

## SERIES: PRESCRIPTIONS FOR A HEALTHY & HOLY CHURCH:

A Study in 1 Corinthians Applied To The Church Today

### III. MAINTAINING PROPER DIET & EXERCISE

#### D.) ROLES & EQUIPMENT (Offices & Gifts)

## “Order In The Gym II: BATTLE OF THE SEXES?”

(1 Cor. 14:33-40)

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### INTRODUCTION:

The title of the message this morning is “Battle of The Sexes.” However, there is a little 'secret' that goes with it. You see, while many are quick to interpret these verses as an issue of men vs. women, that is not really what it is about. True, it does refer to men and women in different functional ways and it even repeats that most hated of words: “submissive.” Combined, this is more than enough for most to prick our ears, charge our emotions and demand that the walls be raised and armor assembled.

In reality, however, such reaction is both unnecessary and prohibitive. **These are not words of men against women. These are words concerning one element of what is necessary for God's church to be powerfully edified and built up through the preaching of His Word and the responsibilities of both men and women, husbands and wives to do their part in achieving this for God's glory!**

### PRAYER

#### I.) THE NATURE OF THE **ARENA** (v. 33)

- *What is the proposed 'battlefield' and what is to be protected or gained there?*

##### A.) The Desired **Result**

- read v. 33
- The battleground is the local church in assembly.
- The dispute is over the area of prophecy (inspired teaching of God's Word).
- **The desired result is that it may remain always an area of peace and never confusion.**
- This result is a normative expectation of ALL assemblies of God's people in ALL places and times.

##### B.) The Existing **Situation**

- We have already seen repeatedly that the Corinthian Christians mistakenly saw themselves as being super-spiritual to the point of being beyond human. Instead, they saw themselves as on a level with the angels and therefore extrapolated that there should no longer be any gender distinctions (even physical) and that they may each speak the infallible Word of God according to their own spirits and superseding the Scriptures and Apostles.
- *This, in turn, produced constant friction, frustration, dispute and division. ALL of which, Scripture tells us, is contrary to the character of God, His purpose and desire for the church!*

#### II.) THE NATURE OF THE **BATTLE** (vv. 34-35)

- In the last few verses of this chapter, Scripture addresses one more factor that has contributed to these problems and that is not acceptable.

- *But, wait a minute, didn't Paul just say in 11:5 that woman did (and could) pray and prophesy in church? Yes, but remember the qualification: “so long as her head is covered.”* That is, so long as she respects the God-ordained roles and functions of men and women, specifically husbands and wives, in relation to one another: so long as she does not somehow dishonor , undermine, or disrespect her husband.
- *So what is going on here? To answer this, we need to more closely examine the specific context and vocabulary.*
- **Context:** (1) Across the bay from Corinth was the famed Delphic oracle, a shrine where a priestess would speak in incoherent sounds of prophecy and prediction to the seeker. Another would then interpret these sounds, always in a manner that was quite broad yet obscure and often left the seeker as mystified as before. Much like today's fortune cookies and astrology readings. *Examples.* People attending the Corinthian Church, upon hearing women in the congregation speak in their mysterious Corinthian 'tongue' must have naturally connected these practices as being generally synonymous. (2) While nobody knows for certain what the arrangement was in the Corinthian Church, the still-common practice in first century synagogues and thusly the early Christian Churches were for men and women to sit in different sections according to gender. (3) In any case, what is clear is that there was a very real problem in the Corinthian Church of too many people trying to speak (whether aloud or to their 'neighbor'), teach and even question during the course of the service. At least a significant element in this was identified as women.
- **Vocabulary:**
- (1) “**Women.**” The Greek word Paul uses is “*gunaikes*”, which can mean either women in general or specifically wives. The context here, particularly in light of the use of “*andras*” in v. 35 to speak of “husbands” supports that the intention here is to refer, at least primarily, to “**wives**” and not “all women.” Further, often left out in our English translations, is the article that indicates these “*gunaikes*” as “belonging or specially attached to” the “husbands.”
- It is not a command prohibiting women from speaking in church simply because they are female. The issue, as Paul will greater enunciate in a moment, is how our marital relationship is to be represented in this setting.
- (2) “**... be silent.**” This is the same word used in vv. 28 and 30 as an admonishment to men. The Greek verb, “*sigao*,” means “to hush, be still” and is used in a continuous sense. As Greek and NT scholar, Spiros Zodhiates explains:  
*“Every time one of these three actions appear on the scene during a worship service, the person should hush, be it a man or a woman. In the first two instances it concerns men and in the last women . . . Under no circumstances does the injunction of Paul in 1 Cor. 14:34 indicate that women should not utter a word at any time during the church service. It is not men versus women or women versus men, but it is confusion versus order. It makes no difference who causes the confusion. It is as bad if produced by men as it is when produced by women.”*  
 (The Key Word Study Bible, note for 1 Cor. 14:33-40)
- (3) “**... in the churches.**” This command is specifically for behavior within a church assembly and is not to be automatically extended any further.
- (4) “**not permitted to speak.**” Again, in the Koine Greek of the original text, there were various different words used to describe different types of speech. The one specially chosen here is “*laleo*,” which is used to refer to unorganized speech and/or meaningless sounds. It can be used in reference to someone who is “babbling,” “prattling” on without focus or relevance, or even to refer to animal noises and tune-less sound from musical instruments or such.
- Carefully understand that this is not a prohibition against any or all sound or speech. Rather, it is a prohibition against speech which is unnecessary, inappropriate, without focus or relevance,

senseless babbling.

- (5) “*as the law also says.*” That is God's Law versus man's law.
- **Genesis 2:21-24** *So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. Then the LORD God made the rib He had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. And the man said: This one, at last, is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called woman, for she was taken from man. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.*
- We see this same connection in 1 Corinthians 11:3,8,9; Ephesians 5:21-33 and 1 Timothy 2:9-11.
- Husband and wife are to be one conjoined flesh who act with one Body and speak with one voice. To act otherwise, particularly in public, is to dishonor this union.
- (6) “. . . *but should be submissive.*” Translated from the Greek “*hypotassomai*”, the middle voice of “*hupotasso*” which means literally “to be under + to place in order.” The middle voice means it is an action that is initiated by the object upon itself.
- Therefore, the command here is for wives to voluntarily place themselves under their husbands according to the proper order instituted by God.
- The important significance is that this is something for the wives, before God, to rightly choose and not something to be forced upon them. When God's arrangement is kept in this manner it will positively contribute to providing peace and order.
- Of course, the greater degree to which the husbands are actively “loving their wives as Christ loved the Church” (Eph. 5:25), the easier and more common it will be for the woman to respectfully 'submit.'
- (7) “... *desire to learn.*” The desire to learn and understand is to be commended and encouraged. But, in the assembly and in the presence of inspired Biblical preaching, it is more important that one LISTEN. This is NOT the time to be turning to your neighbor or shouting across the room your questions, disputes, offense, disagreement, opposing viewpoint, etc.
- (8) “... *they should ask their husbands at home.*” If you must, let that be confined to the home between the discreet intimacy of husband and wife! By the way, be sure to note that the Greek used here for “ask” (*eperotao*) refers specifically to a question between equals. Further, note that there is an unmistakable grammatical connection here that she is to ask *her* husband, not just 'some husband'!

### III.) THE UNDERLYING ISSUE: **AUTHORITY** (vv. 36-38)

- The real, underlying issue to all of these problems of communication - especially in the church assembly - is that of recognizing and submitting to authority as directed by God!
- On whose authority are we to presume to speak for God? Is God's Word to be understood as whatever you today think it is? What best fits your current circumstances?
- Are you the only ones to whom God has revealed Himself? Do you really presume yourselves to be so special and unique from other believers? What applies to others does not apply to you?
- NO, of course not! God's Word has already been revealed and if one, who claims to be spiritual, utters something that is contrary to what has already been revealed, shouldn't a problem be recognized?
- Rather, in ignorance, some of us believe that we can improve on the Word of God. Or, that we understand His instructions better than the messengers He has equipped and appointed to explain them. Or, that they apply differently to us.

- The main context of this text is that of women questioning, challenging, criticizing, opposing, or offering a different viewpoint than the one being spoken by the designated preacher.
- **And if someone in the assembly does insist on such, then the others shall ignore it – not flock to it because it 'tickles the ear' or 'sparks the emotion.'**
- Dr. Ironside summarized this idea applied to wives this way:

*“If God has restricted her so that it is not for her to usurp the place of pastor or teacher in the public assembly, it is not to slight her gifts, nor to ignore the value of her services elsewhere. The true test of love for Christ is obedience to His Word. He knows best what each one of us should do in order to glorify Him . . . A Priscilla may teach an Apollos, a Mary Magdalene may be the risen Lord's messenger to His faint-hearted disciples, a regenerated woman of Samaria may evangelize the men of her city, a Dorcas may serve by ministering to the comfort of the poor, a Phoebe may be a deaconess of the assembly, but a woman, no matter how gifted and godly, is not to take the place of the man in the assembly of God, but to set an example of lowly subjection to the revealed will of God, assured that He values devoted obedience above any possible form of activity, however much it may be approved by those who have never learned to let God's Word be the supreme authority” (First Epistle to the Corinthians, pp. 457-458).*

#### **IV.) REMEMBER THE 'MAIN THING': ORDERED PROPHECY** **(vv. 39-40)**

- AGAIN, notice the point of this order and these instructions instituted by God Himself: **These are not words of men against women. These are words concerning one element of what is necessary for God's church to be powerfully edified and built up through the preaching of His Word and the responsibilities of both men and women, husbands and wives to do their part in achieving this for God's glory!**
- In our day and society, it has been common, accepted and even expected for women to act like men and men to act like women in any number of ways. Society may accept and even encourage it, but our Lord God Almighty does not!
- Men, don't miss this application to yourselves, especially if you have a habit of talking like the stereotypical woman: babbling, gossiping, arguing and full of criticism. The same principle applies, regardless of gender!

#### **OUR APPLICATION:**

**General principles applicable to ALL of us**

**The Need To be:**

- A.) **Teachable**
- B.) **Composed**
- C.) **Submissive**
- D.) **Discreet**

#### **INVITATION**