

San Juan church of Christ

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What Does God's Word Say About...

The Various Roles of Women - Part 2

The gospel was first preached in Corinth by Paul on his second missionary journey (50 A.D.). Paul remained there for 18 months (Acts 18:1-17; 1 Cor. 2:3). After his departure, the members of the church had questions concerning doctrinal issues and they sent him a letter asking him to respond (1 Cor. 7:1). In chapters 11 through 14 of First Corinthians Paul answers their questions regarding the public worship of the church. Remember that the apostles, including Paul, had the authority from God to reveal the doctrines of the church to them (Cor.1:2:10-13). Paul instructed that "The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves...If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church,"(1 Cor. 14:34-35).

Paul wrote, "But if one is inclined to be contentious, we [apostles] have no other practice, nor have the churches of God," (1 Cor. 11:16). We will need to look at the context of 1 Corinthians chapter 11 to explain verse 16. In the first two verses of the chapter, he encourages the members of the church to follow his example just as he followed the example of Christ. He then praises them because they had followed the "traditions just as I have delivered them to you." Paul, as well as every New Testament writer understood the importance of their spirit-inspired words (Gal. 1:6-9; Eph. 3:3-5). In verse 3 Paul is explaining the position of authority: God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, and the man is the head of woman. What is NOT being explained in this verse is the "ranking of superiority." To say that God the Father is superior to God the Son (Christ) would be an error because we know that God the Son is in no way inferior to God the Father (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). So we must conclude that man is in no way spiritually superior to woman, and scripture proves this (Gal. 3:28; 1 Pet. 3:5). The headship explained in verse 3 shows who is to submit to whom just as Christ subjected Himself to God the Father (1 Cor.15:27-28). In the same way, man is to submit himself to Christ. "Every man who has something on his head [a woman having authority over him] while praying or prophesying disgraces his head [Christ's authority over man]' (1 Cor. 11:4). Then finally, women are to submit themselves to their head, which is man (1 Tim. 2:12).

Remember, the point is not who is "better," but who God has placed in "authority." In verses 4-7 Paul explains the meaning of spiritual headship [authority] by using cultural practices of that time. As example of this in verse 6, Paul said if the woman was unwilling to demonstrate her divinely ordained submission to her husband [spiritual headship], she may as well dress as a prostitute and "have her hair cut off" as was the practice of prostitutes of that time. Next week in part 3 we will further explain the meaning of verses 7-16.

Please send any comments, questions, or requests for a Bible study to:

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