

How Should We Worship? – Gender Roles in New Covenant Worship

I. 1 Corinthians 14:26 — When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation.

- A. Notice the **communal** nature of worship (“when you assemble”) and also the vertically **dialogical** nature of worship.

- B. What does this communal and dialogical nature of worship _____ for the roles of men and women in temple worship?

II. 1 Corinthians 14:34 — The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says.

- A. What is the “speaking” to which Paul refers?

- B. “When you assemble, *each one* has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation.”

- C. **1 Corinthians 14:27–28** — If anyone speaks [*laleo*] in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret; but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent [*sigao*] in the church...
1 Corinthians 14:29–30 — Let two or three prophets speak [*laleo*], and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent [*sigao*].
 - When Paul, then, continues, “The women are to keep silent [*sigao*] in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak [*laleo*],” he is referring in context to any *individual* speaking contribution (prophecy, tongue, teaching, psalm).

III. 1 Corinthians 14:35 — If they [the women] desire to learn [*manthano*] anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for a woman to speak [*laleo*] in church.

- A. Paul assumed that the women would be learning everything that the men were learning in church (cf. 1 Cor. 14:31; 1 Tim. 2:11).

- B. Paul’s point appears to be: If the women desire to learn anything *additional* (something not already being revealed or taught), let them ask their own husbands at home.
 - 1. Since temple worship is fundamentally _____, to speak _____ in temple worship (even in the asking of questions) is to take a certain lead in temple worship; it is essentially to take part in determining the direction of temple worship.
 - 2. This is why after saying that he wants “the *men* in every place to pray” (1 Tim. 2:8) Paul goes on to say in 1 Timothy chapter two:
 - 3. **1 Timothy 2:11–12** — A woman must **learn quietly** [*manthano hesychia*] with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

IV. “As the law also says”

- A. **Genesis 2:15 (cf. 2:7-8; 3:17-19)** — Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to [work; *abad*] it and keep [*samar*] it.
- This unique role and responsibility of the man in working and keeping the garden is, in a sense, the distinct _____ of the man (cf. 1 Cor. 11:7-9).
- B. **Genesis 2:18 (cf. 3:16)** — Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.”
- 1 Timothy 2:15 (cf. 5:14; Gen. 3:16)** — But women will be saved [*sozo*] through the bearing [and raising] of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.
- This unique role and responsibility of the woman is, in a sense, the distinct _____ of the woman (cf. 1 Cor. 11:7-9).
- C. These respective roles of male and female constitute their glory because they are grounded in the unique ways that they were each created by God as His own image and likeness (Adam from the _____ [Gen. 2:7] and Eve from Adam’s _____ [Gen. 2:21-22]).
- This does *not* mean that a man who is unable to work or a woman who is unable to have children – or that an unmarried man or an unmarried woman or someone who is retired or whose children have left the house — cannot live a fulfilled life to the glory of God (cf. 1 Cor. 7:25-40).
- D. Adam’s responsibility to work and keep the garden was not just a matter of providing for his wife and children; it also represented his _____ calling.
1. The Garden is described in Genesis in terms of a garden temple (the place of God’s special presence and dwelling with men) and the language of “working” (*abad*) and “keeping” (*samar*) the garden is the same language used to describe the responsibilities of the Levites at the tabernacle.
 - a. **Numbers 3:7–8** — They shall [**keep the responsibility**; *samar... mismeret*] for him and for the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to [**work the service**; *abad... abodah*] of the tabernacle. They shall also **keep** [*samar*] all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, along with the [**responsibilities**; *misremet*] of the sons of Israel, to [**work the service**; *abad... abodah*] of the tabernacle.
 - b. **Numbers 18:4–7** — They shall be joined with you and [**keep the responsibility**; *samar... mismeret*] of the tent of meeting, for all the **service** [**work**; *abodah*] of the tent; but an outsider may not come near you. So you shall [**keep the responsibility**; *samar... misremet*] of the sanctuary and the [**responsibility**; *misremet*] of the altar, so that there will no longer be wrath on the sons of Israel. Behold, I Myself have taken your fellow Levites from among the sons of Israel; they are a gift to you, dedicated to the Lord, to [**work the service**; *abad... abodah*] for the tent of meeting. But you and your sons with you shall [**keep**; *samar*] your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and inside the veil, and you are to [**work the service**; *abad... abodah*].
 2. It was uniquely to the _____ that God assigned the priestly task of working and keeping (or guarding / watching over; cf. Gen. 3:24) the garden temple.
 - a. This explains why the serpent addressed himself to the woman and not the man (Gen. 3:1-6; cf. 1 Tim. 2:13-14).

- b. This explains why, when the man and his wife both hid themselves, God addressed Himself first only to the man (Gen. 3:8-9).
 - 3. It was uniquely to the Levitical _____ that God assigned the task of “working” and “keeping” the tabernacle.
 - 4. This is the glory of the man by virtue of his creation and the creation order. The glory of the woman by virtue of her creation and the creation order is _____, and this glory — together with the glory of the man — ought to be extolled and honored.
 - a. The glory of the man is seen most clearly in its contrast with the glory of the woman.
 - b. Likewise, the glory of the woman is seen most clearly in its contrast with the glory of the man.
 - 5. It is upon this basis (the priestly role of man in the garden temple and in subsequent Old Covenant temple worship) that Paul says women are not to speak in New Covenant temple worship but are to subject themselves, “just as the Law also says.”
- E. When Paul uses the word “shameful” (*aischros*) he is not speaking of something culturally shameful but of something theologically and intrinsically shameful (“as the law also says”; cf. 1 Cor. 11:6-7; Eph. 5:11-12; Titus 1:10-11).
- The shame of a woman speaking in church is what it is only because it is the _____ of the woman’s distinct honor and glory that is rooted in her creation.

Conclusion

- A. There is no place in temple worship where it is an honorable and fitting thing for a woman to contribute (take the lead) individually.
 - 1. This is so because if a woman contributes in temple worship, her contribution has — or *should* have — the nature of a proclamation of God’s authoritative word (teaching and admonishing) or a leading of the congregation in responding to that authoritative word (calling upon the name of the Lord), or both.
 - 2. This specific conclusion regarding the role of women in temple worship is grounded in, and even helps to further clarify and inform, a biblical _____ of worship.
- B. If all we see is an ugly “can’t” then we will always be more susceptible to _____, to _____ and resentment, or to legalistic _____.
- C. As we humbly submit ourselves to the truths of God’s word, let us always pray that He will reveal to us the _____ and the _____ of those truths that we confess.

There are some who would translate 1 Corinthians 14:34-35:

“The *wives* [*gyne*] are to keep silent in the churches; for [*the wives*] are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. If [*the wives*] desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands [*aner*] at home; for it is shameful for a *wife* to speak in church.”

The argument, then, is that *unmarried* women *can* ask questions in the assembly because they have no husband to be subject to and therefore no husband to shame or embarrass. There are several problems with this view:

1. This is a wrong understanding of “shame” not only in terms of the meaning of the word (the point is a moral and theological shame), but also in terms of who it is that is shamed (it is the woman who is shamed, not the husband; the woman does not have “power” to shame her husband).
2. Those who hold this interpretation assume that wives can pray and prophesy in the assembly without shaming or embarrassing their husbands by any lack of subjection — so long as their heads are covered (1 Cor. 11:2-16). But if a head-covering is sufficient to indicate a woman’s subjection to her husband and so avoid shaming her husband when she prays or prophesies in the assembly, why should the same not be true in the case of asking questions?
 - (“If they desire to learn [*manthano*] anything” cannot be made to refer to the passing of judgment [*diakrino*] on prophecies [1 Cor. 14:29] in order to discern [*diakrasis*] their genuineness [1 Cor. 12:10]. Learning by asking [*eperotao*] a question, on the one hand, and passing judgment, on the other hand, are two very different things.)
3. When Paul says that women are to “subject themselves” he is obviously not saying that they should be personally subject to every man. But neither does this subjection need to be restricted only to a woman’s husband. Women are to subject themselves to the male leadership in temple worship.
4. If Paul is assuming married women (“let them ask their own husbands at home”), this only reflects the well-nigh universal reality in the first century that women would be married (cf. 1 Tim. 2:8-15).
5. Alternatively, Paul may be speaking more generally of the male leadership in the woman’s household (“let them ask their own men at home”).