

In Search of Shepherds - Women pt3

REVIEW: In our search for shepherds, we have been looking at the passages in the Bible addressing women, and their role in the church. In our first week looking at women, we saw that Jesus, and Paul both made huge strides forward for the plight of women in the ancient world. In Christ, there is no advantage to being male, nor is there an advantage to being female. There is unity in the body of Christ, and we should not think that because we were born free, or Jewish, or male that we are inherently better than someone born or entered slavery, or born a Gentile, or born a woman. Those things do not matter.

At the same time, we saw that just because there is unity in Christ, unity does not negate roles within the body of Christ. A prime example would be spiritual gifts. Each person has their role given to them by the Spirit. The trick is to understand your role (gift), embrace it, love it, and bring glory to God through your role/gift.

Then we looked at the difficult passage in 1 Timothy 2 where Paul says, “I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man.” We looked at some of the possibilities of what that means (and trust me when I tell you that you can go blind on all the pages that have been written on this topic). I landed on the idea that Paul is in fact talking about women’s role being restricted from the role of elder. All other means of ministry are open with the church, but the role of elder, the headship of the church in a sense, is closed. Much like the family, headship is for the husband - and how hypocritical it would be for God to give headship to the husband at home, and change the expectation at church.

INTRO: Today we dig into the final two passages on women. We are taking them both together, which means I will have to be succinct in my explanation. However, we are taking them both together because the two passages are from the same author, in the same book, so they play off of one another.

Fair warning: these are some difficult passages to deal with. Some of the most respected theologians I know have lamented how difficult the Greek text is in these passages. Quite honestly, we will do more eliminating of what these verses cannot mean (for which we will see solid reasons), and we will have to fill in the gaps for what that do mean (which there are sound arguments for, but no smoking gun, so to speak).

- I. Before we dig in, a few things to take note of
 - A. I have read arguments for both positions of egalitarian and complementarian
 1. Understand that even within each of those views, there are different positions that people land on - it is sort of a sliding scale

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2. The egalitarian position (and I am using the big words so you will learn them) I find far from compelling
 - a) I find that the position has to do damage to the Word of God to arrive where they do - meaning they often call into question, or come so close to calling into question the authority of the Bible, I cannot go where they would want me to go
3. And while the complementarian position does far better at holding to the authority of God's Word, they too have a few loons loose in the hen house - at least for the extreme views held by some
4. You will see what I mean as we go along here
- B. One of the big issues that comes up in considering these passages is context and culture
 1. Egalitarians make a big deal over culture and context
 - a) They attempt to say that these are issues bound to the Corinthian church, and are not for us today
 - b) But again, even when something may be cultural, or contextual, it does not mean that there are not principles to learn and apply
 2. Complementarians to their shame, often do not put enough emphasis on culture and context
 - a) They often want to downplay that these passages do have something to do with what was taking place in Corinth
 - b) In essence they wind up causing these passages to be divorced from the context of the verses around it, as well as from the culture
- C. So as we start into these two passages, hear me very clearly: These verses are both cultural and contextual - they applied to the culture (the church in Corinth) as well as to the verses surrounding them
 1. Paul did not just randomly start to pick on women in these verses
 2. Both the culture of the church, and the context of the verses dictated that Paul bring up these topics
- D. One final thing before we dig in, these passages have led to horrible abuses over the years
 1. Abuses of the text, abuses of women, and abuse of how these verses are applied
 2. So, for example: Some Christians have used these verses to justify women not working outside the home, or if they work, it is okay not to pay them the same wage as a man in the same role
 - a) All based on HORRIBLE exegesis
 - b) They came to the conclusion that women were inferior to men, and the applications came from there

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- c) That is a load of garbage, and anyone that continues to hold to positions like that needs to have their head examined

II. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

A. Now that we have just read the passage, I want to point out the context

1. Back up to 10:23ff

- a) The Corinthians are saying, “We have freedom!”
- b) Paul is saying, “Yes, but it is not all good for you”
- c) Then Paul talks about meat sacrificed to idols, and how there is freedom to eat if one chooses

2. Jump down to 11:17ff

- a) The Corinthians are using their freedom to basically turn the Lord’s Supper into a free for all
- b) Paul is bringing correction to how they understand and observe (hear the words “act”, “behave”, “ACTION”) the Lord’s Supper

B. Right smack in the middle of these two things in which Paul is bringing correction about how the Corinthians understand and use their freedom, we have this section on women in worship

1. Can we really divorce this from the overall context? Of course not!

2. Does that mean the directives are only for the church at Corinth and not for all believers?

- a) You tell me. Do we not principlize the section on eating meat sacrificed to idols to apply it to today?

- b) Do we not take Paul’s instructions on the Last Supper seriously for today?

C. But HOW do we interpret this section?

1. Let’s deal with the word “head” first

- a) Some say it means source, others say it means authority

(1) Both are right by the way - the word can be used either way, however, its primary use is “authority”

(2) The biggest problem in this passage as to understanding it to mean “source” is, if the word means “source” then Jesus was not eternally existent, He was created by God the Father

(a) There are almost no theologians that would agree to that

(b) In fact, it was labeled a heresy early on in church history and has only reared it’s ugly head a few times since

- b) The word has to mean authority

2. Second issue: the words woman and man

- a) The words are general in Greek and can also be translated “wife” and “husband”

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- b) In essence, this would go back to what we said about how God designed men and women - men are tasked with exercising headship (the work of man to establish order so humanity can thrive)
 - (1) Headship is a tall order because it is laying aside one's self for the betterment of humanity and more specifically for one's family
- 3. Third issue: the head covering
 - (1) Allow me to cut to the chase on this one, whatever the custom was that was being resisted by the Corinthian church that all the other churches seemed to accept (v.16), this custom called into question male headship
 - (2) So whether the covering was a person's hair, or a prayer shawl is really immaterial - the bigger issue was how it was showing a lack of respect for authority
 - (3) Does that mean that women should wear head coverings today?
 - (a) Not really - because they do not carry the same cultural issues
 - (b) The principle being played out here is showing respect for the authorities in your life
 - i) We often get bogged down in outworking and details of the principle
 - ii) We go chasing after the cultural issue of hair or head coverings, when the issue is headship and authority
- 4. The reason we know the real issue carries through to today is because of Paul's appeal to the creation order
 - a) As we talked about in God's Great Design, men were given headship of planet earth - and that carries through to wives, family, the church, community, etc.
 - b) Women were made to help man in this enormous task - men are held ultimately responsible, but women are there to help in the task
- 5. One other thing to cover on this and we will move to the next passage: the illustration from the Trinity
 - a) If you have ever been to a wedding I have performed in recent years, you know that the Trinity is the model for marriage
 - b) You have the three Persons of the Trinity, separate but all equal in substance, worth, and value, but each has distinct roles
 - (1) In fact, the Bible tells us that the Son, submits to the Father
 - c) In marriage, you have two separate but equal in value, and worth, each with distinct roles
 - (1) It is our American inability to see that you can have equality and role distinction
 - (2) EX: the church body and spiritual gifts

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III. 1 Corinthians 14:33b-38

- A. Allow me again to show you how these verses are tied to context
 - 1. The whole of chapters 12-14 have been about spiritual gifts and how they are used in worship
 - a) By the way, this even ties back into chapter 10 - I have freedom! But not everything is beneficial
 - b) Just because you have spiritual gifts does not mean you go spinning out of control - so Paul corrects them in a long discourse for these three chapters
 - 2. Look at 1 Corinthians 14:26-29
 - a) What are the two main topics or spiritual gifts being addressed? (speaking in tongues and prophecy)
 - b) Along with that is the interpretation of tongues and the evaluation of prophecy
 - c) Keep this context in mind, because it will be important in a minute
- B. At first glance this seems to be an open and shut case - women are supposed to be silent. Period. Nothing more to say on this matter.
 - 1. However, it is far from that simple
 - 2. Paul has already said in our previous passage (which is why I wanted to treat these two together) that women pray and prophesy in church
 - a) So either Paul is the most forgetful guy ever
 - b) Or he is lousy at making an argument (which we know is not true - read the book of Romans)
 - c) Or, Paul is not forbidding all speech from women in the public worship service
 - (1) Which, by the way, some people that want to silence women try to get around things by saying that in 1 Corinthians 11 Paul was talking about private meetings and chapter 14 is about public worship
 - (2) VERY unconvincing argument - both chapters are dealing with public worship
 - d) The other side of the aisle tries to get around these verses and say that women are not forbidden from speaking in public worship because these verses are not original to Paul and were added later
 - (1) Again, very unconvincing argument
 - (2) In EVERY manuscript we have, these verses are present, and only in a few later manuscripts are the verses moved to the end of the chapter
 - e) So what we know is this
 - (1) It cannot be silencing all women in worship

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- (2) Therefore, these verses cannot be used to defend some chauvinist ideology
 - (a) Sadly, these passages about women have been used in some hideous ways
 - i) Silencing women in church so they are unable to use their gifts for God
 - ii) Subjugating women in the home - making them no more than a slave to their husband
 - iii) The idea that women are inherently less intelligent or can be more easily duped by false ideas
 - (b) All of these things are examples of bad exegesis (because they failed to take the whole Word of God into account, and in some instances ripped verses from their context so the only thing they could say was things about women), so bad exegesis which leads to poor application

C. So allow me to come back to the context

- 1. If you look at the verb “speak” in chapter 14 alone, 20 out of 21 times (minus verses 34-35) it refers to speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, prophecy, or the evaluation of prophecy
 - a) So slow down for a moment and realize that speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, and prophecy are all listed as spiritual gifts
 - (1) They are given by the Spirit
 - (2) And there is no indication ANYWHERE in Scripture that the Spirit takes gender into account while giving out these gifts
 - b) So that leaves only one thing - the evaluation of prophecy
 - (1) But to say that women are band from evaluating prophecy when they are allow to speak prophecy seems foolish
 - (a) In fact, verse 29 says, “Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.”
 - (b) Who are the others? The other prophets.
 - (2) So what then is Paul forbidding?
- 2. This now comes down to the translation and the NIV changed the translation from the 1984 translation to the 2011 translation - and I believe they had it right in 1984
 - a) The phrase “as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people” at the end of verse 33 really belongs to the start of verse 34.
 - b) If it is kept with verse 33, the sentence seems trite or foolish
 - (1) God is a peace - as in all the churches
 - (2) Would God not be a God of peace regardless where He is? Why tell us that God is the God of peace in all churches?

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- (3) It makes more sense that the phrase goes with verse 34
 - c) That leaves us with, what does that mean?
- 3. What we have seen in the previous two difficult verses on women - 1 Timothy 2, and 1 Corinthians 11, is an appeal to the creation order
 - a) That men were created first - given headship of the earth
 - b) That women were created to be a help to men in ordering the earth for prosperity
 - c) These have been issues of submission to God's original design
- 4. The end result that we said from 1 Timothy is that women can use their gifts in the church, but the highest office of elder is restricted to men
 - a) Again, due to the original design of headship
 - b) Men are supposed to set the spiritual temperature in the home, to take the initiative in loving their wife, loving their kids, and leading them all toward Christ
- 5. So, here Paul says women are to be silent, be in submission, as the law says
 - a) The fact is, the law says no such thing
 - b) So bible scholars have tried to offer up what they think Paul was talking about
 - (1) The more popular one is Genesis 3:16 - which is God's judgement on women for their role in the fall of humanity
 - (a) However, I, along with several of my favorite Bible scholars like D.A. Carson disagree
 - (b) It seems unlikely Paul would refer to the consequences of the fall as "the law"
 - (2) Myself, and these scholars favor Genesis 2 as Paul's reference, and if we are right, it is referencing God's original design for men and women (which we started this whole series off with)
- 6. So the final conclusion seems to be, and this is the conclusion that I find the least amount of objections to both biblically, and practically, Paul was forbidding women to have the final, authoritative say on prophecy for the church
 - a) In other parts of scripture we are urged to be discerning about things - and that is to both genders
 - b) It seems logical that, as we said before, the prophets are evaluating one another
 - c) But this, as far as we can deduce, seems to be, especially if it is linked to creation design, another way of saying that the men in authority of the church have the final say

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D. So we have three very difficult passages about women, and as far as I can see, they seem to be more about preserving the creation order, that men were designed for headship, than specific things that follow through exactly today

1. In other words, we get bogged down in head coverings and cultural issues, and miss the bigger picture of submission and headship

IV. I want to finish with a couple of applications

A. What do we do with a passage that talks about head coverings

1. Obviously, whatever the women of Corinth were wearing or doing, it was calling into question the creation order and the authority of the men of the church

2. It is impossible for us to know exactly whether this was hair style, or clothing style, and what that was announcing to the world - but it obviously announced something negative

3. What that means for us today is watching the things we do say or wear that might do similar things

a) The women of Corinth seemed to flaunt their freedom

b) Women today could do the same thing

(1) Hair styles don't seem to convey message like they may have back then

(2) Today though, it could be a specific piece of jewelry - maybe a pin that associates you with something or someone that is calling into question your submission - to your husband, or to the church

(3) Clothing could convey messages

4. The point is, we think through the things we say or do in our freedom that we do not over step our bounds in that freedom

a) Whether that is by showing a lack of submission to our husbands

(1) And that is a husband that makes every effort to love his wife and family

(2) We don't have time to walk the road of what to do if a husband is not loving - but that is possible

b) Or whether we show a lack of submission to our church leadership

c) The point is think through those actions

B. This second passage actually should be an excitement for the ladies

1. Paul, in an odd sort of way, is affirming your use of spiritual gifts in the church

2. This is something that church leadership needs to look carefully at, and use for the glory of God

3. In that usage of spiritual gifts, make sure that they are always used in submission to the authorities God has placed above you

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- a) That goes for females and males
- b) Loose cannons are very bad for any organization, including the church - so all of us need to learn what it means to live under authority
 - (1) Which we will come to soon in this series - what is authority

CONCLUSION: There is probably more that can be said, but we will stop here. In the end of this section of women in ministry, I have to say that as I have studied these passages, the conclusion I come to is that women are a vital part of the church. They have freedom to use their spiritual gifts within the church under the authority of the elders - which is true for male or female. The only thing women are forbidden from is the office of elder - NOT because they are inferior, but because God gave the responsibility of headship to men.