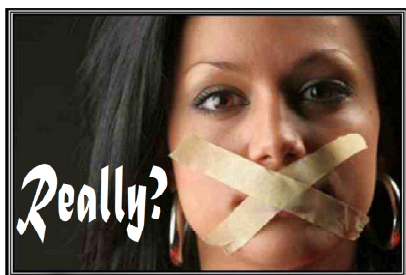


Spotlight on Sisters



Two NT passages,
1 Corinthians 14 and **1 Timothy 2**,
are always ‘thrown’ at those who believe that
a sister-in-Christ
CAN preach and teach (from the Bible)
when men are present.
So...? Can she, or can’t she?

Let’s see briefly what we can find.

Jaime vH.

1. The original.

The Greek word for ‘woman’ is the word used for ‘wife’ - no difference! That happens in some other languages as well, like in Dutch, which is my language. Likewise the word for man is the selfsame word used for ‘husband’. A Greek husband would introduce his wife to a friend, not as “my wife”, but as “my woman”. And when she talks to her friends about him, she does so in terms of “my man”...

Greek is the language of the New Testament, so the translators, when translating passages about a man-woman relationship, must be thoroughly aware of the context in order to translate correctly. On the whole they have done an admirable job, putting ‘wife’ and/or ‘husband’ where the context clearly demanded that. The story of the Samaritan woman, for instance, contains the word for **man** five times, yet it is *not* translated as ‘man’, not even once!

When this linguistic principle, “man=husband” and “woman=wife”, is applied to the passages referred to, it will be seen that the sense shifts dramatically. And here we have the first “key”, **essential** for gaining entrance to Paul’s thinking as he writes on the subject.

2. Paul’s appeal to the ‘law’.

Is there a law, an OT passage, in which God forbids sisters to address their brothers with the Word of God? Does such a ‘law’ say that they have to be silent in the meetings of the saints? **ONLY IF THERE IS**, can - and should - both NT passages be interpreted in what we would call the *conventional* way. But if there is no such law in the OT, then the conventional interpretation hasn’t a leg (or a law) to stand on.

In 1 Corinthians 14 it may not be immediately clear to what part of the law Paul is referring, but it is perfectly clear in 1 Timothy 2. He is appealing to Genesis 3, which, of course, is considered part of the ‘law’. In that fact we are given the second “key”, a ‘**must**’ to understand what Paul is getting at.

Now, if Paul went to this trouble to point out to his readers what is underlying his teaching in the two chapters under consideration, can’t we seriously afford a bit of trouble to look into that, i.e. if we really want God’s light on these NT passages?

Sure, it is much easier to just drift along with the conventional idea that the Christian woman must be hushed up. Benevolently, it may be admitted that, yes, she’s a priest-unto-God, just like the brothers; yes, she’s a fellow member-of-the-body-of-Christ; yes, the Holy Spirit indwells her... But now for her to open, not only the Scriptures, but her mouth as well, when men are present? No, sir, that is just not on...

3. So what about Genesis 3?

Here the reader is thrust into the first ever marriage problem. Basically, God has been dethroned and terrible disaster has ensued.

Eve had decided that she didn't need to obey what her husband had told her about this one tree. Remember, it was Adam who had relayed to Eve all about that, because when God told him, she wasn't around yet.

Now, instead of the wife obeying the husband (and God), she gets the husband to do what *she* thinks he should do; and things are turned completely on their head. Adam's reaction to Eve's words – according to what God Himself says here - was “heeding - or hearkening - to Eve's voice”. In other words, Adam sinned as he ‘obeyed’ his wife, because it meant he was disobeying God.

God tells Eve that her husband will rule over her. That implies submission on her part, but submission to whom? Exclusively to HER man!

Paul is referring to that ‘submission’ in both passages (1 Cor. 14 & 1 Tim. 2), and he does so on the basis of what “the law” states. Now, many centuries later, can we just change the clear meaning into something the law does NOT say? Can we change it into ‘*submission to men in general*’? Look again at Ephesians 5: “**Just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.**”

4. Just saying...

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul paints a picture of what could well be a newly converted wife. She sits where the other women sit (or stand) during a meeting. When she wants to know something from her husband, some distance away from her, she may raise her voice as she addresses him, instead of waiting till she can ask at home... This isn't honoring him, rather she is shaming him.

It could not possibly have been a question of ministry. It was just unnecessary talk and disruption. Didn't Paul already state in verses 24 and 31 that ALL can ‘prophesy’, i.e., minister the Word of God? Is he now revoking that, saying that women are excepted?

In 1 Timothy 2, going back to Adam and Eve, Paul says that a woman (i.e. a wife) must “learn in silence with all submission”. So again, to whom is she supposed to be submissive? To ‘men’? Or to that **one ‘man’** who is her husband?

He adds: “And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence”. Young's Literal Translation puts ‘**husband**’. Paul was not married, but had great insight into a very common problem in the husband-wife relationship. Only one of the two can hold the ‘reins’, and it's not the wife...

That said, I have the distinct impression that, through God's grace there are marriages where the wife has truly learned NOT to insist on ‘having the last word’ in any discussion. Whereas before she might have tried to ‘teach’ her husband a few home truths, she has now learned to be ‘silent’ and ‘in submission’. It has dawned on her that not “having authority over (her) man” is not the end of the world, or of a happy marriage. To the contrary, she's finding out that there is deep peace and joy in letting him do the ‘ruling’.

5. OT times.

There are eight individual prophetesses mentioned in the OT era, apart from 2 or 3 false ones: Myriam, Deborah, Hannah, Bathsheba, Isaiah's wife, Huldah, Anna and Mary. God saw fit to wonderfully use these women, even in the old dispensation. Hannah and Mary are not called prophetesses, but the nature of their utterances makes it clear they were actually prophesying. Bathsheba is mentioned in the supposition that Lemuel in Proverbs 31 is Solomon. Hebrew and later commentators state that as a probability. Thus Bathsheba, his mother, would be the one who is passing on wonderful prophecies to Solomon. In the KJV and other versions ‘prophecy’ is the word used.

Some say that God called women, because there were no men available... That is not really the case. Take Huldah in Jerusalem. When she ministered, faithful Jeremiah had already been actively prophesying in Jerusalem for some five years.

The last two of these eight stand out in that Anna was extremely old and Mary was extremely young. For the speaking of his Word, God sees no problem in either gender or age - as long as He is truly in charge!

6. NT times.

In reality this era starts, not with John the Baptist, but at the Resurrection and Pentecost. A good question at this point would be: 'To whom first of all did the Risen Lord entrust the Good News of his Resurrection'? I.e., for 'broadcasting' it? It wasn't to Peter or John, which, as we read John 20, might to our sense of propriety seem to have been the more logical choice. The Lord passed them by and chose Mary Magdalene for that very special task! And to whom did she have to deliver the divine message? Women and children are not mentioned by the Lord. He mentions his 'brethren', and we read that she told the 'disciples'. No one censored her for that!

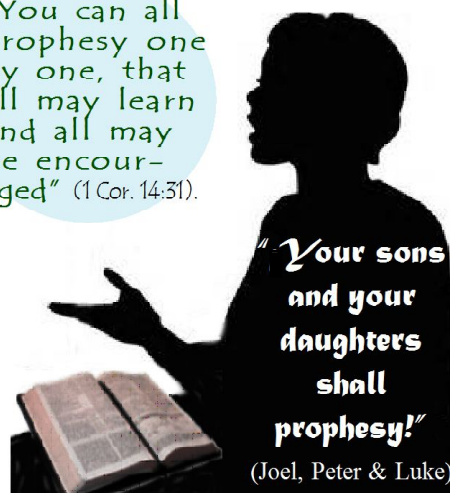
On the day of Pentecost the women-folks were present among the disciples. Not only that, they were certainly VERY present in Peter's meaningful words as he quoted Joel:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of my Spirit on all flesh; your sons **and** your **daughters** shall prophesy... And on my men-servants **and** on my **maidservants** I will pour out my Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy."

That is God giving HIS pattern for the whole of the dispensation!

How could anyone surmise that Paul, later, would say something different? In fact, in 1 Corinthians 11 Paul mentions the public praying and prophesying of sisters-in-Christ in the congregation as completely normal, notwithstanding the fact that he needed to tell them to adjust their clothes so that their faces would be (partly) veiled as they ministered. In chapter 14, as seen before, he makes it clear that, among the believers, the different communications of God's Word were open to "each and every one".

"You can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged" (1 Cor. 14:31).



"He (she) who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men" (1 Cor. 14:3).

Just in case someone is wondering, I do **not** believe in

'woman-pastors'. In fact, I don't believe in modern-day 'pastors' at all - men *or* women.

Whoever loves his New Testament and studies it and appropriates it, cannot in good conscience embrace the modern concept of paid-professional-pastors. It is totally foreign to God's Word. Jesus actually warned against the "hired shepherd"...

But this is another subject, outside the scope of this brief article. If it does have your interest, and it should, go to "**DEAR PASTOR...**" where Don Reiner, at <http://ntmu.net/?p=376>, has excellent and loving material ready for you.

7. Contemporary times.


Untold millions of men have benefitted, and are benefitting, from the greatly blessed words of Christian women, whether spoken in the physical presence of men, or whether through radio, TV or Internet, whether through CDs, DVDs, books or articles, whether in churches, open-air or other venues, or however and wherever.

Of course, there may be plenty of contemporary false prophetesses about as well, but I am definitely not alluding to such. I'm thinking of, and recommending, the likes of such faithful "maid-servants of the Lord" as these twelve:

Mme. Guyon, Frances R Havergal, Lottie Moon, Lillias Trotter, Jessie Penn-Lewis, Amy Carmichael, Ruth Paxson, Corrie ten Boom, Isobel Kuhn, Gladys Aylward, Elisabeth Elliot, Joni Eareckson-Tada. For them and their ministry, and for thousands of their sisters, all the praise be to God, their Sender.

**“The Lord announces the word,
and the women who proclaim it
are a mighty throng!”**

Psalm 68 (NIV).



**She opens her mouth
with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness
is on her tongue.**

Proverbs 31:26