

WOMEN 3

INTRODUCTION

God, throughout the Old Testament, gave women rights and used them as prophets and leaders and to save His people. But men treated women as second class citizens and in many societies, even today, they are of less value than an animal

JESUS POSITION

Jesus went to great lengths to raise the status of women to a place where all His people were equal and could become “all one in Christ”. He chose women to be the ones to announce most of the important event in His story. This is the role of a Prophet.

He allowed women to travel with Him and support Him from their own wealth. His best friends were women, one of whom owned their house. They felt close enough to Him to be able to tell Him off when He didn't raise their brother from the dead as they had expected. This is a relationship of love and “equality”, as much as anyone can be equal with The Son of God.

He “missed” the perfect opportunity to put Mary in her place as a woman in subjection in the incident of the washing up. Instead He used this incident to show Martha, and us if we listen, a “better way”.

After the Resurrection, we see them emerge from the shadows at the foot of the Cross to the glorious light of the resurrection. They were there for Him at the tomb either awaiting His resurrection or wanting to minister to Him in love, while the men were cowering in some back room.

ROAD TO EMMAUS

There is no Scriptural reason why the two people walking to Emmaus after the crucifixion were two men. Only tradition tell us that. We know one was Cleopas. It is more likely that this person was his wife Mary.

Joh 19:25 And His mother stood by the cross of Jesus, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene.

She was a very strong disciple who supported Jesus financially and travelled with Him and they did stay in the same house in Emmaus that night. She was at the foot of the cross when He died and would probably have known more about the incidents than Cleopas himself would have.

The fact that they were actively discussing the events as equals make an enormous difference to our perception of the role of women.

We unwittingly carry the tradition that both were men without even thinking about it.

TRANSLATIONS

We looked how the choice of a word in the translations we read, can influence the meaning that we receive. The words in the Greek “gune” can be translated woman, women, wife and wives. With “aner”, for man, the translators can choose between man, men, husband, wife.

We saw how simple assumptions based on the culture of the time of the events when they were written, and especially at the time of the translations, can influence the choice of English word used and so affect our understandings. These concepts then became traditions or habits which we automatically follow without thinking about it.

We must not trap women in roles which stifle their God given talents.

But women do tend to go to extremes when the boundaries are loosened and now, God has allowed the position and influence of women to move to the point where they often dominate men.

We need a balance and be mindful of behaviours which step outside the model of propriety and love that God has given us.

HIERARCHIES

Humans need hierarchies in order to function.

There is always a boss or CEO or a President, a Prime Minister or Pope. The buck has to stop, and start, somewhere. Then there are executives, department heads, team leaders, and workers or lower ranks.

We saw how Moses set this process in action in Exodus 18.

Each must contribute their part or the endeavour fails or is less efficient than it could be.

We can choose the parameters that will operate or have others forced theirs on us. They can be based on submission from below or domination from above.

CHRIST’S HIERARCHY

There is a hierarchy for the transmission of power and love in God’s Kingdom. God set it up from the beginning with differing models throughout history until Christ perfected it.

God’s hierarchy in the family is Father God, Son, Spirit, Husband, wife, children, slaves; a cascade of equals in Christ who choose to submit, in love, to the one before them on the chain. There is another hierarchy within the Church but we go there later.

In Christ’s Kingdom, we are all one in Christ. So it is a submission of equals.

SUBMISSION

SUBMISSION VERSUS SUBJUGATION

Subjection conveys the overtones of a king ruling his subjects with the power and authority coming down from above and this can be done in a forceful way. When one is being “subject to” one has no option but to acquiesce to the dominant power which usually provokes rebellion or resentment.

Submission is a voluntary act on the part of the underling. It is something they choose to do for whatever reason. No one can force you to be submissive unless you choose to do. If one is submissive because of force, it is not a healthy thing and rebellion will eventually occur.

We looked at a word study and decided that the choice of the English word, “submit” or “be subject to”, was strongly influenced by the traditions and mores of the society, and changed the meaning considerably and reinforces this concept of male domination over women.

While the hierarchical order is retained, the tone and the intent is changed dramatically from one of love to one of power.

Subjection comes from above, submission from below

SUBMISSION IS VOLUNTARY

Submission is a voluntary act. We choose to fit into different hierarchies in order for communities to function efficiently. This is just part of life. We submit to teachers at school, police on the road, and bosses at work. We choose to consider others above ourselves. We choose to put aside our needs, and wants, to respect others, in order for society to survive.

SUBMISSION IS CHRISTLIKE

- Creation submits to God.

1Co_15:27 For^{G1063} he hath put^{G5293} all things^{G3956} under^{G5259} his^{G848} feet.^{G4228}
But^{G1161} when^{G3752} he saith^{G2036 (G3754)} all things^{G3956} are put under^{G5293} him, it is manifest^{G1212} that^{G3754} he is excepted,^{G1622} which did put all things under^{G5293}
G3956 him.^{G846}

Eph_1:22 And^{G2532} hath put^{G5293} all^{G3956} things under^{G5259} his^{G846} feet, ^{G4228} and^{G2532} gave^{G1325} him^{G846} to be the head^{G2776} over^{G5228} all^{G3956} things to the^{G3588}
church,^{G1577}

Php_3:21 Who^{G3739} shall change^{G3345} our^{G2257} vile^{G5014} body, ^{G4983} that it^{G846} may be fashioned^{G1096} like unto^{G4832} his^{G846} glorious^{G1391} body, ^{G4983} according^{G2596} to the^{G3588} working^{G1753} whereby^{G3588} he^{G846} is able^{G1410} even^{G2532} to subdue^{G5293} all things^{G3956} unto himself.^{G1438}

- Jesus submitted to his parents.

Luk 2:51 And^{G2532} he went down^{G2597} with^{G3326} them, ^{G846} and^{G2532} came^{G2064} to^{G1519} Nazareth, ^{G3478} and^{G2532} was^{G2258} subject unto^{G5293} them: ^{G846} but^{G2532} his^{G846} mother^{G3384} kept^{G1301} all^{G3956} these^{G5023} sayings^{G4487} in^{G1722} her^{G848} heart.^{G2588}

- He also submitted to the will of the Father.

Joh 5:30 I can do nothing of My own self. As I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of the Father who has sent Me.

We are to

- Submit to God

Jas_4:7 Submit^{G5293} yourselves therefore^{G3767} to God.^{G2316} Resist^{G436} the^{G3588} devil,^{G1228} and^{G2532} he will flee^{G5343} from^{G575} you.^{G5216}

- Laws of the land

1Pe_2:13 Submit yourselves^{G5293} to^(G3767) every^{G3956} ordinance^{G2937} of man^{G442} for the Lord's sake:^{G1223} ^{G3588} ^{G2962} whether^{G1535} it be to the king,^{G935} as^{G5613} supreme;^{G5242}

- Submit to one another in the Church

1Co_16:16 That^{G2443} ^(G2532) ye^{G5210} submit yourselves unto^{G5293} such,^{G5108} and^{G2532} to very one^{G3956} that helpeth with^{G4903} us, and^{G2532} laboureth.^{G2872}

Eph 5:21 submitting ourselves to one another in the fear of God.

- Wives to husbands

Eph_5:21 Submitting yourselves^{G5293} one to another^{G240} in^{G1722} the fear^{G5401} of God.^{G2316}

Eph_5:22 Wives,^{G1135} submit yourselves^{G5293} unto your own^{G2398} husbands,^{G435} as^{G5613} unto the^{G3588} Lord.^{G2962}

Col_3:18 Wives,^{G1135} submit yourselves^{G5293} unto your own^{G2398} husbands,^{G435} as^{G5613} it is fit^{G433} in^{G1722} the Lord.^{G2962}

- Servants to masters

Tit_2:9 Exhort servants^{G1401} to be obedient^{G5293} unto their own^{G2398} masters,^{G1203} and^(G1511) to please *them* well^{G2101} in^{G1722} all^{G3956} *things*; not^{G3361} answering again;^{G483}

Submission is the voluntary act of allowing others to take precedence over us. It is not an imposition of authority from above.

SUBMISSION IS NOT EASY

It is never easy for any of us to “give in” to another, especially if the issue is important.

It usually comes down to giving up your “power” and position, your identity, wants, needs, plans, dreams. The list is endless. The whole basis of submission is giving up to others. One party chooses to accede to another’s position and this can involve considerable personal cost.

The submit-ee really should appreciate the sacrifice the submitter is making for the general good of all involved. This submission to another person should never be seen as their “right” The cost of the submission should be valued.

MARRIAGE

Paul talks about mutual **submission** in the Church but as soon as we get to the relationship of marriage, the choice of word changes from “submission” to being “subject to”. Same word. Different translation.

Eph 5:21 submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God.

In the very next verse, Ephesians 5:22, the exact same Greek word is used, but the translation changes. “Submission” becomes “subject to”. Same word, different translation

Ephesians 5:22

(LITV) Wives, subject yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord,

(ASV) Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

(YLT) The wives! to your own husbands subject yourselves, as to the Lord,

even to the inclusion of exclamation marks!!!!

Suddenly we have a domination of the husband over the wife, not submission of wife to husband.

How come we are “all one in Christ” in the Church and we submit, a voluntary act between equals, but as soon as they get home she must be “subject to”? Exactly the same word is used in the Geek, only the translation differs.

Just as we make a conscious and active decision to accommodate the needs of others within society and the Body of Christ, a Christian wife makes an active decision to acquiesce to her husband and to fall in with his decisions if there is a major difference of opinions on matters. One assumes that, as an equal in Christ, she will have had input into the process involved in making these decisions, as they will affect her directly. One hopes that the husband will have actively considered this input with prayer and love. If there is an impasse, she, then, acknowledges the hierarchy of husband over wife, just as she acknowledges Christ over her husband, God the Father over the Son and she submits to his position in the argument, and in the family. Hopefully, she does so in good grace.

She does this is to manifest the Love of God to us. She does it out of love for her husband, just as he submits to Christ out of love for Him and to facilitate the smooth running of the household.

This is a deliberate choice that the wife makes, not obedience demanded by the husband.

LOVE YOUR WIFE

Now, so many men who quote Ephesians 5:22- 24verses, about wives being subject to the husbands or even the women in subjugation to men, conveniently stop reading at the end of this verse.

Eph 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

Eph 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

Eph 5:24 Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Three telling verses.

But God does not stop there. He goes on with seven verses for the husband. He tells the husband to love his wife.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it,

Eph 5:26 that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word,

Eph 5:27 that He might present it to Himself as the glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Eph 5:28 So men ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Eph 5:29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord loves the church.

Eph 5:30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.

Eph 5:31 "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two of them shall be one flesh."

One would assume that loving your wife goes without saying. You marry someone because you love them. But God knows that the hardest thing for any of us to do is to put the needs of another before our own needs, especially men, and especially men who had been conditioned to see women as of less value than them.

This expectation that the man love and consider his wife's position is reinforced in 1 Corinthians and 1 Peter

1Co 7:3 Let the husband give to the wife proper kindness, and likewise the wife also to the husband.

1Pe 3:7 Likewise, husbands, live together according to knowledge, giving honour to the wife as to the weaker vessel, the female, as truly being co-heirs together of the grace of life, not cutting off your prayers.

Three verses for wives, seven for men.

MODEL OF GOD'S ORDER

There is a very good reason for the man being the head of the relationship this which goes back to the very foundation of God's plan.

You are "one flesh". No longer individuals but an entity, separate but united, units but a unit.

Gen 2:23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman because she was taken out of man.

Gen 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh.

Mat 19:4 And He answered and said to them, Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning "made them male and female",

Mat 19:5 and said, For this cause a man shall leave father and mother and shall cling to his wife, and the two of them shall be one flesh?

Mat 19:6 Therefore they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.

Marriage does not involve a man with an appendage hanging on his arm. They are two equal people joined together by love and by law and by society

But they are more than joined together. They are one flesh. Rather like when one makes a cake, the eggs and the flour become one entity, a cake. You cannot get the eggs back once the ingredients are mixed. If the egg sits on a layer above the flour, it is not a cake but a mess.

God's concept involves a chain of equal links. Paul makes it totally clear that this hierarchy continues down the line from Father, Son, Spirit, husband wife, children and slaves. For this to be successful, the power is actually flows from the bottom up and is not imposed from above.

There is no logical reason why this beautiful chain should suddenly stop and the power suddenly centre on the man? Up to this point, God gives down and coming the other way, the family gives up. Men seem to have been happy to claim the hierarchy of love and salvation from the Father to the Son, to the Spirit, to the them, then the demand of subjection for the wife, kids and servants.

Men suddenly are the linchpin and the focus of the world. Grace coming from above and subjection to the law to those below.

In fact in Eph 6:4, men have to be told not to dominate their kids.

Eph 6:4 And fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

HARD FOR BOTH SEXES.

It seems to me that God has allocated each sex a role is that is really hard for both of them. He does this to challenge us all to choose to follow His way which is the only one that works.

Men are naturally self-focussed and selfish. They are better able to focus on one issue and manage that totally. There are good reasons for this which go back to our basic programming. It is hard for them to think outside their area of action which is mainly their work. This was especially so in the past where their role was defined as outside the home and focused on monetary or physical protection and support of the family. So for a man to factor in the needs of others is difficult, especially if those others are nagging, demanding and poorly behaved. It is a big ask to expect men to put others before themselves.

It is especially hard for a woman to submit to a man because we all know that women are cleverer, more intelligent, better organised, more intuitive, more versatile, etc etc than men, especially if the husband is grouchy, demanding, dominating and unreasonable. This is particularly so in her own area of operation which is primarily the home and children where the man obviously doesn't know what he is talking about. This especially so if she does not feel valued above a chattel. .

It is especially hard for a woman to be silent.

MARRIAGE

But God made us this way and He put us together to work as a unit. We are designed to function in certain ways which will meet all the needs of the family. We operate differently and to deny this or say that one is better than the other is hiding one's head in the sand. Women are equal to men, wives to husband. They have different abilities. Christian wives choose to submit to their OWN husbands just as we all choose to submit to each other in the

church and life in general. We should do this in the same way as we submit to Christ in order, decency and love.

So, if in Ephesians 5:22 where it says

(LITV) Wives, subject yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord,

If you substitute the word “submit”, which is used everywhere else, for “subject to”, it actually makes total sense.

Husband over wife as Christ is over the Church in a relationship of submission and love.

When both passages are read in this context, there *is* no confusion

CHURCH

This hierarchical relationship of men over women applies only in the marriage situation and does not make women in general subservient to men in general. Only translation and tradition does.

In Scripture did every woman have to submit to every man? Mary and Martha didn't submit to Lazarus? Did Mary Magdalene submit to the men at the banquet? Did Rahab submit to the men of Jericho when they came searching for the scouts?

Submission of women to men, other than that defined by good manners, is expected only in marriage.

In the Church, we see different hierarchies in play and they seem to be based on the Gifts of the Spirit and the appointed position. It seems that there was no discrimination according to gender within these systems, with the exception of the leadership being male.

There seems to be crossover in these systems which makes them flexible and so more able to be adapted to individual groups but the bottom line is that there is no discrimination on the basis of gender.

In other words, we are all one in Christ, all equals submitting to one another in love.

APPOINTED POSITIONS AND GIFTS

We find this hierarchy of roles within the church in

1Co 12:27 Now you are the Messiah's body and individual parts of it.

1Co 12:28 God has appointed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then those who perform miracles, those who have gifts of healing, those who help others, administrators, and those who speak various kinds of languages.

1Co 12:29 Not all are apostles, are they? Not all are prophets, are they? Not all are teachers, are they? Not all perform miracles, do they?

1Co 12:30 Not all have the gift of healing, do they? Not all speak in other languages, do they? Not all interpret, do they?

1Co 12:31 Keep on desiring the better gifts. And now I will show you the best way of all.

So, here, we have apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healing, helping or support, administration, tongues.

GIFTS

Coming from a completely different angle, we are told that we have all been given gifts

Rom 12:6 We have different gifts based on the grace that was given to us. So if your gift is prophecy, use your gift in proportion to your faith.

Rom 12:7 If your gift is serving, devote yourself to serving others. If it is teaching, devote yourself to teaching others.

Rom 12:8 If it is encouraging, devote yourself to encouraging others. If it is sharing, share generously. If it is leading, lead enthusiastically. If it is helping, help cheerfully.

Rom 12:9 Your love must be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

Rom 12:10 Be devoted to each other with mutual affection. Excel at showing respect for each other.

And

Co 12:8 To one has been given a message of wisdom by the Spirit; to another the ability to speak with knowledge according to the same Spirit;

1Co 12:9 to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit;

1Co 12:10 to another miraculous results; to another prophecy; to another the ability to distinguish between spirits; to another various kinds of languages; and to another the interpretation of languages.

All these gifts are designed to equip us to reach out to others and help them. They are not given to benefit ourselves,

Combining these approaches we have the following loose hierarchy. The order of these differs but the concept is consistent.

Apostles
Prophecy,
Serving, helping
Teaching,
Encouraging
Sharing,
Miracles
Healing
Leading
Wisdom
Word of knowledge
Faith
Distinguish between spirits
Administration.
Tongues

Interpretation of tongues.

The fact that there is not a fixed order tells us that, we all have something to offer and that is important, regardless of gender. The only two really fixed points is that apostles come first and tongues and interpretation thereof come last.

I have no intention of going through the list of gifts to explain what they all are. Better minds than mine have done this for years but the important thing is that everyone has been given at least one gift and we are expected to use them for the Glory of God and the well-being of the church. This links with the allocation of the talents that Jesus spoke of in His parables.

Apart from apostles, there is no record in Scripture of any gender based allocation of gifts. It seems quite illogical, and not in God's character to waste anything, so why give gifts to women and then forbid them to use them.

There is a good argument that when Paul was telling women to remain silent in church, he did so because they were exercising these gift too enthusiastically. If one has been a Pentecostal meeting of some fringe groups and seen this unmodified practice, one can quite understand why.

PROPHETS

The only gift we are told to covet is prophesy because this puts us closest to God's will.

Prophets are mentioned in both the Romans 6 list of gifts and Corinthians list.

The role of the prophet has always involved the transmission of information from God to His people.

Deu 18:18 I will raise up a prophet like you from among their relatives, and I will place my words in his mouth so that he may expound everything that I have commanded to them.

While this role was usually filled by a male, the gift of prophesy was given to both male and female.

- Miriam, Moses' sister who took a major leadership role in the Exodus from Egypt. She stood almost equal with Moses.

Exo 15:20 Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand and went out with all the women behind her with tambourines and dancing.

- Deborah who led Israel into battle
Jdg 4:4 Deborah, a woman, prophet, and wife of Lappidoth, was herself judging Israel during that time.
- Huldah

2Ch 34:22 So Hilkiyah and the others who had received orders from the king went to visit Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Tokhath's son Shallum, grandson of Hasrah.

She was the king's wardrobe supervisor, and she lived in Jerusalem's Second Quarter. They asked her about what had happened

- Isaiah's wife

Isa 8:3 And I went to the prophetess. And she conceived and bore a son.

- Anna, who stood in the Temple and was heard, was the first to recognise that The Messiah had been born

Luk 2:36 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of *the* tribe of Asher. She was advanced in many days, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity.

- Philip's daughters were prophets

Act 21:8 And the next *day* those around *him* going out, Paul came to Caesarea. And entering the house of Philip the evangelist, *he* being of the seven, we stayed with him.

Acts 21:9

(ASV) Now this man had four virgin daughters, who prophesied.

(GNB) He had four unmarried daughters who proclaimed God's message.

- Paul makes it clear that women are prophesying.

1Co 11:5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonours her head; for that is even the same as if she were shaved.

And that they were doing this in church.

One very important point is that the fact that women were to speak openly as prophets, was one of the defining signs of the arrival of Christ's Kingdom.

Act 2:17 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on everyone. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.

Act 2:18 In those days I will even pour out my Spirit on my slaves, men and women alike, and they will prophesy.

So the role of a prophet was open to women, as well as men, and how can you keep silent and still prophesy?

Paul tell us to desire this gift more than any other, especially more than tongues, as prophesying exhorts others and builds others up.

1Co 14:1 Keep on pursuing love, and keep on desiring spiritual gifts, especially the ability to prophesy.

1Co 14:2 For the person who speaks in another language is not actually speaking to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands him, because he is talking about secrets by the Spirit.

1Co 14:3 But the person who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding, encouragement, and comfort.

1Co 14:4 The person who speaks in another language builds himself up, but the person who prophesies builds up the church.

1Co 14:5 Now I wish that all of you could speak in other languages, but especially that you could prophesy. The person who prophesies is more important than the person who speaks in another language, unless he interprets it so that the church may be built up.

Just how this gift is manifested today in our church is open to so much debate. Those from more traditional backgrounds tend to be in denial that prophesy can still take place today, saying it died out with the First Church, and so do not deal with it all.

Others say it is very active and many pronounce prophesies over others and for the group and church willy-nilly. People always remember the ones that “come true” and tend to discount those which do not.

There is an inherent danger in this practice in that it can influence other people to make decisions in specific ways which may or may not be a good thing. Some “prophets” bear a disturbing similarity to the gypsy crystal ball gazer in the ambiguity of their calls.

On a personal level, if they are wrong, they can be in deep trouble. At best, hopefully, they lose face in the group, but they may be responsible for a weaker brother making a bad life decision or bring God into disrespect.

Worse still, according to Scripture, they should incur the far greater penalty of death.

Deu 18:20 But the prophet who shall presume to speak a word in My name which I have not commanded him to speak or who shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.

Deu 18:21 And if you say in your heart, How shall we know the word which Jehovah has not spoken?

Deu 18:22 When a prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah, if the thing does not follow nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You shall not be afraid of him.

The prophet has the privilege, and the responsibility, to bring God’s “message” to His people. This is not something to be taken lightly.

WOMEN ARE BARRED

According to tradition, there seems to be two areas that women do not have a role. Apostles and teaching

APOSTLES

What exactly is an apostle? There has been enormous debate over the centuries as to exactly what this position involves.

Some say apostles do not exist today and this position applied only to the ones who lived at the time of Jesus and have since died out.

There were no women apostles. When Judas replacement was made, no woman was nominated for the position. It would appear that this is not a position women can legitimately covert. It also reinforces the concept that leadership, within Christ's body, is male.

Others, today, do not hold this view and hold that many are called today as apostles, including women. We can mount a very good argument that there were women in leadership roles in the early church like Lydia in Thyatira and Pricilla but were these apostles?

I don't know.

TEACHERS

According to 1Ti 2:12, women are forbidden from teaching men.

But I do not allow a woman to teach, or to exercise authority over a man, but to be in silence.

One verse. The proof text.

GO AND TEACH.

Yet scripture abounds in exhortations for us to teach others.

Christ's final instruction to us all was

Mat 28:19 Therefore go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

This is our Great Commission. This is what it is all about. Was this just men who were to do this? It doesn't say so.

In

Rom 12:7 or ministry, in the ministry; or he who teaches, in the teaching;

But there is no gender indicated in the Greek. It is just a verb.

In Hebrews 8:11, again the translations add a dimension of maleness to this role which need not be there.

Heb 8:11 And^{G2532} they shall not^{G3364} teach^{G1321} every man^{G1538} his^{G848} neighbour,^{G4139} and^{G2532} every man^{G1538} his^{G848} brother,^{G80} saying,^{G3004} Know^{G1097} the^{G3588} Lord:^{G2962} for^{G3754} all^{G3956} shall know^{G1492} me,^{G3165} from^{G575} the least^{G3398} (G846) to^{G2193} the greatest.^{G3173} (G846)

There is no word indicating that maleness as the word is just an adjective. The word is more accurately translated person.

Heb_8:11 And they shall not each person teach his neighbour, and each person his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO GAIN THIS POSITION.

We are encouraged to aspire to the role of teacher.

(ISV) In fact, though by now you should be teachers, you still need someone to teach you the basic truths of God's word. You have become people who need milk instead of solid food.

Indeed, the attainment of this ability is held up as recognition of our level of spiritual maturity.

BENEFITS FOR THE TEACHER

LEARN YOURSELF

Rom 2:21 Therefore the one teaching another, do you not teach yourself?

One gains so much benefit and understanding from teaching others as it forces you to clarify your thoughts. It is so wonderful to see those you have taught going on the reach maturity in their own right. They then teach others.

JOY OF PASSING ON THE KINGDOM

I was once bemoaning my apparent lack of contribution to God's work to an old "student" of mine through Bible Study. She said "Barb, you taught me. I am a school teacher. Think of how many kids those teachings went on to."

DOUBLE HONOUR

Also in 1 Timothy 5:17

(ASV) Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and in teaching.

TEACHERS DOUBLE JEOPARDY

Matthew 5:19 (ISV) tells us

So whoever sets aside one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom from heaven. But whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom from heaven.

But for those who teach error,

Jas 3:1 My brothers, do not be many teachers, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

So it is a double blessing to see someone you have taught, grow in Christ, but a double curse if you teach error. And ain't that so when we look back on some of the stuff we taught our kids before we knew better.

WHAT IS TEACHING

There are several words used to convey the concept of teaching and they all based on the Greek word didaskō from which we get our word didactic, a general term for passing on information or teaching

You will be pleased to know that I will not list all 180 places where this word is used.

So there is a great similarity to teaching and prophesy

NO PROBLEM WITH TEACHING

So it seems we have no problem with women teaching, just women teaching men.

EXHORTATION

One of the gifts of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is exhortation or comfort or encouragement, building up, support. There are no Scriptural injunctions precluding women from this role. In fact, this is a role totally suited to women.

This can also link back to prophesy which we absolutely know was available to women

This concept is based on the Greek word paraklesis which we all know is one of the names of the Holy Spirit, who is our great comforter and builder-up.

This has overtones of seeking out others for comfort or to give comfort.

1Co 14:31 All of you may proclaim God's message, one by one, so that everyone will learn and be encouraged.

BUILDING UP

Exhortation or the building up of God's people is the whole, the only, the entire, the definitive reason for gifts and positions. All the gifts (except tongues which focusses on self) and all the positions are designed to build up God's people, to comfort them in trouble, to encourage them to grow and mature in the likeness of Christ.

1Co 14:1 Follow after charity and desire spiritual things, but rather that you may prophesy.

1Co 14:2 For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. For no one hears, but in spirit he speaks mysteries.

1Co 14:3 But he who prophesies speaks to men for building up, and exhortation, and comfort.

1Co 14:4 The one speaking in a tongue builds himself up, but he prophesying builds up a church.

1Co 14:5 I wish all of you to speak in languages, but rather that you may prophesy; for greater is he prophesying than he speaking in tongues, unless he interpret so that the church may receive building up.

SERMONS ARE EXHORTATION

Surely, a woman preaching the Good News, is exhortation and/or prophesy. Prophesy is transmitting God's word or spirit or teaching to others and women are free to do that. The whole basis of a sermon is to lift up people and draw them closer to God. Is this not is exhortation, comfort, stimulation, encouragement for us all to grow more Christlike?

What about women praying over men? Is this not exhortation, comfort, support, even prophesy as the Spirit should be the one leading the praying (gifts of prophesy, discernment) and women have an empathy and understanding that is often not found in men. Often God speaks to a troubled soul in the words that others pray for them, male or female.

Obviously one must be aware of "seemly behaviour" just as one must be aware of privacy and confidentiality, but these behaviours are not gender based.

SERVICE INSTRUCTIONS

GENERAL BEHAVIOUR

The Colossians 3 verses set out the guidelines for how we are to make this hierarchy work in God's people.

Col 3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

Col 3:13 Be tolerant of one another and forgive each other if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, you also should forgive.

Col 3:14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which ties everything together in unity.

Col 3:15 Let the peace of the Messiah also rule in your hearts, to which you were called in one body, and be thankful.

CHURCH BEHAVIOUR

Verses 16 and 17 are generally accepted as a plan for the conduct of services.

Col 3:16 Let the word of the Messiah inhabit you richly with wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and singing to God with thankfulness in your hearts.

Col 3:17 And whatever you do, whether by speech or action, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

All are told to sing psalms, and hymns. All are told to thank God from our hearts. All are told behave in a Godly manner and with thankfulness. All are told to show wisdom. All are told to admonish or exhort each other. Paul is talking to all Christians on how to conduct themselves and their services to God.

How can one do that in silence?

How is preaching a sermon or even leading a Bible Study not the exercise of wisdom, exhortation, building up, admonition? Teaching is supposed to be the bottom line of our mission from Christ and the thing we are told to reach for as a sign of maturity and we are to believe that God precludes half (well, now 80%) of His Kingdom from doing this?

Again, it is Ok for a woman to exhort, prophesy, do miracles, heal, etc etc but women are precluded from teaching. One word grabbed out of a train of thought or hierarchy. The syntax does not support the concept of women not being able to teach in general.

If they can sing, how can that be “keeping silent”?

HOME BEHAVIOUR

In the immediate next verse, Paul then continues this principle of submission to each other, by taking the concept into the home.

Col 3:18 Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is appropriate for those who belong to the Lord.

Col 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

Col 3:20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord.

Col 3:21 Fathers, do not make your children resentful. Otherwise, they'll become discouraged.

Col 3:22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only while being watched in order to please them, but with a sincere heart, fearing the Lord.

Col 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it wholeheartedly as though you were doing it for the Lord and not merely for people.

Col 3:24 You know that it is from the Lord that you will receive the inheritance as a reward. It is the Lord Messiah whom you are serving!

Col 3:25 For the person who does what is wrong will be paid back for what he has done without favouritism.

Interestingly, he starts with the wife and not the husband. She is the one asked to submit to a mere mortal whose many, many faults she is totally aware of. I think this is because the attitude of the wife is the basis of a happy home. Submitting to God's hierarchy gives order and security for all concerned.

There is a logical consistent hierarchical sequence: public, church and then home. God, Son, Spirit, positions, gifts, others. God, Son, Spirit, husband, wife, kids, employees.

SIMPLE SOLUTION

So can we resolve the apparent confusion of all women submitting to all men and women remaining silent in church, under authority and not teaching men? If we accept the premises that there have been mistranslations based largely on the customs of the times and traditions that have built up around them, then everything falls into place and makes sense and is consistent throughout all of Scripture.

We are all one in Christ and God has seen fit to give gifts to all people according to His discernment. He actually does give the gift of teaching to women, and often more so than to

men. Women are natural teachers as one of their major roles in the family is to teach kids. Does this font of ability and Spirit suddenly dry up when she enters a church?

A wife is to submit to her husband. We all accept that as a no brainer.

Again if we just substitute the word wife for woman in the “proof text” and say a wife is not to teach her husband, it makes sense and fits God’s model.

There really is not a lot of point, anyhow, as men instinctively, (or is it programmed) will not listen or learn from “the wife”. I have seen cases where the wife leads the husband to Christ and it is then very difficult for her to then “put herself under him”

But for a wife to speak, exhort, pray, comfort, speak in tongues, using her talents and gifts, with decorum and the acknowledgement of her position “under” her husband, and in a decent manner, fitting with the mores of the society in which she lives, seems to make sense and fits with the overall concept of Christ and His church.

This allows for the full expression of all aspects of God’s relationship with us all. We can all contribute talents given by God, Gifts endowed by the Spirit, male and female aspects of the Godhead, a more balanced expression of all aspects of the Bride of Christ, and a broader picture of The Kingdom of God.

I can see no reason why a woman should not be encouraged to develop her gift of teaching if her husband, the leaders and the congregation are happy for that to happen.

Indeed the world will miss out on an amazing perspective of life and The Word, if women are banned.

CONCLUSION

God, throughout the Old Testament, gave women rights and protected them but men chose to treat them as second class citizens. God used them as prophets and leaders and to save His people.

Jesus went to great lengths to raise the status of women to a place where all His people were equal could become “all one in Christ”. He seems to have deliberately chosen women to be the ones to announce most of His new initiatives.

In all these events, He told them to “go and tell”... impart information... which is the role of prophesy and teaching.

True, He did not have any women disciples. Nor were there any women apostles so it is obvious that leadership is male. And indeed this must be so because our God is male. Heavenly Father. Jesus is male. Son of God.

We understand that some of Paul’s writings seem to put all women into a position of subservience to all men and that they must remain silent in subjugation to all men.

A word study showed that the choice of word in the translation, shed a different light on the issue. The translations have been strongly influenced by the mores of the society at the time and the simple of changing of the translation of the Greeks from “women” to “wives”

changes the whole perspective from domination of all women by all men to the voluntary submission of a wife to a husband. Everything clicks into place and God's cascade is complete and perfect and loving and fair.

We are all one in Christ and have been given talents and gifts to use for the extension of His kingdom.

Hierarchical systems are totally essential for human society to work but in God's plan it is a hierarchy of equals. In the church, God's hierarchy is God, Christ, Spirit, Apostles, Prophets and then others based on talents and Gifts of the Holy Spirit and these are not sexist. All people were given diverse gifts and all were expected to use them to the glory of Christ and the building up of the brethren.

In the home, there was another hierarchical system which follows logically on from the one in the Church. Husband, wife, children, slaves. This system is based on voluntary submission to the one "above" in the chain, in love and wisdom. It is not an imposition of power from on high.

In Christ's model it is a relationship of love. Christ loved us enough to die for us. Husbands need to love their wives in the same manner and wives submit to their OWN husbands out of respect for him and in the love for Christ.

The movement of the women out of the shadows of the Crucifixion into the glorious light of the Resurrection affirms their new position in the "better way". Both men and women have to learn this "better way" in respect of each other.

FINAL IRONY

And the final irony.

When the Lord returns in His glory, He will be returning to the Bride of Christ. All the men who have dominated and demanded their "rightful place", if they are humble enough, will be part of a female entity. Again this will be a corporate unity, many but one, items but an item and the entity will be female!!!!

And it must be thus, **because Christ is male.** It must be female to attend the Marriage Ceremony of the Lamb. The groom is Christ. Male, masculine, Father, God. The Bride is female. His church. The reason why traditional marriage is so important is because it is the model here on earth of the glorious relationship that is to come. Marriage is under such attack in this fallen and evil society, simply to destroy this model. Marriage, done properly, helps us to understand God.

This is the final wonderful culmination of His plan for man, of His hierarchy for living and the concept of Marriage and submission. This is the New and Better way that works through love and cooperation of equal entities in an ordered society with Christ as its head.