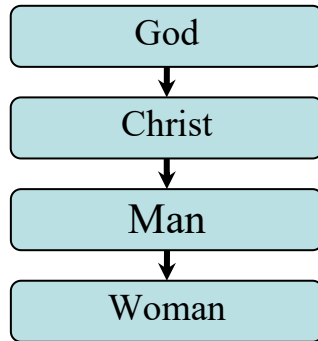


The Role of Women in Church Meetings

If you are a woman who is considering a leadership role in a church, this is for you.



God's Order

1 Corinthians 11:3; 14:35,37
I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

... it is shameful for a woman to speak in church

... the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

Summary

The Bible clearly and repeatably teaches that spiritual leadership and authority roles in church meetings and families are exclusively assigned to men. Women are not allowed to be pastors or preach to men in a healthy biblical church. We will examine claims that some scriptures teach otherwise.

Roles of Men and Women are different

In His perfect wisdom, God has given men and women different roles to play. Just as men and women differ in their physical roles, so too, they differ in their spiritual roles. Men tend to have greater physical strength, but women are able to bear children. So also, God has assigned to men and women different spiritual roles so we can:

1. Maintain order in God's kingdom (chain of command/authority)
2. Reveal the relationship of Christ to His church (symbolic witness)

The church is the bride of Christ. We mirror that in our earthly roles. (Eph 5:22-33)

The Bible teaches male authority throughout. Male pronouns are used for the LORD God. Jesus was male. Every book of the Bible was written by men. God created the man Adam before the woman and created the woman to be his helper. God told the woman her husband "*shall rule over you*". (Genesis 3:16). God commanded that the priests be male; and that the tabernacle and temple be maintained by male Levites. God called men (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Paul, etc.) to lead His kingdom. Jesus called twelve men to be apostles. All of Israel's kings were men (except the ungodly Queen Athaliah who seized power). All of its judges were men, except Deborah. A study of Deborah's symbolism supports male, not female leadership. Further, the book of Judges describes a time when "*everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*" (Judges 17:6; 21:25; 2:11-12, and 4:1-4 which applies to Deborah's timeframe) In the NT God commands that elders, pastors, overseers, and deacons be male.

The Bible also has role restrictions that apply to men. Only Jewish men born of a priestly or Levitical father can be priests or Levites. The NT has restrictions on which men can be overseers, pastors, elders or deacons. Men can't bear children or nurse them. Entry into the kingdom of God is "free for all" by the blood of Jesus, but it is not "a free for all" in how it is organized.

For example:

1 Corinthians 14:33-38

For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. 34 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the [OT] law also says. 35 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. 36 Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached? 37 If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

Some claim that this clear, emphatic command of Jesus and similar scriptures are contradicted by the scriptures about godly women below. These claims are based on imagining things the Bible does not say. Proponents of female preachers interpret the Bible to make it contradict itself and thus imply the Bible is uninspired.

- **Claim #1:** Priscilla taught Apollos, therefore women can preach in church.
Fact: In Acts 18:25-26 Aquilla and his wife Priscilla gave Apollos unplanned instruction in private (“took him aside”) about the way of the Lord. We are not told what, if anything, Priscilla said. Maybe her husband did the teaching. Note how his name is listed first in this ministry context and how Peter’s name is listed first in lists of the apostles. Likely there is a reason for that. Apollos’ instruction was not in a church. See further discussion later.
- **Claim #2:** Women prophetesses prophesied to men in church.
Fact: The NT mentions multiple prophetesses, but the Bible never says they prophesied in a church meeting and forbids them from doing this in 1 Cor 14:29-38.
- **Claim #3:** Euodia and Synchte preached to men.
Fact: Philippians 4:3 commands to “*help these women [Euodia and Synchte] who labored with me in the gospel.*” Laboring in the gospel can simply mean providing for Paul’s necessities, as women did for Jesus in Luke 8:1-3. The command is to “*help*” them, not listen to them preach.
- **Claim #4:** Phoebe was a deacon with authority.
Fact: The NIV translates Romans 16:1-2 as “. . . sister Phoebe, a deacon [Greek diakonos, Strong’s 1249] of the church in Cenchreae . . . give her any help she may need . . .” However diakonos (Strong’s 1249) can refer to a servant without authority as in John 2:5 where Mary tells the “servants” to obey Jesus. In fact, the KJV, NKJV, ESV, and NASB all translate Romans 16:1 as “servant”, not deacon, in agreement with Paul’s command that deacons with authority must be male (1 Tim 3:12). The Romans are commanded to “*help*” her, not listen to her preach.
- **Claim #5:** Junia was an apostle. See Romans 16:7

NKJV	<i>Greet Andronicus and Junia . . . who are of note among the apostles</i>
ESV	<i>Greet Andronicus and Junia . . . They are well known to the apostles</i>
NASB	<i>Greet Andronicus and Junia . . . who are outstanding in the view of the apostles</i>

Fact: The Greek wording and multiple translations make it doubtful that Junia was an apostle. That would make her the only female apostle in the Bible.

Were Andronicus and Junia **noteworthy** apostles, or did the apostles find them “**noteworthy**”?
Most likely the latter.

If they were apostles, it would have been simpler to just say they were “noteworthy apostles” rather than to say they were “*of note among the apostles*” NKJV

Since they are listed together, they could be a husband – wife missionary couple. The word “missionary” comes from the Latin Bible’s word for “sent”. Likewise, the word “apostle” comes from the Greek Bible’s word for “sent”. Thus, missionaries are apostles, if they are truly sent by God. However, it is more likely that the NASB translation “*Greet Andronicus and Junia . . . who are outstanding in the view of the apostles*” “ is the best understanding. The NASB is regarded as the most accurate translation for strict, word-for-word literal precision.

Women’s Roles

In the Bible godly women teach other women, prophesy outside of church meetings, bear children, manage the home, provide hospitality, dress modestly, cover their heads while prophesying and praying (discussed later), conduct business activities, submit to their husbands, and witness to unbelieving husbands “*without a word*” by their godly conduct (1 Peter 3:1). There is no clear record of a godly woman prophesying or teaching in a gathered assembly that includes men in either the OT or NT. (See discussion of Deborah.) That would contradict scripture.

Two passages

1 Corinthians 14:33-38

For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. 34 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the [OT] law also says. 35 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. 36 Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached? 37 If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

Notes:

1. This is a very strong statement – a spiritual person should acknowledge that Jesus commands that women are not to speak in the church (Greek: ekklesia – assembly or congregation).
2. 1 Cor 14:33-34 and 4:17 teach that this command is for all churches.
3. The reference to “*the law*” in 1 Cor 14:34 refers to the OT as law. We know this because just 13 verses earlier, 1 Cor 14:21 quotes from Isaiah 28:11-12 and calls it “the law”. Jesus Himself refers to the OT as “the law” (Matt 5:17).

1 Timothy 2:11-14

Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. 12 And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

There is no doubt what these verses mean. These and many other scriptures exclude women from roles that make them authorities and teachers over men. Before reviewing similar verses let’s do some groundwork.

God’s Chain of Command in the Kingdom of God

Every kingdom or organization needs to have a clear chain of command. Picture an army with a general at its head and with majors, captains, and privates under the general. Each man in the

army has a job to do. Each makes an important contribution. But if each man decided separately what to do the army would not function.

So too, God has given an orderly chain of command in spiritual matters. In both families and churches, God commands male leadership. When there is danger to the family or the church, God has ordained that men risk themselves to protect the women and children – “*just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.*” When decisions need to be made, women are to submit to their husbands or male leadership. This provides for orderly government in both families and churches, like an army. A wise husband consults with his wife and considers her input as part of his decisions.

God’s command is that Christ should submit to God, men should submit to Christ, women should submit to men, and children to their parents. (1 Corinthians 11:3; 14:33-37; Ephesians 5:22-24; Ephesians 6:1-2; Exodus 20:12) It is an orderly chain of command. God is not a God of disorder. 1 Corinthians 14:33 says: *For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.* God’s loving commands provide for an effective and healthy leadership. Church leadership should consist of men who have humble servant hearts, not lording it over the sheep who are in their care. (Mark 9:35; Matthew 20:25-28; Luke 14:10-11; Philippians 2:3)

Jesus lived under authority

Jesus is our example. Since Jesus indwells believers (see John 14:20-21), and Jesus submits to the God the Father, would He lead women to submit to God? Let’s look at examples of Jesus’ submission.

Actions of Jesus as a youth	
Luke 2:49, 51	In the first recorded words of Jesus, when He was twelve years old, Jesus spoke of God’s authority over Him. 2:49 “ <i>I must be about My Father’s business.</i> ” After that, He submitted to His parents: 2:51 <i>Then He went down with them [His parents] and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them.</i>
Words of Jesus as an adult	
John 14:10	The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.
John 5:19	... the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do;
John 5:30	I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.
John 8:28	... I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.
John 12:49	For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.
Matt 26:39	“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

Scriptures that Teach the Submission of Women

Let’s start with the first man and woman.

Adam and Eve

God created the first man, Adam, before creating the first woman, Eve. Before God created Eve God gave Adam the task of naming the animals and commanded Adam that he could eat of any tree in the garden, except one – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He told Adam that eating of that tree would bring death.

Gen 2:16 *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* 18 *And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."*

God's design was that the man teach the woman. The text makes it clear that Adam did tell Eve she should not eat of the forbidden fruit, but she did not heed her husband's instructions. God provided for Eve to know the truth through her husband, but Eve was not satisfied this arrangement. Instead she succumbed to Satan's proposal that "*you will be like God.*" (Gen 3:5)

Satan deceived Eve; she ate, and she then enticed her husband to do the same sin. Eve assumed a spiritual leadership role when she encouraged her husband to do what God had commanded them not to do. This is not the role that God intended. She was created as a helper for Adam, not his spiritual leader.

After this, God told the woman:

*Your desire shall be for your husband,
And he shall rule over you.* (Gen 3:16)

And that is the pattern for the rest of the Bible.

The husband is to rule over the wife.

The man over the woman.

It was God's design from the beginning.

Many women today are like Eve. They want to be independent of God's commands, assigning to themselves leadership roles God has given to men. They reject God's commands just as Eve did. They want to be leaders, just as Eve was the leader that led her husband to break God's command and led to the fall of mankind. Today many men are like Adam. Adam rejected God's command when he accepted his wife's leading to eat the forbidden fruit. Likewise, today's men are accepting women speaking and leading in church; in doing so, these men are disobeying God's command.

Old Testament (OT) Patriarchs, Judges, Kings, Land Inheritance, Prophets

Throughout the OT and NT God called men to be the leaders. The patriarchs of the Bible were all male: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jacob's twelve sons, Moses, David. God allocated the inheritance of the land of Canaan to the twelve sons/tribes of Israel. Land inheritance passed to the next generation based on the males of the family, except when there were no male sons. Christ's lineage is traced through His male ancestors. The prophets God used to write the Bible were all men.

The OT kings were all male. The judges were all male, except Deborah. We will study Deborah later.

New Testament (NT) Verses

Let's ask a question and review related NT verses.

Question: If a married woman is the pastor/teacher of a church, who is in charge in their home?
Does the wife rule over the husband?

What does the Bible say?

===== Colossians =====

Colossians 3:18 **Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.**

===== Ephesians =====

Ephesians 5:22 *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.*
Ephesians 5:25-33 **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,** 26 *that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This is a great mystery, but **I speak concerning Christ and the church.** 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, **and let the wife see that she respects her husband.***

Brother, do you think your wife would be more submissive if you loved and gave yourself for her as Christ loves the church? Just as Christ loves the church (believers) and sacrificially gave of Himself for her, so too, men should sacrificially love and give of themselves for their wives. If men really obeyed this commandment, godly women would find it easier to submit themselves to husbands and elders. Sister, if your husband loved you like Jesus Christ Himself, do you think you would have a problem submitting to him?

===== Titus =====

Titus 2:4-5 . . . *admonish the young **women** to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, **obedient** to their own **husbands**, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.*

===== 1 Peter =====

1 Peter 3:8

Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands,** that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. 3 Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel— 4 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. 5 **For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned

themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

===== 1 Timothy =====

1 Timothy 2:11-14 Let a woman learn in silence **with all submission**. 12 **And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.** 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

===== 1 Corinthians =====

1 Corinthians 14:34 Let your **women keep silent** in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be **submissive**

1 Corinthians 11:3

*But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, **the head of woman is man**, and the head of Christ is God.*

Answer: An overwhelming amount of scripture teaches that wives must submit to their husbands. It is illogical to think that a husband submits to his wife's teaching in church and she submits to him at home.

The Biblical qualifications for church leadership specify a man.

1 Timothy 3:1-5 If a man desires the position of a bishop (episkope, overseer/pastor/elder), he desires a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; 4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?)

1 Timothy 3:8 Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, 9 holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. 10 But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

Titus 1:5-6 (elders)

... appoint elders in every city as I commanded you, if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife ...

1. Note that this command applies to "every city". God's commands are uniform throughout the world, just as we expect.
2. The NT examples of church leaders are men. The Bible commands us to continue those practices (2 Timothy 3:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:15) This is not to say that women did not play important roles in allowing churches to meet in their homes or supporting the Lord and the early church. Women continue in these roles today.

The Bible does teach that God gives each us, including women, differing spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-31) for the profit of all. None of us should attempt to exercise authority over an area that God has not assigned to us, or to exercise a gift He has not given us.

Male spiritual leadership is based on timeless spiritual principles (order) that have nothing to do with culture, behavior at the Corinthian church, out-dated customs, women's education, etc.

Women should teach other women and children.

(Titus 2:3-5)

the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— 4 that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

A woman may have a teaching ministry to women and children and be prominent in providing hospitality (Acts 16:15).

Godly Women of the New Testament

In the New Testament (NT) we find that women who please God are like women in the OT who pleased God. They are in submission to God's order as described earlier. This includes God's commands that women not speak in formal meetings of the church and that women submit to men who serve as spiritual leaders.

Prophetesses of the NT

There are examples of godly women who prophesy in the NT. None of these women are described as prophesying in a church meeting. Elizabeth and Mary prophesied in Elizabeth's house, apparently when only the two of them were present. (Luke 1:39-56) Anna prophesied in the temple when Jesus' parents brought Him to be circumcised. (Luke 2:38) Her prophesying was of an impromptu nature ("*and coming in that instant she* ") to whoever happened to be around, rather than in some formal meeting. We are not told where Philip's four daughters prophesied. (Acts 21:9)

Priscilla

References to Priscilla occur in Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Romans 16:3-5; and 1 Corinthians 16:19. Aquila and his wife Priscilla helped Apollos in his understanding of Jesus' baptism.

Acts 18:24

Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

This is a husband and wife couple in an unplanned, impromptu meeting with a preacher who had an incomplete knowledge about the way of God. So they "*took him aside*" and explained the way of God more accurately. We are not told what Priscilla said and can't be sure she even spoke. It could be that her husband did the teaching and she was merely standing by. We don't know.

This event did not happen in a church gathering that recognized a woman as a teacher. It was in private. It was to help a suddenly revealed need. We should not be legalistic and say that there is never a situation when a godly woman should not help a man with spiritual information.

However, it is a mistake to use your imagination here and claim Priscilla did something here that violated the intent of clearly stated commands and exercised authority over a man.

We can be sure that the attitude of Priscilla's heart was one of submission to male authority. How can we know this? Read carefully through Acts chapter 18. It tells us that Paul lived and worked with Aquila and Priscilla for eighteen months in Corinth. After that, they were so bonded to Paul that they joined him in travelling to Ephesus. It was at Ephesus that they helped Apollos. Paul and Aquila and Priscilla knew one another intimately. If Priscilla had an unsubmissive spirit Paul would not have commended her. Paul's commended Aquila and Priscilla in Romans 16:3-5 and 1 Corinthians 16:19. Would Paul have lived with them for 18 months and commended them if the woman was not in submission to the husband? Not a chance. If Priscilla was accustomed to speaking in church would Paul have allowed her to travel with him to other churches and undermine his teaching? No way! This is the Paul who God used to write the commands that a woman should not teach a man and should be silent in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:11-14; 3:5, 12; Titus 1:5-6; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Colossians 3:18; Ephesians 5:22-24). Paul would not have commended Aquila and Priscilla if Priscilla was in the habit of speaking in the church that met in their house (Romans 16:3-5).

Euodia, Syntyche, Phoebe

What about Euodia and Syntyche who labored with Paul in the Gospel?

Philippians 4:2 I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.

"Labor in the gospel" does not prove that the women were preaching to men. Laboring with Paul in support of the gospel can mean being supportive in physical needs, such as providing food and financially supporting them as women did for Jesus in Luke 8:1-3. It could be women teaching women.

For example:

Luke 8:1-3 Now it came to pass, afterward, that He (Jesus) went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, 2 and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, 3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.

===== Philip's daughters =====

Acts 21:8 On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

There is no record of Phillip's daughters prophesying in church. 1 Cor 14:19-28 forbids that.

===== Elizabeth – John the Baptist's mother =====

Elizabeth prophesied in her own home with Mary, Jesus' mother.

===== Mary – Jesus' mother =====

Mary prophesied alone with Elizabeth in Elizabeth's home.

===== Anna =====

Luke 2:36-38 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and

this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Anna lived in the temple nearly all the time. She prophesied spontaneously when Jesus' parents brought the infant Jesus to the temple. There was no organized meeting going on. She did not exercise authority over anyone.

===== Was Phoebe a Deacon with Authority? =====

Rom 16:1-2. NKJV

*I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a **servant** of the church in Cenchrea, 2 that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed **she has been a helper of many and of myself (Paul) also.***

ESV I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a **servant** of the church at Cenchreae

NASB I recommend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a **servant** of the church which is at Cenchrea

Version	Word	Translation
NIV	deacon	Phoebe, a <u>deacon</u> of the church in Cenchreae.
KJV	servant	Phoebe our sister, which is a <u>servant</u> of the church which is at Cenchre
NKJV	servant	Phoebe our sister, who is a <u>servant</u> of the church in Cenchrea
NASB	servant	Phoebe, who is a <u>servant</u> of the church which is at Cenchrea
ESV	servant	Phoebe, a <u>servant</u> of the church at Cenchreae

The correct meaning of Rom 16:1 is easily seen by including the context of the next verse. 16:2 says, “ for indeed she has been a **helper of many and of myself (Paul) also.**” She is Paul’s helper. Is Paul meaning that Phoebe is teaching him or has authority over him? Certainly not!

This is why four of five of the most commonly used translations say “servant”. The NASB is considered to be one of the most literally accurate translations with more precise word analysis than the NIV. The NASB says “servant” in Romans 16:1. Likewise the ESV is more precise in literal accuracy than the NIV and it also uses the word “servant”.

The New Testament was written in Greek. In it, the Greek word diakonos is translated “servant” or “deacon” and is frequently used to mean a servant. In the verb form (diakoneó) it means “to serve”. It is often used of a simple servant without authority.

When there is a question about the meaning of a Greek word, it is a good idea to read every verse where the Greek word is used. You can do this by searching for all occurrences of a Greek word in an interlinear Bible such as the Blue Letter Bible app or go to blueletterbible.org/. An interlinear shows the English and the Greek words side by side. Each Greek word is assigned a Strong’s number. You can then search for all the occurrences in the Bible for English words based on that Strong’s number and read them all to get a better understanding of a word’s meaning. For the word in question, they are:

Strong's 1249 (noun) and 1247 (verb)

Strong's 1249 Noun: diakonos, Pronounce: dee-ak'-on-os, Servant, Deacon
Strong's 1247 Verb: diakoneó: To serve, to minister, to attend to

Examples:

===== Noun 1249 =====

Rom 16:1 I commend unto you Pheobe our sister, which is a **servant/deacon** (1249) of the church which is at Cenchre

John 2:5 (when Jesus changed the water into wine.) His mother said to the **servants** (1249), "Whatever He says to you, do *it*."

1 Tim 3:12 Let the **deacons** (1249) be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

Was Phoebe the husband of one wife? Paul wrote both Romans and 1 Timothy. Is he contradicting himself?

===== Verb 1247 =====

Matt 8:15 (Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law.) So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and **served** G1247 them.

Luke 10:40 But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to **serve** G1247 alone? Therefore tell her to help me."

There are "deacons" with and without authority in the NT. All of them serve. Context determines which have authority. The first church deacons were those seven men the apostles appointed over the food distribution in Acts 6:1-3. The Greeks complained that their widows were being neglected in the daily food distribution. The apostles said that it was not right for them to leave the word of God and "**serve**" (1247 diakoneó) tables. So they commanded that seven **men** be chosen to oversee the food distribution. Those men had authority. Not every servant does. (Examples: servants when Jesus turned water into wine, Peter's mother-in-law, etc.)

Since deacons with authority are to be the husband of one wife (1 Tim 3:12), that rules out Phoebe as having authority over men.

===== No male and female distinctions in Christ? =====

Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

>> Does this mean there are no role distinctions in the kingdom of God?

Does this mean that men will now get pregnant and bear children? Certainly not.

No, the context in Galatians is sonship. Who is a child of God? Both male and female.

Read in context:

Gal 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Sonship, not headship. For a teaching on headship see 1 Cor 11.

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OT Women – Prophetesses and Deborah the Judge

There were multiple women prophetesses in the OT. In times of righteousness these did not usurp authority from men. There is no clear scripture stating that OT woman prophesied or spoke in meetings of the entire assembly.

Miriam

Miriam spoke to a meeting of women in Exodus 15:20-21. The women “went out” from the full assembly before Miriam spoke. She spoke to a women’s meeting. Do we see her speaking to the full assembly of the Jews anywhere in scripture? No. Her example is consistent with women not speaking in an assembly of men

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Later, we read of Miriam’s pride in thinking she was the equal of Moses, because God used her to prophesy.

Numbers 12:1-15

Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. 2 So they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" And the LORD heard it. 3 (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.) 4 Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!" So the three came out. 5 Then the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward. 6 Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. 7 Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. 8 I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?" 9 So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed. 10 And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow. Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper. 11 So Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord! Please do not lay this sin on us, in which we have done foolishly and in which we have sinned. 12 Please do not let her be as one dead, whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb!" 13 So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "Please heal her, O God, I pray!" 14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "If her father had but spit in her face, would she not be shamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and after that she may be received again." 15 So Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days, and the people did not journey on till Miriam was brought in again.

There are several elements in this account that suggest a central theme in its teaching is to distinguish between the role of a woman and the role of a man. It suggests that Miriam, as a woman, was more “out of line” than her brother Aaron in rebuking Moses. Aaron and Miriam did the same sin. They both tried to tell God’s representative, Moses, he was

wrong in his marital relationship with an Ethiopian woman. Why was only Miriam struck leprous and not Aaron also? Was it because Miriam's sin was worse because she was a woman attempting to be in authority over a man? After the LORD humbled Miriam with leprosy, He then allowed a man Moses, to intercede for her. Finally, look at the language and example the LORD used in assigning Miriam seven days of shame outside the camp. He gives an example of the relationship between a male authority figure (father) and a female he has charge over (daughter). His purpose in sending her outside the camp is to "shame" her. This account is about a woman that needed to be humbled (shamed) because she thought she was the equal of God's (male) representative. Later in scripture, Miriam is remembered as a warning example of how the LORD chastises the disobedient, rather than for her prophecies, a shameful remembrance. (Deuteronomy 24:9)

Deborah and Failed Male Leadership

"Is there any man here?" You shall say, "No." (Judges 4:20)

This verse sums up what happened in Judges chapter 4. Men fail. Women get the glory. At that time Deborah was judging Israel. The story is full of symbolism, similar to a parable, that picture women ruling over failed men. It pictures God's authority order inverted. A woman is the judge. A man makes his obedience to God conditional on a woman going with him to battle. Deborah prophesies that the glory will go to a woman. A woman covers a man three times. A woman kills the enemy leader. And she does it by ATTACKING THE MAN IN THE HEAD. Compare this to 1 Cor 11:3-16.

Judges is described as a *"time when everyone did what was right in his own eyes."* It was a time of disobedience to God. The symbolism of Deborah's judgeship pictures the opposite of what God commands for male leadership.

Likely Deborah Did not Speak to a Congregation of Men

Judges 4:5

And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

Deborah's prophesying seems to be outside any city, because it is characterized as being between two cities and *"in the mountains"*. Likely she did not seek to speak at congregational gatherings, as is common for some modern day women. She was located away from the mainstream. Not in a city or where the tabernacle was. The people had to travel into the *"mountains"* to seek her judgments.

Five times in Judges 4:8-10 it speaks of Deborah going *"with"* Barak. It does not speak Barak going *"with"* her. Deborah allowed Barak to lead her to the battle area. She submitted to the male leader.

However, the story of Deborah is a case of men failing God. Her preeminence is due to men's failures and her own submissiveness. The whole account of Deborah is a picture of an upside-down authority structure. It is a case where the glory of a man is given to a woman. It is the opposite of God's ordained order described elsewhere in the OT and in the NT (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Timothy 2:11-14). Let us examine Deborah in detail.

Period of Judges was Sinful

Overall, the Bible describes the period of the judges as sinful (below). This includes the period leading up to Deborah. After the death of the elders who knew Joshua, the children of Israel had a lengthy sinful period when they were periodically ruled over by judges. It says:

Judges 2:11-12

Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; 12 and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers,

Judges 2:17-19

Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do so. 18 And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. 19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.

“... everyone did what was right in his own eyes”. (Judges 17:6; 21:25)

They did not follow God’s commands, but each person instead did what he or she thought was right. It was a day like today. Deborah began judging in a period after Ehud, when “the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. . . . Deborah . . . at that time” (Judges 4:1-4)

It is unwise to take an example from a period described as *evil* and declare it to be *normative*. If anything, we infer the opposite. Namely, that women lead men in times of spiritual weakness. It speaks of failed male leadership. This is not the norm for a godly assembly of God’s people. The lesson is that God may sometimes use a woman to do a man’s job, but it is a shameful thing for the men who fail God. It is incorrect to use the example of Deborah to justify women speaking and teaching men in the gathered church meetings.

Covering

Also note that Deborah was “under” the palm tree. Thus even she was symbolically “covered” while she prophesied. The concept of “covering” appears both in the NT and the OT. In the account of Deborah it appears symbolically four times, in Judges 4:5, 17, 18, 19. First, we see Deborah under a palm tree. Second we see the enemy male leader, Sisera, symbolically covered three times by Jael, a woman. First she covers him by hiding him in her tent, seeking protection from her. Role reversal. The woman protects the man. (Judges 4:17) In her tent “*she covered him with a blanket*” (verse 18). Then she “*covered him*” again (verse 19). Then she kills him, by attacking him where? IN THE HEAD! It is a parable about headship.

Women are Preeminent in Account of Deborah (Judges chapters 4 and 5)

The story of Deborah is summarized in Judges 4:9, where it says,:

there will be no glory for you (the man Barak) in the journey you are taking, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman (the woman will get the glory God intended for the man who should have symbolized Christ.)

Please consider that the whole account of Deborah screams the preeminence of women over men. This is no accidental theme, but quite intentional on the Holy Spirit's part. Please consider:

1. Deborah calls for Barak to come to her. (a woman initiates, summons the man, but by God's leading)
2. Deborah, gets the prophecy from God to instruct Barak to get an army formed (woman tells man what to do). However note that her prophesying was done humbly (see discussion above) and was not done in a city or gathered assembly of the Jewish nation, but evidently in a rural location.
3. Barak made his obedience to the word of the LORD conditional on a woman's presence; he insisted that Deborah come with him. (Failed male leadership, doubting. It seems Deborah was a proven prophetess with an established track record of accuracy.) Barak, as a man, should have been a protective covering to women and children, including Deborah. Instead he insisted she come into the path of danger by accompanying the army. By not providing that covering, the glory of the man was removed (Judges 4:8-9) and the glory of the woman revealed. Just the opposite of 1 Corinthians chapter 11:3-16. Note the use of the word "cover" in Judges 4:18 and 4:19.
4. In Judges 4:11 the familial connection is through the mother-in-law. (a woman). Generally male familial relationships are emphasized in OT.
5. Verse 14 Deborah, as a prophetess, commands Barak
6. Note the symbolic figurative language of v. 16: "*not a man was left*"
7. The man (Sisera) seeks protection from a woman. (role reversal)
8. Verse 18, Jael the woman, tells Sisera the male enemy commander what to do.
9. Verse 18, the man is covered by the woman's tent
10. Verse 18, the woman "covers" the man (with a blanket) - God's order inverted.
11. Verse 19, again, the woman "covers" the man
12. Verse 21, the woman kills the man, by attacking him in the head (head symbolizes leadership)
13. Verse 22, the woman guides the man (Barak)
14. Judges 5:1 Deborah and Barak sing jointly, probably to the assembly
15. Judges 5:7 Deborah has the preeminence over Barak.
16. Judges 5:7-8 Contains this sequence:
 - Deborah arose
 - they chose new gods (apostasy in Deborah's judgeship?)
 - war followed
17. 5:24 Praise goes to the woman Jael "*among women in tents.*"
18. 5:28 The mother (another woman!) of the slain enemy is mentioned.
19. 5:29 The women of the mother's court are mentioned

Summary of Deborah

In general, the account of Deborah's judgeship is a story of failed male leadership. God's normal chain of command order is inverted. The recorded facts repeatedly picture women dominating over men. It occurs during a time when the Jewish nation is not obeying the LORD. (Judges 2:11-19; 4:1-4; 17:6; 21:25) Her prophesying was done under a remote palm tree in the mountains, not in a city in the gathered assembly of the Jews. (Judges 4:5) This is analogous to a modern day prophetess prophesying outside (not inside) the main church meeting so as not to usurp the authority God has placed in

men. It is wrong to conclude from the story of Deborah that it is okay for women to speak or prophesy in an assembly of the church. This is an example from a time of spiritual weakness, not to be copied.

It is not recorded that Deborah spoke alone to the full assembly. She did sing a duet with Barak.

Note carefully that Deborah did not promote herself. Even in this victory duet, she described herself in a feminine way, as “*a mother in Israel*”, not as a “judge in Israel”. It was not her idea to leave her palm tree to go to the battle site, it was Barak’s. In this she submitted to Barak. Had Barak obeyed the word of the LORD through Deborah without insisting that Deborah come along, Deborah probably would have not have received the same level of recognition. Deborah’s submission to Barak was instrumental in her gaining of honor. Today’s women would do well to note this. Promotion is from God. In like manner the LORD honored Ruth, Esther, and Abigail for their godly and submissive hearts. I praise my own wife who wears a head covering for this. She models truth to me by her quiet and godly example. If not for her, I doubt I would have been able to write this.

Abigail

The account of Abigail represents one of the few times that a wife is right in usurping the authority of her husband. In Abigail’s case, her husband Nabal was a drunken fool who did not realize that his arrogant words would lead to the death of all the men in his household. Abigail correctly discerned this and wisely and humbly interceded with David. She gave David gifts and beseeching words of wisdom to allay his wrath.

1 Samuel 25:23

Now when Abigail saw David, she hastened to dismount from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground.

In this case, the principle of saving the lives of Nabal’s household overrode the principle of being submissive to one’s husband. Abigail was a prophetess, as she accurately predicted David’s eventual ascendancy to the throne, despite his current low position of being pursued by King Saul (1 Samuel 25:28-30). Abigail had great faith in the LORD. (1 Samuel 25:26-31) Abigail presented herself very humbly and submissively to David, appealing to David to rely on the LORD to correct wrongs, rather than taking revenge himself. The result was that God freed her from being subject to a scoundrel of a husband and gave her the more godly David as a husband instead. Abigail’s prophecy came at an impromptu meeting in a road; she had no choice over when to speak to David. It was not in an arranged assembly of the Jews. It is consistent with the teaching of 1 Corinthians that women should not prophesy in church.

We can learn a lesson from Abigail on how to appeal to authority. We should do it submissively and humbly. Her basis was an appeal to do what was right in the sight of the LORD. zzz

Huldah 2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chronicles 34:22

It seems evident that Huldah prophesied in private, likely in her own living quarters. This is consistent with the teaching of 1 Corinthians that women should not speak in the church.

Esther, The Book of Esther

Esther maintained an attitude of submissiveness both to her Gentile husband and her godly uncle. Even after she became queen, she continued to obey her uncle (Esther 2:20). The Bible speaks very well of Esther. Though not a prophetess, she is an amazing example of faith, courage, and submissiveness. If you place yourself in Esther's shoes, you will realize that she faced extremely difficult situations. These included a forced marriage to an unbelieving, polygamous king and risking death in entering the king's presence to intercede for her people. Through it all, she persevered in prayer, fasting, and obeying her uncle. She dealt very humbly and wisely with her capricious husband the king. The result is that God used her to save the Jews from destruction. Esther is the type of woman (and person) who is great in God's eyes.

Ruth

Not a prophetess, but another outstanding woman of the Bible. She was a Gentile who trusted in the true God, the LORD. She had a submissive and servant's heart toward both her mother-in-law and her eventual husband, Boaz. She received the outstanding honor of becoming an ancestor of Jesus Christ.

Noadiah

A prophetess who opposed the LORD's working through Nehemiah to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. (Nehemiah 6:14)

Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10)

I call Hannah a prophetess because her prayer praising God is recorded in scripture. It seems that Hannah prayed this "prophetic prayer" spontaneously at the time her son was weaned (1 Samuel 1:24) and not in any formal gathering of the Jews. This is consistent with the teaching of 1 Corinthians that women should not speak at a gathering of the assembly.

Head Coverings (Hats, Cloths, etc)

The Bible teaches that women should cover their heads when prophesying or praying.

1 Corinthians 11:5-6

But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.

Main points:

1. The covering only applies while praying or prophesying. In these activities a woman bypasses her male authority and communicates directly with God. The covering signifies her submission to God's order while she is bypassing her male authority and teaches the watching angels.
2. It does not make sense to be the hair, since only applies while prophesying or praying. You can't grow your hair long to pray, then cut it short when not praying, then grow it back to pray.
3. A simple reading of 1 Cor 11 in English supports a cloth covering, except for verse 15.

4. Verse 15 deals with nature and uses a different Greek word. Hair only supplies a horizontal covering, equal to the woman, her glory. The prior 6 mentions of covering use a Greek word that starts with "kata", which can convey a vertical meaning.
5. We should cover man's glory (the woman) and woman's glory (her hair), not God's glory (the man)

Symbol

Represents

Man	God's glory	(not to be covered)
Woman	Man's glory	(to be covered by a cloth)
Woman's hair	Woman's glory	(to be covered by a cloth)

To properly understand head coverings, one should first understand the biblical principle that women should submit to male leadership (described earlier). The teaching that a woman should cover her head while prophesying or praying is merely an extension of the principle of the woman submitting to the man in spiritual matters. A woman's spiritual head (authority) will most often be her husband or her father.

1 Corinthians 11:3

But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

Ephesians 5:23

For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body

Purpose of the Covering

By covering her head with a cloth or hat a woman:

1. Obeys God and shows she submits to God and the male authorities ordained by God.
2. Cooperates with men to illustrate the husband-wife relationship that exists between Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:23-32)
3. Hides her own glory (her hair 1 Cor 11:15) and man's glory (herself), so that the glory of God (symbolized by the man 1 Cor 11:7) might have preeminence.

The teaching about a woman covering her head is in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. There is no substitute for reading and obeying the scripture:

1 Corinthians 11:3-16

3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. 4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. 5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. 6 For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. 7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. 8 For man is not from woman, but woman from man. 9 Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. 10 For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. 12 For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God. 13 Judge among

yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? 15 But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering (different Greek word used for covering than preceding verses). 16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.

Head Covering as a Symbol of Authority

Symbols are used to communicate in all societies and in the Bible. For example, a king may wear a crown. The crown communicates that the king is the authority. God has ordained that women cover their heads while prophesying or praying and that men do not. These symbols communicate part of God's truth. In reading the above verses, it is important to understand what the biblical symbols are and what they represent. Please note that the word "head" refers in some places to the man or woman's physical head (the one with eyes, mouth, and ears) and in other places to a man or woman's spiritual head (ruler). A woman's spiritual head is usually her husband or father. A man's spiritual head is Christ.

But every woman who prays or prophesies with her (physical) head uncovered dishonors her (spiritual) head (her husband), for that is one and the same as if her (physical) head were shaved.

Every man praying or prophesying, having his (physical) head covered, dishonors his (spiritual) head (Christ).

Man as a Symbol of God's Glory

A man is symbolic of God's glory, having been created by God in His image. (1 Corinthians 11:7)

For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God.

Woman as a Symbol of Man's Glory

A woman is symbolic of a man's glory, having been created from the man (Adam's rib) and for the man. (1 Corinthians 11:7-9)

but woman is the glory of man

Long Hair as a Symbol of a Woman's Glory

A woman's long hair is symbolic of the glory of the woman and is part of her natural beauty. 1 Corinthians 11:14-15

Does not even nature itself teach . . . if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her

In general, the Bible teaches that long hair is desirable for a woman. (Song of Solomon 4:1; Luke 7:38; John 11:2; 1 Corinthians 11:15) In most of these four passages, there is a beneficial relationship between the woman's long hair and her role respective to men. This is consistent with the concept that woman was created for the benefit of man (Genesis 2:18; 1 Corinthians 11:9) Also, the Bible teaches that a lack of hair is a shame to a woman (Isaiah 3:24; 1 Corinthians 11:5-6)

This gives us the following understanding of spiritual symbols in a worship context:

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Represents</u>
Man	God's glory
Woman	Man's glory
Woman's hair	Woman's glory

With this understanding of symbols, we can now understand the teaching of why women are supposed to cover their heads while praying or prophesying. In spiritual activities, such as praying and prophesying, we want to give the Lord Jesus Christ the preeminent place. (Colossians 1:18) Symbolically speaking, we want those things that symbolize God's glory (man is the symbol of God's glory) to appear. Therefore a man should not cover his head while praying or prophesying. Likewise, we want those things that symbolize man's glory (woman) and woman's glory (her hair) to appear in symbolic submission. Therefore, a woman covers her head with a hat or cloth to symbolically cover man's glory (herself) and her own glory (her hair).

Objections to Head Coverings

Objection – If this is important to God, why is there only one place in scripture that teaches on head coverings?

First of all, note that the teaching that a woman should cover her head while praying or prophesying and that a man should not cover his head is very clear in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. If you were a parent and clearly told your child to brush his teeth, would you be satisfied if your child did not brush his teeth because he only heard you once? Nor would God. If you sincerely desire to obey God it is enough to understand His command once.

Second, the teaching on head covering is merely one aspect of a larger framework of teaching on submission to authority and the preeminence of Christ. The head covering is a single doctrine that fits in with larger doctrines, a piece of an integrated whole. The larger concepts (the preeminence of Christ and submission) represented by the head covering are plainly taught elsewhere in the Bible. Suppose I am going away on a long trip and give my teenage son some instructions: "Please take care of the house." Later I say, "Mow the grass while I am gone." In reality, mowing the grass is just one aspect of taking care of the house. In a sense "take care of the house" includes mowing the grass. Mowing the grass is not an entirely "new" command. Neither is a woman covering her head an entirely new command. It derives from the larger commands of submission and giving God preeminence.

Third, there are other places in the Bible that teach on head coverings, hair, and submission/authority. In addition to the scriptures previously discussed, we note the Bible associates men covering their heads with shame (2 Samuel 15:30; Esther 6:12; 7:8; Psalm 69:6; Jeremiah 14:3-4) Therefore, since man typifies God in assembly worship, a man covering his head may symbolize God being shamed.

Please note that in OT times (Exodus 28:36-40, Leviticus 8:9, Ezekiel 21:26-27; 24:17-18; and Zechariah 3:4-5) the high priest is instructed to wear a turban or hat. The high priest also is symbolic type of Christ, the Great High Priest Who bore our sins before God and will be crowned forever as King. The gold plate on the high priest's forehead was associated with bearing the sins of the people ("*that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the people*") and being a crown. The priest's sons' "hats" are "for glory and beauty". It is interesting that the OT high priests wore hats and NT men are commanded not to while praying, when both are types of Christ. I believe the difference is in the roles they are playing. The high priest's role symbolizes Christ the Man representing man before God. In contrast, the men of the church symbolize the relationship between Christ (men in authority) and the church (women in submission). In the former role, Christ is in submission to God, therefore the hat. In the latter role, Christ is head over the church, therefore, no hat. However, I am open to instruction on this.

Regarding hair, the OT priests were not to “*let their hair grow long; but they shall keep their hair well trimmed.*” (Ezekiel 44:20) This parallels the NT instructions that the men generally should keep their hair short (1 Corinthians 11:14), Nazirites being an exception. Even Nazirite vows might last for only one to three months and the man would cut his hair at the end of that time. (Numbers 6:18; Acts 18:18; 21:23)

Church Tradition

Besides biblical arguments based on the OT, Paul appeals to two other sources to convince the churches that woman should have their heads covered while praying. First he appeals to the common knowledge of church tradition.

1 Corinthians 11:13

Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?

“*Judge among yourselves*” In other words, Paul is saying something like: “Hey this is common knowledge. All the churches of God are aware of this (1 Corinthians 11:16). This is nothing new. Keep obeying the traditions you were taught (1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15). Obey what you should already know to be true! It is common knowledge that a woman should cover her head while praying.”

Nature

Besides biblical arguments and church tradition (common knowledge), Paul appeals to a third and distinctly different source, nature. In Romans 1:19-20 the Bible says that there is a revelation of our marvelous God in nature. Look at the majesty of the stars, the design of a beach shell or a flower; they reveal God’s infinite capacity to create. Similarly, here Paul argues that nature also gives a revelation of the purpose of a woman’s hair. Long hair is a glory to a woman and serves as a beautifying natural covering.

Objection – Isn’t a Woman’s Hair Her Covering?

1 Corinthians 11:14-15

Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? 15 But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering (peribolaion).

If you read verse 15 in English by itself, out of context, it is easy to misinterpret. One may think this verse means that if a woman has long hair, she does not have to cover her head with a hat or cloth. This is incorrect.

If we were to read the entire related passage in the original Greek, we would discover that a different Greek word for “covering” is used here (verse 15) than in the preceding verses that say a woman should cover her head (1 Corinthians 11:4, 5, 6, 7, 13). In those five verses a different Greek root word for “cover” or “covering” (kata or its forms, such as katakaluptetai, Strong’s Englishman’s Concordance number 2619) is used a total of six times. It is the same Greek root word in all six instances. But here, in verse 15, suddenly a different word for “covering” (peribolaion, Strong’s 4018) is used. Why would this be? Why use one word six times and then switch to a different word at the end of the passage? It is likely because there is a switch from vertical meaning to horizontal meaning (see table below). It may also be because this ending verse deals with the realm of nature (v. 14 *does not even nature itself teach . . .*), and the prior verses deal with spiritually based arguments. It is a switch from the spiritual realm of the preceding verses to the natural realm. This is similar to how Paul reasons from a revelation

from nature in Romans 1:20-22. The phrase “*does not even*” (v. 14) is intended to communicate that a different line of reasoning is being used. In the natural realm, a woman’s hair is part of her beauty (Ezekiel 16:7-8). It does not serve as a covering in the same sense as wool or linen (Hosea 2:9-10) or a woman’s cloth head covering would. It requires a deliberate action to put it on or off while “praying or prophesying”. Hair does not.

Vertical vs. Horizontal Meaning

katakaluptó (and related forms)	Peribolaïou
Used 6 times (1 Corinthians 11:4, 5, 6, 7, 13)	Used once of woman’s hair 1 Cor 11:15
Strong’s 2619	Strong’s 4018
katakalýptō (from 2596 /katá, "down, according to" and 2572 /kalýptō, "to cover") – properly, cover down to make appropriate (complete), i.e. to wear a veil.	that which is thrown around, a covering
Kata – can convey a vertical meaning From Strongs 2596 katá, "down, according to"	Peri – can convey a horizontal meaning
Think vertically. When a woman is prophesying or praying, she is bypassing her normal spiritual head (husband or father) and communicating directly with God. That is why it only applies when prophesying or praying; the cloth covering shows she is still in submission to God’s order while bypassing her male chain of authority.	Think horizontally. peri-meter (the outside edge) peri-scope peri-pheral vision (side vision) Thus, the hair is the glory of the woman, her equal/horizontal relationship, not “covering” in a vertical sense.

Christ’s Glory, not Woman’s Glory (Hair), in Worship

The woman’s hair itself can not be the covering intended because it negates a main point of the passage – the principle that only the glory of God be visible in worship. As we established before, the woman’s hair represents her own glory (verse 15). The woman’s hair itself must be covered or the glory of the woman will appear and compete with the glory of God, as symbolized by the man’s uncovered head. (1 Corinthians 11:7)

One of the functions of the “head covering” is that it serves as a symbol of authority (or power) as a lesson to observing angels. (1 Corinthians 11:10) It seems that a cloth covering would more distinctly convey that meaning to the angels. It does give one pause for thought to think that angels are watching us and learn a lesson from us. Perhaps it will prompt us to live more godly lives.

If you reread the passage and try to insert the phrases like “short hair” for “uncovered” and “long hair” for “covered”, the meaning of the passage is rather strange. This should not be the case if the meaning of “covered” is interchangeable with “long hair”. If we try this exercise with verses 5 and 6 we get:

- 5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with “short hair” dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. 6 For if a woman has “short hair” let her also be shorn (really short hair). But if it is shameful for a woman to have “really short hair”, let her have “long hair”.

It seems like a waste of ink to say “short hair” is like “really short hair” (shorn). What would be the point of this? In reality this passage is comparing the lack of a symbolic man-made head covering the angels can see with a shaved head. Understood in this way, the passage makes sense.

Finally, hair does not satisfy the natural and normal understanding of a simple reading of the passage. The passage states that a woman should be covered “*WHILE prophesying or praying*”. This implies that at other times she might not be covered. This concept agrees perfectly with the understanding that a woman could put a cloth or hood over her head while praying and then remove it when done praying. If the covering is understood to be long hair, then the passage would seem to teach that a woman could have short hair and then grow it back when she wanted to prophesy or pray. Foolishness. In summary, it does not seem reasonable, at least to this poor soul, that the woman’s long hair is the covering intended in this passage.

Why is it “shameful” for a woman to speak in church?

It shames her leadership. It is like an army private speaking instead of the general, when the general is present. A woman teaching in church is an act of disrespect towards both God and men. Such a woman is in rebellion to God’s “chain of command”. It contradicts the consistent teaching of the Bible (above) that says that a woman should be in submission to men in the church.

Angels are Watching

God is giving a revelation through the church that helps the angels understand His kingdom. (1 Corinthians 4:9; 11:10; Ephesians 3:10) If we are an inaccurate representation of the church’s submission to Christ, it will have a detrimental effect on the angels. It is not a good thing for angels to see a woman teaching or ruling over a man in church.

1 Corinthians 11:10

For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

Ephesians 3:10

to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,

Are there Exceptions When a Woman May Speak in Church?

I personally believe that there are few occasions when it is proper for a woman to speak in church. Women may speak after church, before church, in small groups, at home, but not in a general gathering of the congregation. This is for three strong reasons:

1. The commands of the Bible are so clear on it.

If we read through the verses I have listed above, especially 1 Timothy 2:11-14 and 1 Corinthians 14:34, there is no mistaking what is intended. If someone spoke these words to you in normal conversation, you would understand that the women are to be “silent”. This is

not a meaning taken out of context, but is consistent with the overall context of what is being taught. In 1 Corinthians 14:34 the women are commanded to be silent using the same Greek word (sigatoosan) that is used to command the prophets to stop speaking four verses earlier in verse 30.

2. Nowhere in the Bible does a godly woman speak to exercise authority over an organized assembly of God's people (men and women together). The closest thing is Deborah in Judges chapter 4. She judges Israel at a time, "*When everyone did what was right in their own eyes.*" The Bible does not record that she spoke to an assembly of people.

She did sing a duet with Barak. Singing a duet with another person is not the same thing as speaking or teaching alone. Please see the discussion of women prophetesses, including Deborah, in the OT and NT that follows. There are plenty of women in the Bible, but we have not one positive example of a woman speaking to an organized assembly of the congregation. If we can't find it in the Bible, the source of the idea must be from . . . ?

3. The symbolic meanings of the roles of men and women forbid women teaching men in church. Men do not teach Christ. As explained elsewhere, just as the Passover lamb represented Christ, women represent the church, and men represent Christ. A woman teaching men publicly symbolizes mankind teaching Christ. This is error. It is foolishness for men and women to act out roles that symbolize the shame of Christ. This may be why the Bible says that "*it is shameful for women to speak in church*" in 1 Corinthians 14:35.

What if a Woman is Asked to Speak?

In general, seek for a reasonable alternative that honors God's order. In most cases, an elder who says it is okay for a woman to speak, because he is the authority and is giving her permission, may be himself violating God's command. However, we should not be dogmatic and say it is never correct for a woman to speak in church. There may be unusual cases where emergencies and the like require it. Please see the discussion of Abigail, the wife of Nabal, for an unusual case where a woman correctly usurps her husband's authority to save his life.

Woman Ministers?

Except in unusual circumstances, any system which sets up woman as pastors or leaders over men, and allows such to teach men or address the assembled church is ignorant of the commands of God. 1 Cor 14:38

Objections

1. **Question:** My husband does not act like Jesus Christ. In fact, he does not even believe in Jesus Christ. Do I still have to submit to my husband?

Answer: Yes. As long as your husband does not ask you to violate God's commandments, the woman should still obey her husband. The woman should maintain a submissive attitude, and silently by her good behavior witness of the love and truth of Christ to her husband. God may use her submissiveness to move her husband's heart toward Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 3:1-2) If the husband is a threat to the safety of his wife or children, then it may be that based on other scriptural principles a wife may have to leave her husband; all the time seeking to restore her husband to Christ and herself. In such a case a woman should seek wise spiritual counsel to supplement her own prayer and Bible study.

2. **Question:** Galatians 3:28 teaches that in Christ there is "neither male nor female". Doesn't this mean that men and women have the same roles?

Answer: No. Men do not bear children. If you read this verse in context, it is plain that the subject under discussion is “sonship”, i.e., who is a “child” of God. Who is in the family of Christ? In Christ both men and women are equally “sons of God” (Galatians 3:26). Contrast this with Ephesians 5:22-32 “Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord”. Here the main context is the “headship” of Christ. This passage deals with the chain of authority, not “sonship”. Both men and women are children of God; in this sense there is “*neither male or female*”. But within an earthly family of God (husband, wife, and any children), the Bible is clear that the husband is to be the spiritual leader. (Ephesians 5:22-25; 6:1-4) Remember, both Galatians and Ephesians were written by the apostle Paul. He is not contradicting himself in Galatians. Both Paul and Peter and also the early church affirmed Paul’s teaching as coming from Jesus.

3. **Question:** Acts 2:17 teaches that “*your sons and daughters shall prophesy*”. Doesn’t this mean that women should be prophesying in church?

Answer: No. This verse plainly teaches that women will prophesy, but it does not say “in church”. As we review in this document, all the known locations of OT and NT prophetesses show that they did their prophesying outside of a full assembly/church. I could not find one example where a woman teaches the full assembly by herself. It is not clear that even Deborah ever did this. She did sing a *duet* with Barak. Please see the discussion below titled: “Old Testament Teaches the Silence of Women in Church Meetings”.

In general a prophetess should speak at times outside than the full meeting. 1 Corinthians 14:27-34 indicates that it is within a prophetess’ ability to do so. Elders should provide a time and place for prophetesses to exercise their gifts without violating God’s order. Elders themselves might seek God’s direction by asking prophetesses to pray and ask if God will give a word of direction in matters before them. However, they should seek to hear female prophets outside of the main meeting.

4. **Question:** 1 Corinthians 11:5 teaches that a woman can prophesy and pray. *But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.* Wouldn’t it be best for her prophesying to be in meetings of the entire church where as many as possible can be edified?

Answer: No. While prophesying is to edify others, it is not edifying if it is done in a manner that breaks God’s commands. It is breaking God’s commands if a woman speaks in church. The men can share the content of a woman’s prophecies in church. The church can be edified without the woman actually speaking herself. For a woman to speak in the general meeting would violate the principles we discuss elsewhere. 1 Corinthians 11:5 and the context of the surrounding verses (1 Corinthians 11:2-16) are emphasizing that woman are to be submissive. There is nothing in them to support the idea that women can prophesy or speak in the church meeting. Contrast this to 1 Corinthians chapter 14:34, which IS plainly teaching about a full assembly of the church, but commands silence for woman. Scripture does not contradict itself.

5. **Question:** In Acts 10:9-16 God gave Peter a vision that told Peter that he was to break the Jewish OT Law and eat with the Gentiles. Isn’t it possible that the Holy Spirit is now telling us break out of the mold of Paul’s instructions that women should not teach and prophesy in church meetings?

Answer: No. The NT commands are the current “rule of practice” for the present “Church

Age". It is the Holy Spirit, writing through both Paul and Peter, that teaches that women should be submissive to men. The Holy Spirit is not divided against Himself. (Mark 3:24) Gender distinctions in authority structure may disappear in heaven (Mark 12:25), but continue through the present "Church Age" as we wait for the Lord Jesus to return for His bride. Peter would not be breaking God's dietary law for the Jews; as God actually changed the Jewish dietary law so Jews and Gentiles could eat together. They are one in Christ.

6. **Claim:** "the law" in 1 Corinthians 14:34 applies to Corinth then, not today.
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.

Answer: Some people claim that "the law" in the verse above is a reference to the local, cultural law of the day. Therefore they reason that they do not have to obey it today. They say it cannot refer to the Old Testament, because the Old Testament Law does not say that women should be silent in assembled meetings. This is incorrect for a number of reasons:

1. There is no doubt that "*the law*" refers to the Old Testament, not some cultural law of that day. The Greek phrase for "the law" is used repeatedly in the New Testament with a consistent meaning: the Old Testament law. The Greek definite article "the" means a single, specific law is in mind. Just 13 verses earlier in the same chapter, in 1 Corinthians 14:21 it uses the same phrase to say: "*in the law it is written*" and it follows this with a quotation from the Old Testament. There is no reasonable possibility that in verse 21 "*the law*" refers to the Old Testament law and in verse 34 of the same chapter "*the law*" refers to Gentile law. The Holy Spirit is an able writer and is not the author of confusion.
2. It conflicts with the consistent teaching of the rest of the Bible that women are to be submissive to men and not teach them in church (1 Timothy 2:11-14, 1 Peter 3:1-6) We have three NT scriptures that all agree and teach that the OT taught the submission of women (1 Timothy 2:11-14, 1 Peter 3:1-6, 1 Corinthians 14:34). Please see discussion above.
3. Some may object: "Then show me where in the Old Testament that it teaches that woman should be submissive and silent" in assembled meetings. We do so below.

Old Testament (OT) Teaches the Silence of Women in Church Meetings

There is no question that the OT teaches the spiritual submission of women. Not once in the entire Bible does a godly woman speak alone in a leadership capacity to the entire assembly. This applies to Jewish assemblies in the OT and the local church in the NT. Thus, by both examples and commands the Bible teaches that women should not speak in church. Examples of commands are: husbands shall rule over wives (Genesis 3:16) and the priests shall be males (Exodus 29:29-30; Leviticus 6:22; 16:32; 21:1). In addition, we see by example that throughout the OT the Bible presents it as proper for men to be in the authority positions. Please see the discussion of OT prophetesses.

All the kings of the Jews were men. The writers of the OT were men. Both Peter and Paul in their writings, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit affirm that the OT teaches that men are to be in authority over women (1 Corinthians 13:34; 1 Timothy 2:12-14; 1 Peter 3:1-6) There is no doubt that the OT and NT teach that women should be in submission to men.

In 1 Peter 3:1-6 the Bible teaches that godly women with ungodly husbands are to influence their husbands "*without a word*" (3:1) with the beauty of "*a gently and quiet spirit*". That is a very strong statement. God feels so strongly about the principle of

authority of men over women that even an ungodly husband is an insufficient excuse for a wife to exercise authority over her husband. This is exactly parallel to what God commands to believing slaves who have ungodly masters (1 Peter 2:18-24).

Moreover, Peter gives an example from the OT of submission, Sarah and Abraham. So both Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:34 and Peter in 1 Peter 3:1-6 say that the OT teaches that women are to be “quiet” in submission to men.

However, the die-hard women’s liberationists (who unwittingly seek to be liberated from the protective authority of Christ) may say “Okay, so the OT does say women are to be submissive, but where does it command them to be silent in the assembly meetings? Submissiveness and silence go hand in hand. If I am not in spiritual authority, how can I speak (teach, prophesy, speak in tongues) in church as a spiritual authority? We discuss the OT examples of women below. By example, the OT (i.e. “the law” of 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 14:21) teaches women should be silent in the assembly.

How True is the Bible?

Some persons are so eager to promote “women’s liberation” that they prefer to believe the Bible or the letters of Paul are in error when they teach women are to be submissive.

A careful study of the Bible makes it very plain that Jesus, Paul, Peter, and other apostles taught that the scriptures are the inspired word of God, completely true. Jesus either said this directly (Matthew 5:17-18; Mark 7:9-10; Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39, 45-46) or implied it in the way He quoted Old Testament scripture. He quotes the OT 50 times in the book of Matthew, 19 times in Mark, 37 times in Luke, and 17 times in John. There is absolutely no doubt about what Jesus taught. The scriptures come from God and are to be obeyed.

It is beyond the scope of this document, but a serious student can confirm that the Bible came from God by studying the hundreds of times it accurately has predicted the future. For example, the Bible predicted that Jerusalem would be a problem for all the nations of the earth. (Zechariah 12:3) It was in ruins at the time God gave Zechariah this prophecy. It is not a seaport or even near a river for trade. Jerusalem is not mentioned once by name in the Quran. Why should the nations care about Jerusalem? But now they do. God said they would.

Another example of prophecy – the Bible correctly predicted that in the last days God would bring the Jews back into Palestine from where they had been scattered all over the face of the earth. After 2000 years this has come true. Both of these were wildly improbable predictions when they were given thousands of years ago. What other nation has ever lost its land and regained it after thousands of years of being scattered and persecuted? The Bible correctly predicts world shaping events. What other religious book contains detailed and specific prophecies? None.

The Bible is the only sacred writing in the world that gives many detailed, verifiable predictions of the future. You won’t find it in the Quran (although Muslims claim some, they are of dubious merit), the Book of Mormon, the Hindu Vedic writings, or wherever else you look in religious writings. The Bible is unique.

There are also many predictions of the future in Paul's and Peter's letters; their letters are inspired by God.

How True are Paul's Letters (epistles)?

Paul's letters (Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, etc.) in the New Testament have the same authority as the rest of the Bible. Paul explicitly says he was not taught by "flesh and blood" (Galatians 1:16) Paul was taught by the Lord and divinely inspired. (1 Corinthians 11:23; 15:3; 2:4-5; 13; 9:1; 14:37; 2 Corinthians 11:5; 12:1-7; Galatians 1:1; 11-12; 2:9; etc.) The early church accepted the letters of Paul as inspired scripture. Peter taught that all Paul's epistles (letters) are scripture (2 Peter 3:15-16). Paul said the command for women to be silent in the churches came from the Lord Himself (1 Corinthians 14:34-37). Paul repeatedly said he was sent by Jesus Christ as His messenger (apostle, sent one), opening nearly all of his letters in this fashion. Paul thereby claimed that his authority originated with Christ, not himself. God confirmed Paul's message by working miracles through Paul. Luke was an eyewitness recorder of God's miracles and message through Paul. In the book of Acts Luke writes that "we went here, we went there" (Acts chapter 20, etc.). The early church confirmed Paul's message as from God. Paul and Peter's message is Christ's message. Rejecting the teaching in Paul's letters is the same thing as rejecting Jesus Christ Himself (John 10:26-27; 1 Corinthians 14:37). Women who are in church positions where they teach or have authority over men should consider that it is better to lose a man-made position than to lose favor with the Lord of Eternity.

Women in Business

There is nothing wrong with a woman prayerfully running a business, provided her husband (if any) approves and it does not interfere with priority responsibilities God has given her (helping her husband, children, running a home, etc.) The Bible contains favorable mention of women who ran businesses. (Proverbs 31:10-31; Lydia in Acts 16:14)

Women who are in church positions where they teach or have authority over men should consider that it is better to lose a man-made position than to lose favor with the Lord of Eternity.

"If anyone loves Me he will keep My word . . . He who does not love me does not keep My words, and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's Who sent Me." Jesus, John 14:23-24

"Not everyone who says to Me 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." Jesus, Matthew 7:21