

Sunday, August 23, 2026 am

WHAT GOD HAS NOT JOINED TOGETHER (5)

Women as Leaders in Churches

Today we continue our 2026 theme. This is a year examining some doctrines that man often sets aside what God's word actually says, whether it be NOT "joining together" things God has established as complimentary OR "joining together" things that God has NOT. We have noticed the examples of creation vs. evolution, fellowship with unbelievers and in our last lesson we discussed the concept of denominations as things God has NOT joined together. Today we want to address what is one of the most controversial subjects we have talked about in this theme to date. We want to address the role of women as leaders in churches.

By *churches*, I have reference to local congregations. And as *leaders* I am discussing taking public leadership roles within a congregation, whether it be leading in acts of worship and mixed studies OR leadership roles in determining the affairs of a congregation (e.g., elders, deacons and preachers).

What makes this such a controversial subject is our society's views of what women's equality means. The concept of equal rights for all today is the belief that everyone should be on equal footing in all areas regardless of biological distinctions. This is accompanied by a belief that Bible teachings are oppressive to women and treats them as inferior to men. But this is NOT what the Bible teaches (Galatians 3:27-29, etc.). There is big difference between discussion of value (one's worth) and the roles and limitations God has given each of us.

And this discussion has not been helped through its abuse by men who have viewed women as inferior, treated their wives and daughters more as property than as "heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7 - which was superior to the views of society when the Bible was written). OR of men who refuse to stand up and lead in a godly and loving way. Furthermore, modern feminism has sought to convince women if they seek to fulfill their Biblical role in the family that they are failing to reach their full potential.

It is not my intention in this lesson to deal with all the political and societal implications of the roles of men and women in God's word (though obviously our subject will briefly touch on some of these points), other than to say it is a product of feminist ideas. Our goal in this study is to notice what God has said about WHO can be a leader in the church, including leading in the worship assembly.

I. What does the Bible say?

- a. Some observations as we begin:
 - i. We ought to obey God rather than men – Acts 5:28-29.
 - ii. John 17:17 – God's word has the final say in what we do. We MUST respect its boundaries – 1 Corinthians 4:6
 - iii. Obeying God does not depend on whether we like or agree with something (based on human wisdom). It is not determined by societal trends, etc.
 - iv. This is NOT a question about the worth of women and men. Recall Galatians 3:28, 1 Peter 3:7
 - v. Submission is something we must ALL understand and apply properly.
 1. James 4:7 – we must all submit to God
 2. Hebrews 12:9, *Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?*
 3. Romans 13:1-5 – we are to submit to governing authorities.
 4. Ephesians 5:22-24 – wives are to be subject to their husbands AS the church is subject to Christ. As Christians, we are ALL part of His church and must so understand subjection.

5. The point is that subjection does NOT mean subpar or of lesser value.
 6. BUT where God says we are to submit – If we love God we will submit!
- b. **1 Timothy 2:11-15** – the leadership role of women is specifically forbidden:
- i. *Let a woman learn in silence.* The word is *silence* translated “quietness” or “quiet” in other translations. The idea is not that no sound can be uttered (though the word can mean that), but it is a demonstration of respect. (See Acts 22:2 – when Paul spoke in Hebrew, they kept the more silent & 2 Thess. 3:12 – work in quietness). As noted in the text it is with submission.
 - ii. Vs.12 - Paul elaborates, *She is not to teach or have authority over a man, but to be in silence.* This explains the “silence” in the text. This is about usurping authority that one does not have, or speaking out of place. But why?
 - iii. Reason 1 – Adam was formed first, then Eve (from his side). It was God’s intent that the man stand up and be the leader.
 - iv. Reason 2 – Eve sinned first being deceived. It was further emphasized as a part of God’s pronouncement toward mankind because of sin – Genesis 3:16.
 - v. *Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing.* Again, this is not about her ability to produce children, but a way of saying she understands her role and faithfully fulfills that role, whatever it may be. NOTE: In these times, it is worth noting that Paul mentions an action that ONLY a biological woman can fulfill.
- c. **1 Corinthians 11:1-3** – Paul beginning to address conduct in worship makes this observation that all must understand.
- i. He notes that God has established a divine order – God, Christ, man, woman. In everything we do as we assemble, this order must be respected.
 - ii. 11:4-12 - He proceeds to explain EMPHASIZING that ALL know their place in worship. NOTE: This is a passage that addresses the head covering (which also is not the intent of this lesson), but underlying what Paul is saying is the understanding of what it means to honor God and Christ in what we do. And that is through submitting to Him and respecting His will.
 - iii. But what about the woman prophesying here? Does that imply leadership in a public assembly? We do not know all the details (is it when assembled or what type of assembling?) I do not have all the answers, but any answer given should not contradict other clearly established texts related to this subject – namely 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 which we will address next. Again, the point is knowing your place in whatever you do, whether man or woman.
 - iv. Finally consider also vs. 11-12 where Paul notes that *man is not independent of woman or woman independent of man.* This shows that in God’s eyes we need each other in our respective roles to function. Is the woman important? Answer this: Would we be here without a mother? So the answer is – yes – just as important as the man. She has a function.
- d. **1 Corinthians 14:34-35**- continuing to deal with worship, Paul is now focusing on WHO may speak (in a leading way) when we are assembled. In vs. 34-35, Paul is clear, *Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.*
- i. In some way there were women who wanted to publicly address the assembly – maybe these were women with spiritual gifts. But Paul was clear, this was NOT the place for them to do such.
 - ii. The word for “*silent*” here *σιγάω*, (sigaō) is a different term than 1 Timothy 2. It means to hold one’s tongue. The word is found 9x in the NT, with 3 of those times in this chapter - 14:28 – *if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent*; 14:30, *if anything is revealed to another*,

let the first keep silent. From these verses we can clearly see this has to do with publicly teaching in the assembly.

- iii. Also, the word for “speak” is found about 30x in this chapter and if you read the text it is dealing with publicly speaking in the assembly.
- iv. Paul even makes this clear when by elaborating that this is “*in the churches*”. In vs. 35, “*It is shameful for a woman to speak in church.*”
- v. Finally, he declares if she has a question to ask her husband at home, designating that the place where this restriction is found is different – namely the assembly as shown in the text.
- vi. Point: Paul has identified a specific type of speaking – in a leadership role. He is not saying a woman can never utter a sound for then she could not fulfill the command to sing (Ephesians 5:19, 1 Corinthians 14:15), confess Christ if needed (Matthew 10:32-33), confess her sins if needed (James 5:16)
- e. The point of these passages demonstrates that it is not God’s intention for women to have a leadership role in the worship assembly or over a man in a teaching situation where a man is present.

II. Examples of leadership in scripture

- a. When it comes to leadership in the church, the responsibility is always given to men.
- b. Jesus is the head of the church – HIS body – Ephesians 1:22-23
- c. All the apostles were men – Matthew 10:1-4. Jesus chose 12 and when a replacement was made for Judas Iscariot, Matthias was chosen.
- d. Acts 6:1-6 - 7 men were appointed to help Hellenist widows who were being neglected.
- e. Acts 15:6 – the apostles and elders came together to consider the matter.
- f. Elders are described as men – 1 Timothy 3:1-2 – including the husband of one wife.
- g. Deacons are to be married to wives and have children – 1 Timothy 3:8-12 (cf. Philippians 1:1).
- h. All the NT writers were men (this also applies to the OT writings).
- i. The book of Acts finds only men as preachers in public assemblies.

III. What can a woman do?

- a. I do not want to conclude this lesson without clarification that women are needed and have a role in the church. Consider some things they can do.
- b. Be a part of the body – Ephesians 4:16 – every part has a job and needs to do its share for the body to grow.
- c. Be servants in the church – e.g., Romans 16:1 – Phoebe (a servant of the church at Cenchrea). NOTE: The term is generic for a servant and does not necessitate an office.
- d. They can teach other women – Titus 2:3-5
- e. They can sing making melody in their hearts – Ephesians 5:19
- f. Work in teaching others in private studies – Acts 18:26 – Priscilla helped her husband teach Apollos.
- g. She can influence her family – 1 Peter 3:1-6, possibly win an unbelieving husband.
- h. Because they can teach women and children, they can teach such Bible classes.
- i. Be reminded that her salvation depends on her fulfilling her role (1 Timothy 2:15). I believe that equally applies as she works within a congregation.

There is much to be said about this subject. I have not addressed the objections that are rendered (we can do that at another time if you would like), but we can see clear texts and examples that show God has NOT given women a leadership role in His church.

Society balks at this. And so does many religious institutions. What I have said is not politically correct and in our society it is controversial and unpopular. But the teachings of man do not change the established teachings of God. Whose teachings are you willing to follow?