctional. Nowhere does the Bible indicate that men are chosen to lead because they are better than women.

John: So, how about Jesus? Doesn't He have women for friends? Yes. Doesn't He love them and care for them and aren't they active in His ministry? Yes. But He does not choose any of them to lead. On the contrary, He again and again makes sure that women are cared for by men. A sinning woman is lifted up and set free in John 8. At the foot of the cross His mother is handed over to His best friend, John. (John 19:26&27)

Acts 16 & 18: Women worked side-by-side with men in the spreading of the Gospel. A woman named Lydia helped found the church in Philippi. (Acts 16:11-15). And a woman named Priscilla was prominent (with her husband Aquila) in the teaching ministry in Corinth. (Acts 18:24-26)

I Timothy 2:9-15: Why, then, does Paul need to say these words to Timothy as he Pastors a church in Ephesus? Why does Paul make a point of telling the women of the Church at Ephesus to "receive instruction with entire submissiveness", and to not "teach or exercize authority over a man, but to remain quiet"?

Keep reading in this passage. Verse 13 tells us why Paul felt he needed to say something. "It was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam that was deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression."

Paul knew, as we do, too, that Eve was deceived by the serpent in the Garden of Eden. She believed the lie and disobeyed God. Adam didn't

believe the lie, but he still disobeyed God. They were both wrong...but Eve was more easily fooled.

So, Paul says, women are not the best choice to be in authority because they are more easily deceived. Does that mean all women are not to be trusted? Of course not. Everything we've seen in scripture so far has said just the opposite. But it does mean that men are better choices for leadership because they have an edge on women - they are not as easily deceived. Are there some men who are easily deceived. Oh yes. But this is a general statement of fact. It's the way men and women are wired up. A Godly man is a better choice of leadership than a Godly woman.

Why did Paul need to say this to Timothy? We can only guess, but I'm assuming there was a problem with women wanting to lead, or perhaps with competition between men and women for authority, and Paul wanted to set the record straight for this church...and God wanted to set the record straight churches 2,000 years later. Men were still God's first choice for leadership in God's plan for the world. Would there be times when women would have to lead because no man was available? Yes. But that would not be the norm...or the best. In I Corinthians 14:34&35 Paul says basically the same thing to the church in Corinth.

When you can, do it best. Not second-best.

Titus 2:3-5: So what is a woman supposed to do? Raise a family. Keep a home. Support and love and be submissive to her husband. And use all of her many gifts to serve God. What if one of those gifts is teaching? Can a woman teach in the church? Sure. Teach children. Teach other women. Write. Speak. Give. Sing in the choir. Serve on a committee. Run a program.

Again, the Simple Truth

There's only one limitation put on women serving in the family of God: Don't take a position of authority over a man. Don't put yourself into a place where you feel you have the right to be "over" a man. You can't be a

Pastor. You can't be an Elder. And you can't have an attitude of "teaching" men.

Why do I say "attitude"? Because the Bible never says a man can't learn from a woman. If a man wants to learn from a woman, he has that choice. It's the woman who has the responsibility to keep herself from an attitude of being a teacher of men - a leader of men.

Can you teach? Do it. Just limit yourself to a teaching situation which is Best. Don't settle for second best.

Do you want God to amazingly bless your service for Him? Steer clear of anything which may make your ministry less than the best God wants for you.

When I finally got all of this into my head and my walk with God, I realized I had been foolish.

It was as if I had been in a large, beautiful field full of opportunities and had moved to one corner of that field and begun butting my head up against a fence corner. I just didn't understand why I couldn't go to the other side of the fence, so I banged into that corner again and again and again. I could teach. Why couldn't I teach men?

Then the Lord told me to turn around and look at the rest of the field. It was breath-taking. He told me I could minister anywhere in that field. Anywhere at all. He was just asking me, for the sake of His kingdom, to move away from the corner - to give up the thing I thought I had to have - and to enjoy and explore the whole world of things He wanted me to have.

I moved.

-Kathleen Dalton