

New Testament Church Principles - Part 3

by Mike Attwood

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the assembly in the church, the role of women in the church, and the need for men to be in subjection to Christ.

Duration: 52:25

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 14:34

Topics: "Church Leadership", "Biblical Roles"

Description

This sermon delves into the clear biblical restrictions regarding the roles of men and women in the church, emphasizing the need for men to lead audibly in prayer and teaching, while women are called to be silent and focus on domestic responsibilities. The importance of following these restrictions is highlighted, along with the impact women can have through investing in children and family life.

Transcript

Okay, I'd like you to turn with me again to 1 Corinthians 11, and I'm going to take the trouble of reading the whole section again from verse 2 through verse 16, and then we're going to pick up some loose ends from this morning. So verse 2 says this, Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.

Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonors her head. For that is, even all one, as if she were shaven.

For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of the man.

For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power or symbol of authority on her head because of the angels.

Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman, but all things of God. Judging

yourselves, is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? And if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her, for her hair is given her for a covering.

But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." And again, we believe God will bless the reading of His Word to us this afternoon. Scott DeGraff and myself go to Africa occasionally. We've made a few trips.

I think we've been there three times together. And one of the things we do there is elders' conferences, and we get elders together, first of all in Nairobi from the city assemblies, then we get the elders together out in the bush in Nyanza province, and we do basically seminars on New Testament church principles. And it takes us a week, and we have 50 lessons on the New Testament church.

Now I'm saying all that to say this. This weekend, this conference is titled, almost presumptuously, New Testament Church Principles, but you've given me five sessions instead of 50 sessions. So don't expect that every question on New Testament principles is going to be answered this weekend, because it isn't.

We're just kind of dealing with some of the biggies and some of the more controversial ones. So I just want you to know that, that there's a lot more to it than just what we're going to be dealing with. But we are dealing with perhaps the most controversial one, and that is the role of women in the church, although I think we've learned this morning that it's not all just about the role of women.

We've kind of emphasized the point that the man is to be in subjection to Christ. But we want to look at some further issues that come out of this chapter, and we want to just think about the head covering, and two issues particularly that I'd like to think about in this session, as well as getting to the issue of the silence of women in the church. But first of all, the question is, when should the head covering be worn? And you know, there was a time when this question was kind of a mute question.

It wasn't really an issue. And for many today, like the gospel halls, I don't know how many know anything about the gospel halls, it's not even a question for the gospel halls. It's a settled issue of when the head covering is to be worn.

You see, the New Testament church only envisioned meetings of the church. We've made it so much more complicated, right? We've got camps, we've got Sunday school, we've got rise-up conferences, and we could go on and on, right? We've got all kinds of things that are not what you would call typical meetings of the church. And so the question is, when should the head covering be worn? Well, we know for sure that from Scripture, that only envisages the assembly.

It doesn't envisage camps. Now, I'm not saying God hasn't used camps, and they haven't been a blessing. There are many here that have benefited, I mean, this is Turkey Hill country, I'm glad I'm not wearing my Greenwood Hills t-shirt today, I might get mobbed or whatever.

But you know what I mean, this is Turkey Hill land, right? And you've all benefited from that. But it's brought with it a certain amount of confusion, right? Because you see, well, should the head covering be worn at camp? You get the issue now? You see, it's difficult now, because we've moved out of the realm of Scripture in these things that are certainly beneficial, and God has used them, but that's where the questions come in, right? What about Sunday school? You won't find Sunday school in the Bible. Don't die in defending Sunday school, because it's just not a scriptural idea at all.

The idea was that children should be taught the word of God by their parents, wasn't it? Now, I'm not saying God hasn't used Sunday school, but Sunday school is a recent, Johnny come lately idea, you know, only, I mean, the church survived for 18 centuries without Sunday school. It's a really relatively recent idea, but it brings with it complications. And so I'm saying that when it comes to the Scriptures, it's clear that the only idea that the Scripture has is the assembly.

And by the way, let's just say this, let's emphasize what God emphasized. All these other things can be used of God, you know, I meet people, and they're kind of gung-ho about kind of these organizations, para-church organizations, but they're not committed to an assembly. And I'll tell you, they might be zealous, and God may be using them in lots of different ways, but they're missing the heart of God.

God's heart is for the assembly. And the assembly has to be number one priority in your life. Young people, if camp's more important to you than the assembly, you're not in a biblical state of mind.

I'm not saying there's anything wrong with camp. It's a good thing. God has used it greatly.

But what I'm saying is the assembly is the priority in the heart and mind of God. It's number one. God's plan is the assembly, right? That's it.

God--Christ loved the church and gave--and so we need to keep that straight. And when it comes to the head covering, it's clear that when we come together in church capacity, men should appear with uncovered heads, women should appear with a covering on their head. That's simple.

Our difficulty is, what about all these other periphery-type situations? And that's where you get into difficulties, isn't it? That's where the problem comes. And how do you answer that? How do you even begin? When we've moved out of the realm of Scripture, we have created a series of problems for ourselves that there are no simple answers to. See, there's a tendency that women want to usurp authority and take the lead over the man.

That's one extreme. The other extreme is man wants to lord it over the woman and act like a despot. And that's another fleshly extreme.

And the idea is that we recognize our roles, we follow our roles, and we recognize the value of each other and the roles that God has given us, and we work together for the glory of God. And certainly it's in the Lord. And we also recognize at the end of verse 12 that all things are of God.

What we're saying is, okay, the first woman wouldn't have been here if it wasn't for the man, and then he says, well, the man wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the women, but nobody would be here if it wasn't for God. So in a sense, we're dependent on each other, and we're also extremely dependent on the Lord as well. And so the idea is we need each other, we're designed by God to act together in the Lord, and when you see that, it's a beautiful thing.

Again, I just performed a wedding in Norway. It was my firstborn son and his wife, and one of the things that I said to them is that Scripture is clear. Two are better than one.

You know, what does the Scripture say? One will chase a thousand, two will put ten thousand to flight. Isn't that what the Scripture says? In other words, much more effective, isn't it, to be a partnership together for the glory of God is just exponentially so much greater. And so we want to recognize that, and so he brings this in, the importance of working together for the glory of God, and of course the fact that all things

are of God.

And then verse 13, he says this, and what I really like about both the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul is that they call people to a decision. In this verse, it's decision-making time. And so he says this, judge in yourselves, in other words, okay, it's time to make a judgment on this stuff.

I'm not just giving out information for the sake of it, but he said it's make-your-mind-up time. Judge in yourselves, is it comely, is it right, is it fitting, he says, for a woman to pray unto God uncovered? What do you expect the answer he's expecting in this question is? Is it comely, or is it not? It's not, right? I mean, there's no possibility of any other answer. If you've been following the reasoning and logic of his arguments, he's only expecting one response, but he wants them to make the response, you see.

And he's saying, okay, give me the answer here. He might do it in a sense, tell me the answer here, folks. Is it right for a woman to, and he's saying, no, it isn't.

It's not right, it's not comely, it's not fitting for a woman to pray unto God uncovered. And then he goes on, having expected them to answer, to follow this logic and answer with him, no, it's not. Then he says, okay, let's go into another realm here.

We've argued from Scripture, we've argued from the angelic realm. Let's say now, what about even the natural realm? Doesn't even nature itself teach you if a man have long hair, it's a shame unto him? Now, of course, this is an interesting thing, isn't it? Because every picture you've ever seen of Jesus, what does he look like? He looks like a San Francisco hippie, doesn't he? Isn't that, I mean, I say that reverently, but isn't that what he looks like? Where did they ever get that from? Well, I'll tell you, they didn't get it from the Bible. Maybe they got it from the idea that, you see, in the Old Testament, there was a special vow in Numbers chapter 6 called the Nazarite vow.

And the Nazarite vow was a voluntary vow where a man would say, my devotion to God is so great that I'm going to make some big decisions for a while. He said, one thing, I'm not going to let a razor go to my head. In other words, my love for God is so great, I don't even care how I look.

In other words, my appearance doesn't bother me. All that matters to me is my love for God and my service for God. And then he wasn't to eat from the fruit of the vine, and of course, wine is a symbol of joy.

And what he was saying is, I'm not going to have anything, not even a raisin, nothing to do with the fruit of the vine. I won't touch it because, you see, I get my joy in my service for God. That's where I find my joy.

And then thirdly, he was not to touch any dead body, including that of his close kin, mother and father, whatever. And what he's saying is, my love for God is so great that it even supersedes the greatest of human relationships. Now this Nazarite vow is a pretty rare thing.

In fact, in the whole of Scripture, now there were Nazarites, clearly, because we read about it in various of the Old Testament prophecies about God giving Nazarites. It talks about it in the book of Amos, for instance. But the ones we know of in Scripture that were Nazarites were Samson.

And that vow was not one that he made. It was made on his behalf by his parents. Samuel, another one, Nazarite vow, placed upon him.

And the third one, same thing, placed upon him, didn't take it himself, John the Baptizer. Three in the whole of Scripture. Obviously, it was a rare thing.

But you see, maybe some of these artists that did these pictures of what they thought the Lord Jesus looked like, maybe it got confused when they read in Scripture that it said, he shall be called a Nazarene. Maybe they thought Nazarite. Maybe that's what it was.

I don't know. But it's very clear that in Scripture, when somebody had long hair, a man, Scripture tells us. It actually spells it out, right? It's such a rare thing for a man to have long hair that the Bible tells us.

Can you think of anybody? Absalom, right? Do you remember Absalom? He used to get his hair cut once a year. I forget how much it weighed, but it was kind of a heavy load, wasn't it? It really got him into a mess, didn't it, his long hair? He got caught up by his long hair. But certainly him, and then Revelation 9, you've got men with long hair.

Just look at that. It's a real picture of confusion. Revelation 9, verses 7 and 8, it's these demon locusts in the last days, and it says, the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared to battle, Revelation 9, 7. On their heads were, as it were, crowns like gold.

Their faces were as the faces of men, and their hair as the hair of women. And their teeth were the teeth of lions. And quite a sight.

Again, a picture of the confusion and the demonic activity of the last days, although it's kind of a funny thing. Sometimes you might be walking behind someone, they've got this beautiful long hair, and then you walk past them, they've got chops and a beard. That's part of the confusion today, isn't it? And what it was saying is that usually, Scripture points out when somebody has long hair, but it's clearly, Lord Jesus wouldn't have had long hair, because Scripture clearly says it's a shame for a man to have long hair.

So when did that become in vogue again? 1960s. Huh, isn't that interesting? When rebellion became mainstream once again. And you look at pictures that are depicted of the times of the Roman Empire, what kind of hair did they have? They all had short hair, didn't they? The men had short hair.

That was just the way it was. And so what he's saying is in the natural realm, we've got this clear picture of what takes place in the spiritual realm. And so he says, nature teaches you a man has long hair, it's a shame to him.

If a woman has long hair, it's a glory to her. And again, we have to say this, that I'm not going to stand here and say to you, like I have a brother who's passionate about women having long hair, and that's a big issue for him. And I said, well, how long is long? He said, well, it has to be long enough to wipe the feet of the Lord Jesus.

That was his answer. And of course, there was a lady that did that, didn't she? But what I am saying to you is that, for instance, if you're married and your wife's hair is shorter than your hair, either your hair is too long or her hair is too short. There ought to be a clear distinction between the man and the woman, shouldn't there? And again, we've lost some of that.

And what amazes me is, you know that most radical feminists, how do they look? Masculine, don't they? That's the irony. They call themselves feminists, but they're anything but feminine. I used to work with one, and she was into trade unionism and all this kind of stuff, and she was radical.

And I used to love to open the door for her. And she hated that. It used to drive her nuts.

She said, I can open the door myself. She said, what are you doing? I said, I just like to open the door for ladies. Oh, she used to go, I shouldn't have done it.

But I just am an incorrigible kind of a character, and I used to love doing that just to wind her up. But I want to tell you, she was anything but feminine. So verse 16, then, is the closing verse of the whole section.

If any man seems to be contentious, almost like he understood that this is going to be a problem issue, and certainly was in Corinth, and certainly is to this day, he says, we, the apostolic we, we have no such custom. In other words, what's going on in Corinth is out of step with everybody else. We don't believe what you're doing, neither do the churches of God.

Get in line. Pull yourself in line with what every other church is doing. So now we move on to the next issue.

And of course, it comes out of this passage in chapter 11, verse 5. It says, every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is even all one as if she were shaven. So some have implied from this that, well, what it must mean is that a woman can pray in the assembly and can prophesy in the assembly if she has a covering on her head. Because it clearly says here, every woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered dishonors her head.

So what they say is, well, okay, it's okay then. She can do those things as long as she's covered. The interesting thing is the people that say that, they want the women to be able to pray and to preach, but they don't want them covered.

Right? In other words, they want, the part of it that they want to hold on to is, they want women to be able to audibly pray in the meeting and audibly preach, or take part, but they don't want the covering part. But we've got a difficulty here, an apparent contradiction, because we have other scriptures that clearly state, like chapter 14 of Corinthians, verse 34, let your women keep silence in the churches. So here's this kind of tension in scripture where, on the one hand, it seems to imply from 1 Corinthians 11, 5, that women were praying and prophesying, and then in chapter 14 he says women are to be silent.

Well, it's hard to, well, you can pray silently, and of course we do that all the time, don't we? And by the way, I expect that the sisters who are believer priests, every believer's a priest, right? That they ought to be praising and worshiping God on the Lord's day, the remembrance meeting, but you don't have to do it audibly to do it, do you? Quite often, sometimes when I'm preaching, and I feel like I'm swimming in molasses, I can't get off the ground, I'm just really struggling, and while I'm speaking to you, I'm speaking to the Lord at the same time, and I'm saying, Lord, help me get off the runway here. You don't hear that bit, but I want to tell you, it's real, right? It's done inaudibly, but it's nonetheless real. And we do that all the time, don't we? Don't we pray without it being audible? Yeah, of course we do.

So what we're saying is that we expect the sisters, and I believe some assemblies where the men are so spiritually inept that the only worship that really ascends up to God from the remembrance meeting is the silence of sisters worshiping from their hearts the Lord who they love. And probably an aroma fills the room and fills heaven because of that. And the men are there too busy thinking about the football game that was on the night before.

Forgive me if I'm being harsh, but that's just the reality of some of it, isn't it? I feel sorry for sisters, I really have to be honest. I feel so sorry for sisters that sincerely want to follow the Word of God, and then they have to sit in cold silence because the men are not taking their role seriously. And I find that despicable.

And so men, tomorrow morning, let's be ready. No matter how late we stay up eating pizza, you get up early and you become here ready with a basket full, ready to worship tomorrow morning. So let's look at this issue of the tension here between the silence of women and then their apparent praying and prophesying in chapter 11.

And I want to look at chapter 14 in a little bit of detail, because I want you to see that there's some guiding principles in understanding this chapter that are very important. And I believe that what Paul has in chapter 14, particularly from verse 26 to verse 40, is what I would call regulations for audible participation in the meeting. Now, we know that there are certain things that stand out in this passage.

Look at verse 26, for instance. It says, how is it then, brethren, when you come together, every one of you has a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation, let all things be done unto Ediphi. You could say a lot of things about the Corinthian assembly, but one thing you can't fault them for is enthusiasm, right? He says, when you come together, every one of you has a psalm, has a tongue, has a--in other words, boy, were they ready to participate.

There weren't awkward silences in the assembly in Corinth, I want to tell you that, because everybody was straining at the bit. They all were ready to take part. We could learn something from that, couldn't we? You know, we criticize the charismatic movement, but I'll tell you what, they're enthusiastic.

They might be deceived, and they might be believing stuff that's bizarre, but they believe it passionately, don't they? And I sometimes think we're the frozen chosen. You know, we say we believe this stuff, but we're so unenthusiastic about it. And yet, we can get enthusiastic at a football game, can't we? People with blocks of cheeses on their heads and--what do they call them--cow horns coming out of their--I mean, and painting themselves different colors.

I mean, I'll tell you, people get really excited about this stuff, don't they? And what amazes me is that we're dealing with some of the most amazing eternal truths that you can ever imagine, and yet it's almost like, oh, blah, you know? What's wrong with us? Let's learn something. Let's be enthusiastic about what we believe. If you have nothing good to say about the Savior, what does that say about you? Don't you have anything good to say about Him? Is there not something that you could come and say about Him tomorrow morning that is worthy of saying about Him? Of course there is, isn't there? So let's address that.

He says, brethren, you come together. Every one of you does. But he says, okay, let's have some guidelines here.

Let all things be done unto edifying. Make sure that what is said will build up the people of God. That's good advice, isn't it? Those of you young men that do some preaching, make sure that what you say is going to edify the saints.

You know, one of the big mistakes in assemblies, and it is a big mistake, is we believe that a one-man ministry is unscriptural. And we're right, it is unscriptural. But I'll tell you something, an any-man ministry is unscriptural too, isn't it? You get two legs and you're a man, you can preach.

Not necessarily. It's gift that fits a man for ministry, isn't it? Now, we're all gifted, but not necessarily all gifted at publicly expounding the Scriptures. And people have to sit through messages, and it's 45 minutes, and it seems like 45 years.

It seems like a life sentence, doesn't it? I mean, it just seems like it goes on. I've heard people speak, and I've even heard people speak enthusiastically and dogmatically say nothing. I remember one guy, I used to listen to him speak, and I said, I've never heard anybody say nothing so dogmatically and so enthusiastically.

But there's nothing to it. No substance. Didn't edify because there was nothing to edify.

And so, one of the golden rules is, is it going to edify? Is it going to build up God's people? If it isn't, sit down and shut up. That's what you do us all a favor. Wives, be honest with your husbands.

Now, recognize that some people, you know, they're in the process of development, but after 40 years, if you haven't got it, you haven't got it. You know what I'm saying? There has to be some edification. And then verse 40, we're just looking at the general principles here, regulations and for public gatherings.

It says, let all things be done decently and in order. And we stress that God is a God of order. It needs to be done in an orderly way.

If it's chaotic, it's not of God. Verse 33, we've already stressed this. God is not the author of confusion or disorder, but of peace.

If there's confusion and disorder in a gathering, it's not of him. So he begins to introduce in this section, these things that are there to, on the one hand, direct this enthusiasm in a proper way. And so he begins with the issue of speaking in tongues.

Now, we're not going to get into the whole issue of tongues here, but I want to say that these regulations, if they were taken seriously, would kill the charismatic movement dead overnight. They really would. Verse 27, if any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two or at the most by three and that by course and let one interpret.

And if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church and let him speak to himself and to God. OK, so here's the tongue speaker. OK, there must be a limit to the number of people who speak in tongues in a meeting, two or at the most three.

And it must be one at a time. That's what it means, let it be by course. In other words, they can't all three of them stand up there and do it at the same time.

It has to be one at a time. And it has to have the guarantee that there is somebody in the gathering who can interpret and he must know that before he speaks. And if there's nobody to interpret, he has to be silent.

OK, so it's speaking clearly of an individual who wants to address the assembly. In this case, he wants to do it in a tongue, a language that he has not previously learned. OK, because the word unknown is not there in the original.

It's a language. OK, so he wants to use a language. And of course, there are many times because I've spoken in different countries where I would think, Lord, it would be a wonderful thing if the biblical gift of

tongues was available now and I had it.

Because it's so frustrating after you've preached to an interpreter and there are people queuing up to ask you questions and you would love to know what they're really saying, but you have to go through this other person. It takes forever to do it. And you think, oh, wouldn't it be wonderful, Lord, just to be able to speak their language without all that hard work? But you see, it must be if you can do that.

And of course, we know that in the early church, there were that gift was available. There were people that did speak in languages that they had never previously learned. But he says if that's going to be done in the assembly, there must be the assurance that somebody can interpret.

And if you can't find anybody that knows they can clearly interpret what you're saying, you be silent and let him speak to himself and to God. And of course, implication being in silence. Right? Because and again, if I was to speak to you this morning in Tagalog, anybody here speak Tagalog, Filipino dialect? If I was to speak in Tagalog, you might be impressed and say, well, that sounds really good, but you would have no idea what I'm saying.

Right? Wouldn't do you any good. And so it needs to be in a language where there is a guarantee of interpretation. Because why? Because they can't be any edification unless there's understanding.

Right? That's the reason why. You must let all things be done to edify. And if you can't understand what I'm saying, then you're not going to be edified.

So two or at the most three in anyone gathering one at a time must be interpreted. If not, let him keep silence. Okay.

Regulation number two is about prophecy. And again, he's saying in verse 29, he says, let the prophets speak two or three and let the others judge. Why the others judge? Because as well as prophets, there are false prophets.

Right? And so that you have to discern and you have to say, is this man what he's saying? He said, I've got a word from the Lord. Is it a word from the Lord? Right? Because there are false prophets. So there's got to be a judgment.

There's got to be discernment. And again, by the way, that's not just prophets. This weekend, you don't just because Mike Atwood says it, don't you just believe it? You check it with the word of God.

Right? Be Bereans. Search the scriptures and see if these things be so. It don't matter who it is that stands in this on this podium.

I don't care who it is. You check it with the word of God. If it don't line up with the word of God, you have a right to question that.

You've got to be judging. You've got to be discerning all the time. And so prophets, he says, two or three, let the others judge.

If anything be revealed to another that sits by, let the first hold his peace. And so here's one and he's holding false and he's given this word from the Lord. And it's obvious that another brother is now exercised to address the assembly.

And this guy, he needs to be discerning of that and needs to sit down and shut up and let somebody else speak. He knows he needs to know when to stop. And then he says, the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

There's a verse that has been, of course, a lot of miles of ink has been written over this one. But the basic idea is that it has to if he's saying he's speaking from the Lord, it has to fit in with what God has already spoken through his prophets in the scriptures. It must be in harmony with what God has already said.

I remember one time, early days of Christian charismatic movement was massive. We were being taken along to all these charismatic meetings. And a guy stood up in a meeting and he had a message for a couple that were in the gathering.

And he said that God wants them to get married. Well, I knew the people. I knew one was a believer.

One wasn't a believer. I knew God already had a message for that couple. And it was that they shouldn't get married.

But he had a word from the Lord. I said, no, it's not a word from the Lord. Because God will never contradict what he's already said.

Right. And he's already said no unequal yoke. No matter how handsome he is.

No matter how charming he is. No matter how witty he is. No matter how educated he is.

What a great job he has. And how much money he's got in the bank. Doesn't matter if he's not a believer.

He's not for you if you're a believer. All right. And so, again, we've got to test these things and be willing to sit down and be silent if somebody else is ready to address the company.

And then he goes on. And now this is the third group that he's going to address about directly addressing the assembly. And I want to just stress this.

This is speaking of individuals standing up to address the assembly. The tongue speaker was going to do that. The prophet was doing that.

And now he says, let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home or their menfolk at home, for it's a shame, there's that word again, for women to speak in the church or in the assembly. Now, is that a clear statement or is that not a clear statement? Golden rule in interpreting scripture is this.

When you have an unclear statement, you always interpret the unclear in light of the clear. Right? How clear does this verse read? Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. If they learn anything, let them ask their menfolk at home.

It is a shame for women to speak in the church. Is that clear? Well, I'll tell you what, it can't get more clearer than that, can it? It's really clear. How come is it then that Joyce Meyer addresses mixed gatherings? He says, well, the men want me to preach.

I don't care whether the men want you to preach. God doesn't want you to preach to a mixed gathering. Right? Because he said it.

It's very clear and it's not just here. So then what is the issue with 1 Corinthians 11? Well, anybody here ever done math? In math, you've got something called a compound problem. You ever had a compound problem? It means a problem with more than one part to it.

I'll tell you, the Corinthian church was a big compound problem, wasn't it? There are lots of problems in the assembly. And how you deal with a compound problem is you do one part of the equation first, and then you deal with the next part of the equation. Right? So what he does here in 1 Corinthians 11, there was a double whammy against them.

On the one hand, the women were not covering their heads, and they were audibly participating in the meetings. Right? Because they were. I mean, they were drunk at the Lord's Supper.

They're doing all kinds of things in Corinth. Don't say, well, because they were doing it, it must be right. Well, is it okay to be drunk at the Lord's Supper then? Because they were doing that too.

You see, the fact that they're doing it and he describes it doesn't mean to say that he's prescribing it. Descriptive and prescriptive are not the same thing. And so what's going on is, one, the women are uncovered.

Two, they're audibly participating in the meeting. Chapter 11, he deals with the first part of the compound problem, which is the issue of headship and glory. Okay? So that they should be covered.

Chapter 14, he's dealing with the biggest subject of audibly addressing the assembly of verbal participation in the meeting. And so then he deals with the second part of the problem, which was the fact that the women were audibly taking part. And he tells them that they are to be silent in the church.

Now, it's not just there, by the way, that he does that. He also is going to do it in 1 Timothy chapter 2. Just turn there and see that it's not just in one place that he makes this clear statement. Remember, yesterday we began by reading from 1 Timothy 3.15 about behavior in the house of God and how you ought to behave yourself.

Well, he says in 1 Timothy 2.12, I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. So we've got two clear statements that say that women are to be silent, and we've got one that seems to imply that they can audibly pray and prophesy in the meeting. So how are we going to interpret the one that appears to say they can do it when you have two that say they definitely can't? Right? You always interpret the unclear in the light of the clear.

And it's clear that women are to be silent. Now, of course, let them ask their menfolk at home, where does that put the pressure? On the menfolk, doesn't it? Doesn't God know that men are spiritually lazy? Do you think he knows that? I think he knows that. That's why he's designed the assembly so that the men have to get their finger out and do the work.

It's God's design, isn't it? I remember when we taught this in Kilkenny in Ireland, there was a group of... That was an amazing thing. There's a group of believers already there, and they were meeting together, but the women were already vocal at all the meetings, and they weren't covered. And so I was invited to go there and help with the work.

And I told the guy that was there, well, listen, if I come and teach what I believe, they're not going to agree with it. And he said, well, come and give it a try. So I thought, well, okay, I'll try.

So I went there and I taught these very principles. And while I'm teaching it, the ladies are vocal. And some of them were so upset.

In fact, I remember one meeting, ladies were veins sticking out on their necks. They were red. They were standing up and they were shouting them.

And they're saying, you're a male chauvinist and all this. And they were really upset. And so I just kept teaching the scriptures.

And eventually the ladies came to me and they said, Mike, we realized that our problem is not with you. It's with scripture. I said, well, you got a real problem now.

If it's just my opinion, you're right not to do it. But once you realize this is what God says, you better do it. And so they said, well, we want to.

So I said, okay, let's go ahead and do this. So they got mantillas. They covered their heads.

They were silent. Now, the problem is that in most of the meetings, the men weren't saying anything. The ladies, so I met with the guys.

And I said to the guys, I said, well, guys, you want me to get head coverings for you as well? Because up to now, you've been acting like women anyway. And they didn't want me to do that. So I said, well, you better start participating and taking your role seriously.

And the amazing thing was, before we left there, after five years, the ladies met with me one more time. They said, Mike, we want to just thank you for being faithful to the word of God. Because the growth in our men, since they have started to take their roles, has been thrilling to our hearts.

Isn't that amazing? Because God's way is right. It really is. And I've been in other churches where they don't follow these principles.

And so often, the ones that are the Bible encyclopedias that know the scriptures are the ladies. Now, I'm not advocating that ladies be ignorant of scripture. And they're not.

And in many assemblies, there are many women that know their Bibles very well. And praise the Lord for that. But the idea is that men are supposed to be spiritually giving direction.

And if you're not in the book, how can you possibly give direction? How can you? You've got to be in the word, you see? So now, let's look again at this passage in 1 Timothy chapter 2, because I want to go to another bit that's important, I think, in this issue of the role of women in the church. And I want to think about the prayer meeting, particularly. A growing trend in many assemblies, and maybe your assembly does this, is they have a divided prayer meeting.

You ever had that? Where the men pray in one room and the ladies go into another room. And you know what they say is, well, here's the logic of it. That way we can get a lot more people praying, therefore it's better.

You ever heard that kind of reasoning? Right? In other words, we're doubling the number of people praying, therefore it's better. Is that really how it is, I'm asking? I don't think it is. Look at 1 Timothy 2, verse 8. He says, and clearly he's talking about, let's read from verse 1 just to show he's talking about prayer.

I therefore, first of all, supplication, prayers, intercession, giving of thanks, be made for all men, for kings and all in authority. There's clearly that the context is prayer and the issue of corporate prayer. And he says, I will, verse 8, therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.

Now, when he writes this verse, I will therefore that men, there are two Greek words that he could have used for the word men. He could have used a word that basically means mankind in general. I will that mankind pray everywhere.

Or he could have used a word that was gender specific. I will that the males pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting. Guess what word he uses? Gender specific.

I will that males pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting. The males. And the idea is that the men are the ones who are to lead the assembly in prayer.

Now, brethren, when you pray in the assembly, I want to tell you something, that you do not pray individually. You pray representatively. You get what I'm saying by that? In other words, you're not just going and praying on your own.

You're actually leading the whole assembly into the holiest of all. So when you pray as a representative priest, because that's what you are, a priest to God, and you're there, when the priest went in to do what he did, did he act as an individual or did he act as a representative? When he went into the holy of holies, he went to represent the people, didn't he? He didn't go in just as an individual. He went as a representative.

Christ is our high priest. Is he there as an individual or as our representative? He's there on our behalf, isn't he? He ever lives to make an accession for us. He's representing us at the presence of God.

So when you pray, you pray as a representative rather than as an individual. So when you pray, it's not all about I, me, my, and myself. When you pray in the assembly, it's we, us, our, isn't it? I remember one time preaching and I was very convicted by my own message.

That sometimes happens. You know, men actually got converted preaching. Can you believe that? Actually got saved preaching.

And they obviously took their message seriously for once and got saved. Well, I was already saved, but I was convicted about the message. And so it came out in the prayer and I was talking about, you know, what the Lord has said to me and a guy just about nailed me to the wall afterwards.

And he said, do you think you were the only person in the room convicted today? So you should have been praying on behalf of all of us. We were all convicted. And the point was fair taken, you see.

So when we pray, it's not Lord I, it's we because you're going on behalf of everybody. So when everybody says their amen, how many people pray? One or was it the whole assembly? Amen means that everybody's saying so be it. Let it be so.

So individually, you go in as a brother into the presence of God, but you express the desires of every person in this room. Like if I was to start praying now for revival in the assemblies, would anybody agree with me about that? Anybody want to see that here? So if you were to say amen, what you're saying is, Lord, that's my prayer too, right? So how can you have more than all? Because everybody prayed to that representative man, didn't they? So dividing the assembly up is just a way of getting around the clear teaching of scripture. I don't think we should.

We need to follow what the scripture says. And so what about the sisters? Sometimes they might be tempted to say, even this very passage at the end of verse 11, it says, let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. I suffer not a woman to teach, nor usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

For Adam was first formed, then Eve. Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding, she shall be saved in childbearing, for they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

And of course, here's the point. One might say, well, what can I do? If I can't preach and I can't audibly pray in the meeting, what can I do? Well, she can be saved from loss of reward by being involved in childbearing. Now, it's not just having babies, but the whole idea of working with children and investing in the lives of children, right? Because what has happened in the church through the investment of women in the lives of children? Remember this guy, Timothy, that Paul's writing to? Do you remember what his background was? What do you know about his dad? At the very least, he was a dud, wasn't he? We don't know anything about him, but we do know that he had a godly grandmother and a godly mother, and that from a child, he learned the scriptures which were able to make him wise to salvation.

And these two godly sisters poured their little hearts into this young Timothy, and he would be a great man of God. And you know, the Jesuits used to say this, that he that rocks the cradle rules the grave. Remember that? Give me a child until he's, what was it, eight years old, and you've got him for life, something like that.

And they understood the principle, right? Invest in the lives of children, and certainly look at Titus chapter two. And by the way, I think when you look at Titus two here, look at verse four, it says, well, verse three, sorry. The aged women, likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things, that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

So here's the aged woman, and he says, what should she be doing? Well, she needs to be teaching good things. By the way, the good things here, he's not saying that they're teaching the Book of Romans or teaching, what is he teaching? It's domestic engineering, isn't it? Isn't that what it is? Teach them, the young women, to be sober, to be serious, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. In other words, the idea is this, that the older women teach the young women about family.

Family life, looking after children, loving their husbands. Now you say, is that all? Well, is there not a cause? Can I ask you something? What is the major crisis in our country right now? The breakdown of home and family. Isn't that true? And what we need is not sisters running around teaching the Book of Romans.

We need sisters, older sisters, who have raised a family to invest in and help them to do this, because it's not easy. Right? Because we've got a real crisis in our world today. And here's a whole sphere of ministry that can affect the cause of Christ tremendously for generations yet to come.

So England is in a mess, right now, and it was in the past. So whatever happened in England? Well, there was a lady called Susanna Wesley. Do you remember her? And she invested in her little boys.

Two of them turned out to be tremendous evangelists, John and Charles Wesley. And they saved England from revolution. But behind it all was a woman who took her domestic responsibilities seriously and poured her heart into her children.

Now, okay, there's a lot more to it. And in fact, I have a whole message on things that sisters can do. And we may deal with that tomorrow morning.

I don't know. I haven't decided yet. But I do want to say this, and it's very important, that there are clear restrictions in the Word of God.

And we need to follow the restrictions because God knows what he's doing. Okay? And it's clear. I mean, it's very clear what he's demanding of us.

On the other hand, it puts pressure on the men, doesn't it? If the women are to be silent, it means the men are not to be, right? It means that we have to be audible. It means that we've got to have something substantial, worthwhile to say. If the women are to ask their menfolk at home, it means we better be in the book, guys, because they're going to come asking questions, and we better have some answers.

And we need to be men of God. And you say, well, what if I don't have a husband? What if your husband's bailed out on me? What about that situation? Well, that's why it says, let them ask their menfolk at home, because it recognizes that can happen. It happened in Timothy's case.

Dad wasn't in the picture. But there were others, I'm sure, in the local assembly that they could go to and get help and advice and all the rest of it. But the pressure is on, guys.

It really is. And we need to be serious. And if we don't get serious, and certainly if you don't get serious now, when are you going to get serious? I think the Lord is coming real quick.

If we don't get serious soon, when are you going to get serious? But there's so many areas where a sister can affect the cause of Christ. And I have so many instances where revival has come to an assembly through the prayers of sisters, not audibly in the meeting, but just burdened about the spiritual dearth in the assembly. And they have gone home and got on their knees before God.

And instead of criticizing, they've got on their knees and talk to the only person in the universe that can change it. And it's brought revival. So there's lots that can be done in these areas and lots of other things that can be done in the context of the home order.

We've already said about Aquila and Priscilla and how they together did things. I'll be honest. Listen, I got saved through the testimony of a woman.

Can women have an impact? Absolutely. I know that. I met my wife at work and I was not a Christian.

She was. And I'll tell you something. There was something about her that I just knew she had something different.

And I started asking her, what is it about you? And she told me that she was a believer and she kept giving me books to read and stuff like that. And I got saved in my own bedroom. And even after I got saved, she wouldn't have anything to do with me because she said, I don't believe that you're really saved.

I want to see some evidence. So I tell you, a woman can have a profound influence. You're benefiting today.

Hopefully you're benefiting as a result of the ministry of a woman. So, you know, there's lots that can be done, but there are clear biblical restrictions in the word of God. And we need to follow them.

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