



# ***Can Women Minister to Men?***

***And Other Dangerous Thoughts***

**By Craig B. Cooper**

***Can women minister to men? This is a “hot topic” in Christianity but one that needs exploring because the subject affects about half the people in Christianity – all of the women!***

***Most people after reading the title of this booklet will fall into one of three groups. The first group is those who automatically answered yes and wondered why I am taking the time to write on this subject. The second group answered no and are already sharpening their battle axes waiting to see if I answer the question “correctly”. The third group, probably a minority of people, actually thought to themselves, “I’ve been wondering about that subject. I am glad you are writing on it”. If you are in that third group then this booklet is for you.***

ISBN 978-1-257-82360-4



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# Preface

Can women minister to men? This is a “hot topic” in Christianity but one that needs exploring because the subject affects about half the people in Christianity – all of the women!

The title is the right question. Many times I have heard the question phrased like this, “Can women minister”? But this isn’t usually what people are asking. Most people believe women can minister—just not to men. Generally, women have been free to minister to other women or children.

Most people after reading the title of this booklet will fall into one of three groups. The first group is those who automatically answered yes and wondered why I am taking the time to write on this subject. The second group answered no and are already sharpening their battle axes waiting to see if I answer the question “correctly”. The third group, probably a minority of people, actually thought to themselves, “I’ve been wondering about that subject. I am glad you are writing on it”. If you are in that third group then this booklet is for you. The first group can stop reading. To the second group my answer to the question is yes, so you can stop reading now too and put away the battle axe. For the third group read on!

This is going to be one of the “ground zero” issues coming to the church. Keep in mind, this is not an exhaustive study. It is only meant to answer some of the core questions to help us as we work our way forward in what God is doing in the last days.

Besides ministering at my own church, I have a vested interest in this subject because I have two daughters. I want them to have all that God wants for them. So I need to know the boundaries, too. Have fun and enjoy!



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# 1

## Literal Application

The Apostle Paul must have been schizophrenic. Let me give you some examples of what looks like his opposite way of thinking:

*1 Cor. 11:5a And every woman who prays or prophesies...*

*Phil. 4:3a ... loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel...*

*1 Corinthians 14:34a ...women should remain silent in the churches.*

How can someone pray, prophesy, and contend at Paul's side for the cause of the gospel and remain silent while doing so? They wouldn't be very effective would they? What is going on here? Was Paul truly schizophrenic? There must be another explanation.

## ***Basics of Interpreting Scripture***

Before we start we must understand some basics about interpreting Scripture. We can make the Bible say anything we want by picking out a verse and reading it by itself. Much harm has come to the Church by not properly interpreting scripture. Let me give you an extreme example. *Matthew 27:5* has this account of Judas, '*...he went away and hanged himself.*' Jesus told Judas in *John 13:27*, *What you are about to do, do quickly.*' So based on these two verses we should start a new movement of quickly hanging ourselves!

The basic method of interpreting Scripture is to follow the HGC method. 1<sup>st</sup>, look at the Historical context of the passage. This means look at the date and time period the passage was written including an analysis of the culture. 2<sup>nd</sup>, look at the Grammatical layout of the passage in the original language it was written. For example, in the New Testament there is only one word for love. That is because there is only one word for love in English. But in the Greek (original language for the New Testament), there are 3 separate Greek words for our one English word that has 3 distinct and separate meanings. Without this understanding, some passages do not have the impact they would otherwise. 3<sup>rd</sup>, a Contextual examination of the passage must be done. This means to look at all of the verses preceding and succeeding the passage and see what they say. It is also very important to ask the question how this passage fits in with the overall theme of the chapter or book. Otherwise, you will most likely miss the meaning.

For example, someone could come up to you and say, "I heard Craig, say, 'he hates praise and worship music'". Of course, you would be shocked by this until you heard the CD where I really said, "I hate praise and worship music when there is no anointing and people are only going through the motions." This is an example of Contextual misinterpretation.

There is another basic principle of interpreting scripture. It is that no doctrine is established on one scripture alone. For example, who wants a major doctrine of 'go and hang yourself' like Judas? Every major doctrine needs to be established on at least 2, preferably 3 scriptures. Every Scripture must be consistent with what other Scriptures say on the same subject. Many cults and false doctrines have come about because this principle of interpretation was ignored. We see in the Bible the importance of 2 or 3 witnesses to prove something.

*Matt. 18:16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'*

*1 Cor. 14:29 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.*

*2 Cor. 13:1 This will be my third visit to you. "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."*

## **Be Consistent!**

Many Christians do not believe in women ministering to men. They use the following verses as support for their belief:

*1 Timothy 2:12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.*

*1 Corinthians 14:34-35 <sup>34</sup>women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. <sup>35</sup>If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.*

When you read these verses by themselves without applying the HGC method of interpretation they are saying the following things:

1. Women cannot teach a man.
2. Women cannot have authority over a man.
3. Women must be silent in the church and are not allowed to speak because it is disgraceful.
4. Women must ask their husbands for the answers to any questions they have in church.

Let's say for now that these verses are to be taken at stand alone value with no application of HGC interpretation. If you believe these verse are saying the 4 points above then you must be consistent in obeying them.

Think about what it would like if we actually implemented *1 Corinthians 14:34* literally. Think about how quiet our churches would be if women never said a word! This is what this verse is literally saying, "*women should remain silent in the churches.*" If you believe that women can't minister to men because of these verses then you need to be consistent by obeying the verse in all situations.

*1 Timothy 2:12* says, "*do not permit a woman to teach*". Let's look at the primary definition of "teach" from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. It means: "to cause to know something". If you take this verse at face value, the following cannot occur in church:

- Women can't give testimonies because there may be a lesson in it that will increase our knowledge - thereby teaching men.
- Women can't teach the youth, teenagers, or college level classes because according to the Jewish culture boys became men at age 13.
- Women can't sing in choirs, on teams, or solo specials because songs have a message. Women would then be teaching because they are causing them to know something.
- Men can never read any books, articles, newsletters, pamphlets, tracts, etc. written by women. Why? Because you might learn something!

- Don't let women teach overseas as missionaries to men.
- There couldn't be women instructors in schools, colleges, conferences, and business settings.

If we take these verses without proper HGC interpretation the challenges to implementation continue to grow. It says in *1 Corinthians 14:35* that women should ask their husbands for answers to their questions. What if the woman is a widow, single, or divorcee? Where does she get her answers?

You may say, "You're being extreme". No, I am only being consistent in applying these verses literally.

## **2 Other Interpretations**

There are 2 other common interpretations I have heard on these verses that I want to discuss briefly.

First, because of the problems I listed above with literally following these verses some people teach something along these lines: 'Women can teach but they can't preach from the pulpit.'

Let's be honest. Do you see this distinction in these verses? Does anybody even know what is the biblical difference between teaching and preaching? The first century (and second century) believers didn't even use pulpits with our style of church. The reason Christians often speak up for this interpretation is because they see the problems with applying these verses literally.

A second interpretation goes like this: 'Women can minister, but only until the men rise up and assume the authority given to them.' Again, where are the Scriptures for this? How would we know when men rise up and 'take the authority'? What if they do something wrong in their authority? Do the women come back in and 'straighten it out' and hand authority back over to the men again?

At this point I only see two choices for Christians on this subject. Women must truly keep silent in the church or there has to be another explanation. I want to give you hope that there is another explanation. It starts by looking at the context of the verses and the many other verses in the Bible about women ministering.



# 2

## What About These Verses?

Before we discuss the controversial two verses (1 *Corinthians* 14:34 and 1 *Timothy* 2:12), I want to share with you some other verses that support women ministering. It is important to discuss the two controversial verses. But it is also important to show the multitude of verses where women are ministering. If we believe because of these two verses that women can't minister, what do we do with these verses?

**1. Acts 2:17-18 (First written in Joel 2:28)** *“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.”*

The main question is when the daughters and women prophesy what are they doing? Is prophesying teaching? 1 *Cor.* 14:3 gives us the definition of prophesy: *“But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.”* So prophesy does three things: strengthens, encourages, and comforts the person getting prophesied over. I believe that when you ‘strengthen’ someone you are probably crossing over into teaching at one time or another.

It is very clear in this verse that women can prophesy. So if you believe 1 *Corinthians* 14:34 that women should remain silent, what does this verse mean? If you believe 1 *Timothy* 2:12 that women can't teach men, can they prophesy? The Bible says they can clearly prophesy both in the OT (Joel 2:28) and NT (Acts 2:17-18).

**2. Matt 18:7-8** <sup>7</sup>*Then go quickly (Angels talking to Mary and Mary Magdalene) and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”* <sup>8</sup>*So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.*

Two women are instructed by angels to go and tell the 11 male disciples that Jesus had risen. Was this teaching? The men didn't know this fact. Can women tell some new truth about our God to men that they do not know and it not be teaching? In fact, these two ladies were the first NT evangelists!

**3. Gal. 3:26-28** <sup>26</sup>*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,* <sup>27</sup>*for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.* <sup>28</sup>*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Male nor female in Christ?

**4. Acts 18:26** *He (Apollo) began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.*

From the preceding verses we know that Apollo was teaching old truth. Priscilla (wife) and Aquila (husband) gave him updated teaching on Jesus. Notice that Priscilla is mentioned before Aquila. Paul who wrote the controversial *1 Corinthians 14:34* and *1 Timothy 2:12* passage is describing a time when a woman clearly taught a man. If this wasn't allowed don't you think this passage would have been different or not even included?

**5. Mark 16:17-18** <sup>17</sup>*And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; <sup>18</sup>they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."*

We have been specifically talking about women not teaching men. But the title of this book is, 'Can Women Minister to Men?' This verse clearly states that whoever is a believer can minister deliverance, speak in tongues, pray for sick people, etc. to "people". It does not state any difference between men and women. This verse clearly shows that women can at least minister these things. But what about the spirit of this verse? Do you think a woman can do deliverance, speak in tongues, pray for the sick, etc. for long and not have a "point" of teaching somewhere in it?

**6. Romans 16:1-2** <sup>1</sup>*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. <sup>2</sup>I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.*

The word *servant* is the same word translated other places in the Bible as deacon (or deaconess). Paul is saying she was a great help to him. We don't really know what she was doing. But how could she be a help to Paul in the ministry and she never was allowed to say anything.

**7. Phil. 4:3** Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Strong's Concordance says the word *contended* means: "to *wrestle* in company *with*, to *seek jointly*:—labour with, strive together for". This verse tells me that Paul worked in ministry with women. Also notice, he did not "politely" work with other women. He did not just tolerate them. He contended with, wrestled with, and strove together with them for the sake of the gospel. If Paul, who started many churches and wrote a majority of the New Testament, worked with women believers, wouldn't it be all right for us to follow his example?

**8. John 4:28-29,39** <sup>28</sup>Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup>"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"... <sup>39</sup>Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."

This is the story about the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus came up to this unbelieving woman and started telling her that he was the Messiah. She recognized it and then evangelized much of the town – men and women. If women could not teach or minister to men, why would Jesus not have corrected or stopped her?

**9. Acts 21:8-9** <sup>8</sup>Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. <sup>9</sup>He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

Paul in his journeys stayed with Philip the evangelist. It says that Philip's daughters prophesied. It doesn't say if they prophesied to Paul or not, but it doesn't say that Paul rebuked them for doing it. He simply stated this as a fact. If Paul knew that women shouldn't prophesy don't you think there would be some note or comment here?

**10. Colossians 3:15-17** <sup>15</sup>Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

This is a pretty extensive list of what believers can do, including teaching. We know this applies to women because in vs. 15 it says, "*members of one body*". Could there be two bodies, one for men and one for women?

How do you interpret these verses if you don't believe women can minister to men?



# 3

## Those Two Verses!

This chapter discusses the two passages that have been used to say women cannot minister to men. As I started looking at these verses it was important to me to seek the Holy Spirit for a simplistic solution. There have typically been three approaches to explaining these verses.

The first approach is to take them literally with no understanding of the chapter they are located in. This results in women not being able to minister to men.

The second approach goes something like this: "I know that women are able to minister to men because of all the other verses mentioned in the Bible where women minister, but I can't explain the passages in *1 Corinthians* and *1 Timothy*. And frankly I don't care to bother with it." This approach ignores the subject.

The third approach has often involved a long explanation that brings in all kinds of historical, cultural, and grammatical aspects to explain the verses. I believe this is the right way to approach the problem, but many times the explanations get rather complicated.

As I prayed I sought the Holy Spirit for a straight forward and common sense approach to these verses. I learned a long time ago that if you have to do lots of explaining to make a verse say something then something is usually wrong with the explanation. I have found the Word of God is profound but it is not complicated. As Albert Einstein said, "*Simplicity is genius.*"

As you read my explanations on these two passages you will find the explanations anti-climatic. There are no "deep revelations" here. But this is exactly what I was seeking.

My goal in writing this booklet was not to be a theologian but to explain the scriptures simply. What is needed is simple clarity where people say, "Is that it?" "Why has it been made so complicated?"

## **1 Corinthians 14:33-35**

*<sup>33</sup>For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, <sup>34</sup>women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. <sup>35</sup>If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.*

To understand this verse properly, we have to use the HGC method of interpreting Scripture that we discussed in chapter 1. Specifically, a Historical and Contextual examination of the passage must be done. This means look at the date and time period the passage was written including an analysis of the culture. Also, look at all of the verses preceding and succeeding the passage and see what they say. It is important to ask the question how this passage fits in with the overall theme of the chapter or book.

1 Corinthians is a book written by Paul to the believers at Corinth. Corinth was a port city located in Greece. Corinth was a very cosmopolitan city and a great worshipper of pagan gods including Aphrodite. The temple of Aphrodite alone had over a thousand temple-slaves and courtesans. As a result Corinth was one of the most immoral cities of the Roman Empire. This was the cultural environment new Christians came from when they committed themselves to Jesus and entered Church life.

The book of Corinthians is a book of answering questions to the Corinthian church about problems they were having in the church. Most of the book is telling the Corinthians on what it means to live in church life. These new believers had come out of pagan worship and knew nothing about their new life.

The first chapter of 1 Corinthians immediately jumps into the issue of people choosing certain teachers as their favorite. This was causing great division in the church. If you understand that Paul in this book was setting order on how to run the church it will help you to understand the purpose of this book.

Let's jump to chapter 14. This chapter specifically deals with the varied problems that were going on in the actual group gathering or 'church' service. It is important to understand that the verses we are looking at (vs. 33-35) are in the middle of this ongoing teaching on how to have an orderly church service where everyone is to be blessed-*vs. 33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.*

In vs. 34 of 1 Corinthians 14, Paul tells women to be silent. But do you realize that he has already told 2 other groups to be silent (using the same Greek word) in the same chapter? In vs. 28, he tells everyone who is giving a tongue that does not have an interpreter to be silent.

In vs. 30, he tells prophets who are speaking to be silent if revelation is given to another seated. Do you see the pattern here? In vs. 28,

30, & 34, Paul is addressing specific situations where there were problems in how the service was being supervised and the solution in all three situations was to be silent.

Reading between the lines in vs. 28, evidently there were people who were speaking in tongues without an interpreter which was causing disorder. It doesn't say that directly but it is implied. Also, evidently we had many prophets 'talking all over each other' in vs. 30 that needed to be stopped. It doesn't say that directly but it is implied. The issue here is that the Corinthians knew what the actual problem was that Paul was addressing.

I believe that the 'woman' passage here is the same type of problem. As a continuation, in vs 34, Paul was saying the same thing he just said twice. He was not saying that people speaking in tongues or prophets had to be permanently silent, just be silent at certain times. In other words, don't talk out of turn! It is entirely in keeping with the context of this chapter, that Paul just four verses later is not saying that women should be permanently silent in the church, just don't talk out of turn!

Contextually, this keeps within the spirit of the chapter. Paul in vs. 5 says that it is his desire for everyone to prophesy. In vs. 26 he says that he wishes for everyone to have a psalm, teaching, revelation, tongue, or interpretation when you get together. Why would he totally change course just a few verses later and tell women to always be silent? After vs 26 he gives three specific instances of when acting out vs 5 and 26 to hold your tongue and keep peace. When you take this approach this verse makes total sense.

So it is very simple what this verse means. There were 3 instances in *1 Corinthians 14* where there was disorder in the church. The woman issue was the third issue. Paul, was saying under certain circumstances people speaking in tongues, prophets, and women are talking too much and need to be silent. That is the explanation.

The next question that is often asked is what was the circumstance where the women needed to be silent? The passage is not clear at this point, all though we have two clues from the passage that narrows down the circumstance. But rest assured that the Corinthians understood the problem, just like they understood the problem with people speaking only in tongues and all the Prophets speaking at once. Paul was writing to them and saying, "While, we are putting things to order, we also need to deal with these women causing

commotion in the service.” Here is my explanation.

First, notice the passage is only speaking to women who were married.

*<sup>35</sup>If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home;*

So there was something going on with married women. They had to ask certain questions of their husbands. It does not say just men but husbands. This brings up a good question if we take this verse literally that women are to be silent in the church. What if a woman was single, divorced, or widowed? She doesn't have a husband to go home to and ask questions. Does she never get her questions answered? Also, the Greek word for 'woman' here means according to Strong's Concordance: '*specifically a wife*'. So there was something disorderly going on with the wives.

The second clue has to do with what Paul said in vs. 34, "*as the Law says*". The Mosaic law mentions how women are to be submissive to their husbands and not men in general. We need to realize that the Mosaic Law does not forbid women from speaking in services, just do it in an orderly manner.

Beyond this we don't know what was happening. We can only theorize. Maybe the wives were talking to their husbands about home issues during the service. Maybe, because Paul talks about husband and wife submission issues that the women were not being submissive to their husband who was in a ministry role at church. We don't know for sure, but the Corinthians knew.

In summary, I am saying that when you take vs. 34 & 35 in context with the whole chapter it becomes real simple. Paul, said that everyone could prophesy, teach, etc in verses 5 and 26. He said I don't want to stop the liberty that God has given you. Exercise freely all the gifts. But here are a few guidelines to cut down on confusion. He then gives in vs. 28, 30, & 34 these specific guidelines.

This interpretation of these passage flows perfectly into the last verse of the chapter, vs. 40, "*But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.*" This interpretation flows naturally with the whole chapter and book and keeps Paul from contradicting himself.

Another common explanation of goes something like this: In the

Corinthian church women and men would sit on opposite sides of the church. The wives would ask their husbands questions during the church service causing confusion. The explanation says that this was the common style of church service during that time.

Let me say up front that this could be true. We don't really know. But I want to say that I don't personally hold this belief for valid historical and cultural reasons.

First, the style of church service that separated men from women was a Jewish tradition in the synagogue. This was not a group of Jewish believers. They were pagans straight out of the Corinthian culture. There was no separating by gender in their religion. Quite the opposite was true. Women in the Greek culture were held on equal esteem with men. It was the Jews who gave women a second class view. Knowing what Paul and Jesus thought about women (*Galatians 3:29*), I don't see Paul demanding that they follow an old wineskin of separating the sexes during a service.

The Corinthians had much interaction, fellowship, and dinners (*1 Corinthians 11:20*) together. When we realize the vitality of life that was happening in the early churches that we see played out in Acts, there could have been no possible way that the genders were separated in some formal way.

Let's press on and discuss our second controversial passage:

### **1 Timothy 2:11-15**

*<sup>11</sup>A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. <sup>12</sup>I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. <sup>13</sup>For Adam was formed first, then Eve. <sup>14</sup>And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. <sup>15</sup>But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.*

According to the HGC method of interpretation the G or Grammatical part of interpretation is crucial in this verse. We need to look at the layout of this passage in the original language it was written. Let's look at a few words and see what they meant in the original Greek text.

The word woman in verses 11 & 12 means according to Strong's Concordance: '*specifically a wife*'. The Greek word for man is *aner*. It

means “fellow, husband, or man”. It is used approximately 150 times in the New Testament. In 40 times that it occurs it is translated husband. Why is it translated sometimes as man and sometimes as husband? The translators have to look at the context and make the decision!

I believe that in this context woman should have been translated literally as wife like the Greek says. When you do this it makes sense to translate man as husband because of the context of the word wife being in the same verse. This makes sense from the context of the passage because in the next three verses Paul is talking about events in the context of the marriage relationship. He talks about Adam and Eve and then talks about child rearing. To translate it otherwise is to violate the spirit of the passage and it defines a doctrine that goes against everything else in the Bible.

What is that doctrine? If you keep it as man and woman then you are setting up the principle that women are under the authority of ALL men in the church. No where in Scripture is this supported. The only place in Scripture where this is supported is in the husband and wife relationship. This passage is simply talking about the marriage relationship.

If you translate this as husband and wife then the passage makes perfect sense. For example, “*A wife should learn in quietness and full submission. <sup>12</sup>I do not permit a wife to teach or to have authority over her husband; she must be silent. <sup>13</sup>For Adam was formed first, then Eve....*”

The point is not that a wife can’t ever speak to her husband. How would a relationship be developed or any thing get done? The point is that wives should not be demanding their way with their husbands.

Is this method of simply putting wife in for woman (which the Greek says should be done), and husband in for man (which the Greek also allows based on context), strained? No. The passage then makes perfect sense and is not a big deal.

## ***Authority Over a Man***

I often hear the idea, “OK, a woman can teach a man but they cannot have authority over a man.” This usually means that a woman cannot be in a church governmental position like elder, pastor, etc. This idea again comes from this verse: “do not permit a woman to teach or to

*have authority over a man”*

This idea takes us right back to chapter 1. According to this verse if you believe that a woman cannot have authority over a man, you must also believe that they cannot teach and must be silent. There is no separating the two ideas. You cannot believe one and not the other — they are the same verse. I believe that this verse is simply talking about a wife usurping authority over a husband.

# 4

## **Same Assignment A Dangerous Thought**

When Adam was created, both male and female genders were created in him. As a result both men and women were given the assignment to be fruitful, multiply, and take dominion.

Let's look at the original creation:

*Gen. 1:26-28* <sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup>God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

This passage gives us some insights into our original purpose. It says in vs. 26, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness". From this verse we can see that we are created in God's image and likeness. We do know that we have the following similar characteristics as God: personality, emotions, desires, will, intellect, and memories. Another way that Adam mirrored God was that he was three parts like the Trinity is three parts. We are made up of a body, soul, and a spirit (1 Thess. 5:23). So Adam mirrored God. Adam was not God. He was just created in His image.

It says in vs. 27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup>God blessed them and said to them". Do you see what this verse is saying? It states that when Adam was first created both male and female were created in him. Both genders were created in Adam.

We often think that the male gender (Adam) was created first and then the female gender (Eve) was created second. But according to this verse that was not the case. The word man in vs. 27 is the Hebrew word 'awdawm'. This word does not mean a male as in man but 'human being' as in the species.

Before you jump to conclusions, he did not have some sort of perverted body that had both sexes contained in it. But in his soul he contained the characteristics of both sexes. The Trinity contains both sexes. It has too. How else could we be created in His image if He does not have both male and female characteristics? Adam was a mirror of the Trinity. He was three parts and had some of the

characteristics of the Trinity too--both male and female.

## ***Separation of Woman from Man***

The scriptures say that out of Adam's side (the Hebrew means side not rib) Eve was created. Out of something in Adam, Eve was created. *Gen. 2:23b* says "...for she was taken out of man." Eve came from what Adam already was. She was not created separately as Adam and the animals were. What happened when Eve was created was that the genders contained in the soul were split into two physical bodies. Wow – what a thought. But now it would take both male and female together to fully represented God's image.

Why did God create Adam and Eve in this manner? Why did he not create both Adam and Eve at the same time? I want to share with you my opinion.

*Gen. 2:18* The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." This verse for years has caused me confusion. Why? Look at an earlier verse, *Gen. 1:31a* "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." Do you see the problem?

In *Gen 1:31*, God said that he looked at all that he had made – including Adam – and said that it was good. Then 18 verses later He said that it is not good for man to be alone. Did God not foresee a problem with His creation? Was He caught off guard? Did He have to go back and do a 2<sup>nd</sup> revision? I hope not.

Let's review. God made Adam (humankind) in His image as one body with his soul containing both male and female characteristics. But Adam was still one person. The Trinity is one God but with 3 persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All through the Scriptures the Trinity is seen as one God but also 3 distinct persons.

It says in *Gen. 2:18, 20b* <sup>18</sup>The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him..." <sup>20b</sup>But for Adam no suitable helper was found."

The Trinity said that Adam would not be fulfilled when it was just Adam by himself. Adam was created to receive love and give love just like God. Love is not really love unless it can be given to another person. That is why God made Adam. He wanted to share His love with someone else besides just each other. For Adam to be fulfilled he

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had to have someone else to pour his love out on. This is why it was not good for Adam to be alone. He would be fulfilled when he was pursuing love with another person in complete oneness like the Trinity.

Why didn't God separate man and woman from the beginning? I believe it has to do with the same reason that God asked the question of Adam after he sinned, *Gen. 3:9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"* Did God not know where Adam was? Of course He did. The question was asked for Adam's benefit, not God's. It was a teaching opportunity using questions.

I believe it was a way of reinforcing into Adam His grand plan. We read in *Genesis 2:19-20* how Adam saw and named all of the animals. He would have seen the principle of male and females in the same species. It probably even dawned on him that there was not separate male and female species for mankind. I believe that it could have been a teaching tool for Adam. It would have made an impression on him of the need of having someone to walk with and pour his love out on.

Notice that it was God who brought up the subject of separate species in *Gen. 2:18*. I don't know about you, but I have often thought it was Adam who noticed that he was alone. But it wasn't. It was God. We also often think that Adam was lonely. It doesn't say that. It only says that he was alone – by himself — he was one. There was only one type of his creation. Unlike the animals and the Trinity.

### ***Both Eve and God are Helpers***

So God decided to make Adam a helper. We often think of this as a secondary or subordinate position. But it is not. This is the same word that God uses when He says He helps us in *Psa. 30:10 (KJV) Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper.*" No one would ever describe God as being in a subordinate position. After Eve was created out of Adam, I believe Adam instantly understood what had happened and he was pleased with the results (*Genesis 2:23*).

### ***Conclusion***

So what was God's original intent for mankind? Adam and Eve together reflected the image of God. Adam and Eve *together* as co-equals were given the assignment to be fruitful, multiply, and take

dominion. His intent is still the same today! Notice, there was no hierarchal organizational order in the beginning. They were co-equals with a co-assignment!



# 5

## **Co-Equals** **Another Dangerous Thought**

Have you ever wondered what the following verse means in relation to men and women?

*Gal. 3:26-29* <sup>26</sup>You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,  
<sup>27</sup>for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

It all goes back to the creation where both male and female were created in Adam. When Eve was created the female portion of the soul was removed into a separate body. Together they were the image of God. Together they were given the assignment to be like God and be fruitful, multiply, and take dominion. There was no mention of a hierarchy of order. After the fall this co-equal role was perverted because of the sin in the earth.

This verse is saying that because of the Cross, we are all sons, there is neither male nor female. Jesus has returned us to the place where the perverted roles of male and female that were a result of the fall are gone. Of course, we are talking about our place in the body of Christ – the church. Obviously, there are still male and females walking the earth after salvation. But the key is the end of verse 28, “for you are all one in Christ Jesus”.

Remember this was Jesus' prayer at the end of His earthly life, “that they may be one as we are one” *John 17:22*. This concept is crucial to our understanding of the place of men and women. Is any person within the Trinity any less or more than the others? No. They have different roles but they are co-equal. They operate as one, voluntarily submitting to each other. Remember, Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane? He had the right to not go to the Cross. But He said, “Yet not as I will, but as you will.” *Matt. 26:39*. He voluntarily submitted to the will of His Father.

Another example of submitting to one another is found with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We see that the Holy Spirit was submitted to Jesus in some circumstances *John 16:7 (KJV)*, “... It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” But keep in mind other times Jesus was submitted to the Holy Spirit. “Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil”. *Matt. 4:1*. We see from just these few examples the concept of voluntary

submission depending on who was to have the lead role in a particular circumstance.

Let's now look at some of the repercussions of the fall. It says that God told Eve in *Gen. 3:16b* <sup>16</sup>*To the woman he said, "...Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."* Notice, it says that your husband will rule over you. The word "rule" means that he will have dominion and power over you. Remember, this was a consequence of sin. This was not God's will! God did not even set this up as an eternal parameter. He simply said that as a result of the fall you will have more pain in childbirth, the earth will be hard work to toil in, and your husband will dominate you. Many men and women act like it was God's will for men to dominate and have power over women. It was no more God's will than it was for Adam to have to earn his living by the sweat of his brow.

Many churches act like the domination was God's will. But this behavior was simply predicted by God to Eve to show her how far the perversion of sin would reach. It is obvious that this was not the norm before the fall. If it was, then why did God bring it up here along with the other predictions of hardness in life? There is absolutely no where in Scripture before the fall that indicates anything less than a co-equal position between Adam and Eve.

After the fall God was saying, Eve, you were once a co-equal with the task to be fruitful with Adam. But because of the fall man will use his superior physical strength and he will dominate you. You will lose your co-equal position along with pain in childbirth. Notice God did not speak or curse Eve with this. He simply stated what would happen. Yes, he cursed the ground and serpent, but He did not curse Adam or Eve. He simply said here are going to be the natural consequences of your decision.

Let me say this: One of the purposes of the Cross was to restore our oneness with God, but another purpose was to restore the oneness or equality of men and women that was lost as a result of the fall. How can I say that? Look at this verse:

*2 Cor. 5:16-17* <sup>16</sup>*So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.* <sup>17</sup>*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

We are new creatures! What does it mean to be a new creature? It

means to be something that is new!

*Col. 3:9-10 <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices <sup>10</sup>and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

We are being returned to the image of our Creator in the Garden – male and female He created them!

If we insist on keeping men and women on a hierarchal basis where they are unequal then we are returning to a post-fall mentality and not a pre-fall/after Cross mentality. God wanted us to be one as He is one. This is one of the prayers of Jesus that He prayed at the end of His life. This is their desire. Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Father all have separate roles in the Trinity, but they are still equal. They voluntarily submit one to another. The same thing is to happen between men and women in the church.

We know that division is a result of the fall. Why? What was one of the first things that happened after the fall in the Garden of Eden? When God asked Adam what was the problem he immediately went into the division mode and blamed all his problems on Eve. Eve then blamed all of her problems on the serpent. Teamwork went out the window and it has often been that way since.

But as a result of the Cross, Jesus is giving us the tools to reclaim the equality of both sexes so that teamwork can happen. Why does it need to be done? Simply, we will never take dominion over the earth without both sexes working together. That was the original mandate and it hasn't changed? Why do you think that dominion of the earth by Christians has not happened so far? One reason is only men are allowed to do the work. We will never take dominion until we learn to pull together.

*Matt. 22:29-30 <sup>29</sup>Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. <sup>30</sup>At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.*

The devil realizes that our strength and destiny happens when we *all* pull together. He is scared to death of this. So he does everything he can to separate us. This includes not only by gender, but by race, economic class, education levels, etc.

Let's come full circle from the beginning of this chapter. We talked about how the persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) within the Trinity are co-equals but voluntarily submit to each other for the greater good. They are and operate as one. This was Jesus' prayer over us. We as men and women are co-equals and we are to voluntarily submit one to the other to the gifts that God has put inside of us for the greater good. In Romans 12 where the 7 service gifts are listed, in 1 Corinthians 12 where the 9 Supernatural Gifts are listed, in Ephesians 4 where the 5 offices are listed, it is important to note that none of the lists are divided by gender. Any gender can operate in these gifts as given by the Trinity. Do we have different gifts? Yes! But that does not make us superior to each other. We are to voluntarily submit to each other for the greater good – God's will. There will be times where one gift works better in a particular circumstance. We all need to submit to that person who has that gift at that time. There will be other times where another gift is more appropriate. We all need to submit to that person and their gift at that time.

For example, if an unbeliever comes into your church meeting, it would probably make sense for someone with the gift of evangelism to minister to them first. After their salvation, the next logical thing to do would be to hand them off to a pastor for making sure they get placed in the sheep fold. Then they need to be introduced to a teacher who can disciple them. Is the evangelist less than the teacher? No, they are different gifts or *roles* that play out at different times.

In closing let's talk about this passage? What does it mean?

*"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior." Eph. 5:22-23 .*

It's very simple. What is the context of this passage? The home. It is very clearly speaking to husbands and wives. It has nothing to do with the church. It simply says that in the home the final authority is the husband. But even here it is not talking about domination or a master/slave relationship for two reasons.

First, in *verse 24-25* it says,

*"Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her"*

Is there a master/slave relationship between Jesus and the church? No. Paul is clearly saying here that he knows there needs to be a person who makes the final decision. But even in the husband/wife role model it should work the same as Jesus works with the church.

Second, in *verse 21* that precedes the whole discussion of the husband/wife role is this key verse that is often overlooked by people: “*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ*”. Even where there is a head role of a husband in the marriage context, Paul is saying that both of you need to acknowledge each other, be wise, and submit to one another. Many husbands completely overlook the God and gifts in their spouse. The role of a husband is not an omnipotent and all knowing position. There are circumstances where the husband has to make the final decision. But the wise husband will acknowledge the gifts of God in their spouse and submit to them when it shows to be the right thing. This is voluntarily submitting to one another.

I am looking forward to seeing all God’s sons and daughters walking in the power of the Holy Spirit and all of His gifts!

*Acts 2:17 “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.*

# About the Author



Craig is married to Susan Luhrman Cooper; a proud Father to Abigail, Grace, and Israel; a Software Developer; and Founder/Pastor of Relationship Church.

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