

Women, Worship, and Ministry (pt.1) [SLIDE ONE]

Intro: One of my favorite shows is “Mythbusters.” One of the biggest myths out there is “the way things are is the way things have always been.” While it is true that “there is nothing new under the sun,” our systems, forms, and interpretations are based in *arguments made in history according to culturally accepted methods*. [SLIDE TWO]

We have to remember *that even our Bibles were written, translated, and interpreted in a cultural and historical box*. (illustrations: use of “church” and “baptism” by King James has lingered to this day, causing all kinds of trouble) Change comes slowly – and that might not be a bad thing when we are dealing with matters of faith and doctrine.

[SLIDE THREE] This study is not designed to take us anywhere other than where we were two years ago when the elders made their statement on men and women in worship and ministry. We will not go beyond the teachings Jerry Tallman gifted us with over an entire summer.

But we will repeat those teachings here, in a truncated form, and in a way that reminds us of where we are and how we got here.

I. Jesus and Women

- A.** It is not helpful to do this kind of study unless we are willing to see through the eyes of Jesus.
- B.** There were first century cultures in which women were very active in politics and the larger community. Rome was not quite one of those cultures (although women did much behind the scenes) and the Jewish culture was absolutely male dominated. (but not Taliban style)
- C.** Jesus chose to arrive through birth – through the body of a woman. Not only that, he chose to arrive without male help and in the body of a woman who was not quite married.
 - 1.** From day one he chose to be identified with the outcast, the powerless, the lower castes.
 - 2.** From the day he began his ministry, he sought out women as examples of faith, treating them with uncommon courtesy and respect.
- D.** While some believe that Christianity holds women back, a case can be made that before Christ came women were treated as property and their rights were severely restricted. The changes in the social standing and culture’s view of women came about

as Christianity progressed. The new faith placed a halo around women and honored them. [SLIDE FOUR]

1. Churches met in women's homes (women's, not their husbands).
 2. Women followed Christ and supported him and the apostles.
 3. The original conception of marriage as a covenantal union of equals was re-established (unlike Muslim and pagan cultures).
 4. Unlike almost all other faiths, you cannot find Jesus warning His followers against the dangers of women. Even when He prophesied about the fall of Jerusalem, he reserved his pity for the poor pregnant women with small children when those times came. (Matthew 24:19; Luke 21:23)
- E. [SLIDE FIVE] He was comfortable in the home of Mary and Martha. He was comfortable around the fallen woman in Luke 7:36-50. The woman taken in adultery was safe around Jesus (John 8:1-11). She wasn't safe in the hands of religious leaders, but she WAS safe in Jesus' hands.
- F. [SLIDE SIX] The first prophet to announce the birth of Jesus was a woman prophet – Anna.
- G. When Jesus was resurrected, the first person He appeared to was Mary Magdalene.
- H. He protected widows, complimented the poor woman who gave two mites, and attacked men who mistreated women. (Matthew 23:14)

II. Jesus' Restoration

- A. In some ways, Jesus wasn't that radical. I mean this: Jesus merely restored what he intended at creation. We get hints of this in the Old Testament as God raised up first one woman and then another to a place of leadership and honor. [SLIDE SEVEN]
1. Deborah, the judge.
 2. Huldah.
 3. Sarah.
 4. Rahab.
 5. Hannah.
 6. Esther.

- B.** In the New Testament the pace of this elevation of women picks up considerably. [SLIDE EIGHT]
- 1.** The Marys.
 - 2.** Priscilla.
 - 3.** Anna.
 - 4.** Junia. (consider female until edict of a pope in 13th century)
 - 5.** The daughters of Philip who were known as prophetesses.
 - 6.** Phoebe.
 - 7.** [SLIDE NINE] Euodias.
 - 8.** Syntyche.
- C.** Women met with the men in the upper room after Jesus ascended into heaven and prayed with them. Both men and women gathered to pray in John Mark's mother's house when Peter was imprisoned (Acts 12:1-17).
- D.** A quick look at the books of Corinthians along with the above citations show you that in the early church women served as prophets, fellow workers, servant ministers (deaconesses), instructors, encouragers, hosts of church assemblies, and financial supporters of ministries.
- E.** When Jesus came everything changed. [SLIDE TEN] Now we do not view things from an earthly perspective anymore. (2 Cor. 5:16-18) Nor do we put them in boxes like Jew or Gentile, male or female (Galatians 3:28).

III. Seeing Paul Through Jesus [SLIDE ELEVEN]

- A.** There is a great danger: that we will not rightly divide the word; that we will take something targeted for one situation or culture and try to apply it to all churches, worldwide, world without end.
- B.** It is also dangerous to try to interpret two verses Paul wrote without remembering everything we learned from the life of Jesus about the value and place of women in the body of faith.
- C.** There is no question that both men and women are loved by God, equipped with a set of spiritual gifts, and that the Holy Spirit is poured out on each of us.
- D.** The question is: do a few verses from Paul move women to a second tier of service, excluding them forever from some

actions or offices, or are those verses meant to be applied in a local context? (think “build an ark”)

IV. The Timothy Passage [SLIDE TWELVE]

- A. “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.” (1 Tim. 2:11,12)
- B. First, we interpret this passage. We do not “take it as read.” We believe that women can and must sing. We even sing songs that women wrote and read Bible passages that are direct quotes of the words of women so we don’t think the word “silent” really means “silent.”
- C. What does it mean? Look a few verses earlier and you will see that the men were commanded to pray lifting holy hands in prayer without arguments or disagreements (who here believes that all prayers, everywhere, are to be made with lifted hands?).
 - 1. a few verses before, women are told not to wear gold or jewelry and to leave their hair unbraided.
 - 2. a couple verses later, Paul says that women will be saved by bearing children.
 - 3. do we take either of these passages “as read”?
- D. [SLIDE THIRTEEN] Men and women in Ephesus and Corinth were having a lot of problems with arguing and disrupting worship. Both were severely cautioned in the Timothy passage.
- E. In both Ephesus and Corinth men and women were being converted from pagan religions where female priestesses had sexual relations with male worshippers, or where a female deity was in charge of the town.
 - 1. When converted, they entered a very gender stratified and conservative milieu. The early church was mainly made up of Jewish people who were comfortable with the synagogue tradition.
 - 2. In fact, in both Corinth and Ephesus the church met in synagogues until they were evicted and had to move to a home or lecture hall.
 - 3. [SLIDE FOURTEEN] Rowdy, free wheeling Gentiles entering into these houses of worship caused considerable distress to the quiet and contemplative Jew.

4. One of the ways Gentiles learned was by asking questions (re: Plato, Aristotle, Socrates). Questions were asked on the spot and it wasn't considered impolite to interrupt a speaker with questions.
 5. The Jews quietly sang and took turns reading scripture while the rest listened. When the Jewish believers came into contact with Gentile believers, Paul had to intervene and write some rules of orders.
- F.** Adding to the confusion was that the two cultures had two different ways of telling stories. The Jews went for scrupulous accuracy while the Gentiles prized embellishment and creativity.
- G.** [SLIDE FIFTEEN] Early Gnostic writings even spun the creation story so that it was Eve who gave life to Adam. (Hypostasis of the Archons, On the Origin of the World, The Apocryphon of John)
- H.** Paul began this book by warning against those who engage in endless genealogies, godless myths, and old wives' fables. He reestablished the true order of the story by recounting that God made Adam first, then Eve. This was a corrective to a myth being spun already and which continues to this day in the Da Vinci Code nonsense. (in Gnostic teachings, Eve was wiser than Adam because she sought wisdom – Sophia – while Adam did not)
- I.** [SLIDE SIXTEEN] Anyone who taught such things should shut up and sit quietly and learn the truth. You have to learn before you can teach. It seems that some in Ephesus – especially the younger women or young widows – were supported to do good works but instead had become “gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to” (later in the letter), some of whom “... have in fact already turned away to follow Satan.”
- J.** When Paul calls the women to silence, it refers to their teaching of a doctrine that elevated women and demeaned men. How do we know? We remember the context of these books (need for order, clash of systems, Gnostic heresies) and we remember that Paul and Jesus considered women fellow workers, prophets, servants and, at least once, an apostle. We cannot interpret a few verses in such a way as to dispense with all the rest of the New Testament. (as many do with the faith alone doctrine, or as the Jabez prayer people do)

- K.** We already know “silent” can’t mean “shut up.” It seems that it means that both men and women had to quit arguing, quit trying to compete with each other, and get the story right before they taught in public.
- L.** Women were not to teach that they had a natural authority over men (a standard proto-gnostic teaching). Neither gender has an edge in God’s sight.
 - 1.** When Adam and Eve disobeyed, God never cursed one over the other. In fact, He didn’t curse either one. He cursed the ground, which made Adam labor. And since neither had chosen to eat of the Tree of Life, they would have to perpetuate the species via childbirth and that would be the labor of Eve.
 - 2.** It’s not a curse – it’s a consequence.
- M.** When Jesus came, the curses were lifted, canceled. He approached women as beings made in the image of God, gave them due respect and treated them as equals (but not superiors).

[WEEK TWO]

Review:

1. Why we are doing this.
2. Jesus had an exalted view of women.
3. His compliments went toward women. They supported his ministry. They were the ones most noted for their faithfulness.
4. He gave them protection, respect, and attention...in a land and time where that was not the norm.
5. In the Old Testament, many women had positions of leadership: Deborah, Huldah, Hannah, Esther.
6. In the NT, we meet Priscilla, Anna, Junia, the daughters of Philip, Phoebe, Euodias, Syntyche.
7. Galatians 3:28 and 2 Corinthians 5:16-18.
8. The Gnostic heresy – the creation order reversed. Sophia.
9. Paul told them to be silent... but none of us think that means “silent.” (all the earlier mentions of them teaching, Paul’s admonition for them to prophesy and pray, and the fact that singing is commanded)

V. Silence? [SLIDE SEVENTEEN]

- A. In the Old Testament, the word used in Timothy is translated:
1. Joshua 5:8 “they rested” or “they remained.”
 2. 1 Chronicles 4:40 “peaceful and quiet”
 3. 1 Chronicles 22:9 “peace and quiet”
 4. Job 34:29 “silent” or “quietness”
 5. Proverbs 11:12 “holds his tongue” or “holds his peace”
 6. [SLIDE EIGHTEEN] Isaiah 66:2 “contrite”
 7. Ezekiel 38:11 “peaceful” or “them at rest”
 8. These speak of an attitude rather than volume. In the Joshua passage it indicates what they did after being circumcised. Volume wasn’t the issue – attitude was.
- B. [SLIDE NINETEEN] In the New Testament, the word is translated:
1. Acts 22:2 “they became very quiet”
 2. 2 Thessalonians 3:12 “to settle down”
 3. 1 Timothy 2:2 “peaceful and quiet lives”
 4. 1 Timothy 2:11 “to learn in quietness”
 5. 1 Timothy 2:12 “she must be silent”
 6. 1 Peter 3:4 “a gentle and quiet spirit”
 7. In each of these, the phrase “settle down” most closely approximates the word in our modern language. Paul and Peter are not asking for volume control, but attitude control.
- C. [SLIDE TWENTY] Jesus made it plain that in his kingdom there would be no one who was allowed to lord it over the others (Mark 9:42-45). Mutual submission is the order of the day (Ephesians 5:21) and it applies to males and females.
- D. In First Corinthians 11 women are given the all clear to prophesy and pray. Some see this as a contradiction to chapter 14 only because they insist on reading “silent” as “silent”. Others say it refers to a small, private gathering and not a community worship event. But Paul puts it right in the middle of a discussion on how to take the Lord’s Supper!

IV. A Question of Leadership [SLIDE TWENTY ONE]

- A. We use expression such as “leading singing” or “leading in prayer” but such actions are not authoritative and our language is misleading. When one assists or participates they are not exerting authority over others. We could just as easily borrow the language we use when we say “serving communion” and say that the

individual is “serving in singing” or “serving in prayer.” Things such as these are not exerting authority. Do not confuse participation and service with leadership.

- B.** [TWENTY TWO] Does Romans 12:3-8 indicate that only men are given gifts? Of course not! We understand that the “he” in these verses would include women. Why? Because we understand how language is used.
- C.** [TWENTY THREE] Does 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 teach that women are always to wear hats? If we take this and then add to it Paul’s admonition to “pray without ceasing” it would indicate that they were never allowed to take their hats off... unless we were honest about language.
- D.** [TWENTY FOUR] Are we to take 1 Timothy 2:8-15 literally as a teaching about all times and places? Then where is the lifting of hands? Why are women wearing jewelry or braiding their hair? It seems the only part of Paul’s laundry list some wish to enforce is the single phrase about women teaching.
- E.** [TWENTY FIVE] It is a question of mutual submission, submission to the elders, and to the pure and simple doctrine of Jesus Christ.

[NOTE: as time allows, Patrick will address the questions/comments made via cards the first Sunday]