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Finally, brethren
WHATEVER THINGS are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely
are of good report
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND IF THERE
IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

PHILIPPIANS
4:8

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Proper Attitude Towards Doctrinal Differences

Sunday Ayandare | Ibadan, Nigeria

Jude, "the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James..." (Jude 1) wrote: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write until you and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). So this makes "contending for the faith" one of the onerous tasks before a faithful Christian, and indeed, a preacher of the word.

But as it should be obvious to everyone that truth, by its very nature, could breed differences and even offences at times. Many disciples of Jesus Christ at a time took exception to His teaching and said, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it." What was the result? "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him" (John 6:6-66). Besides, Paul asked the Galatian brethren whether he had become their enemy because he told them the truth (Galatians 4:16). From this standpoint, it should be palpably evident that differences, and even controversies, are inevitable among Christians. But what should be our attitude as Christians when differences crop up among us is the thrust of this article.

First, it should not be our attitude to "forget about our differences." Evidently, ignoring or forgetting our differences is not the path dictated to us by the Holy Spirit as could be seen from Jude 3. We have the mandate to "contend for the faith." This means we have to assert strongly, and strive for the faith and discuss differences that exist among

us fully and freely; and let God's word be the means of settling such differences (Romans 3:3-4; Psalm 119:89; John 17:17). To fail to do this is to toe the line of weakness, cowardice, compromise and bigotry. Moreover, it should be clear to everyone that ignoring our differences does not free us from the necessity of facing them at a later date. So brace up and "fight the good fight of faith..." (1 Timothy 6:12). "Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2).

Second, proper attitude in dealing with our differences dictates that we put a distinction between principles and personalities. What do we mean here? We are advocating that principles of divine truth should be appraised independent of the character and motives of those who proclaim them. Consider this: Peter was the one who proclaimed on the day of Pentecost that God's promise was "... to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). And later in the house of Cornelius, he made the declaration that "God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him" (Acts 10:34-35). In both instances, Peter indicated the acceptance of the Gentiles by God into the fold of the elect (Acts 15:7-11). But this same Peter was to be blamed for the dissimulation he practiced at Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14). In conformity with his proclamation which was divine truth, he was eating with the Gentiles. Right! But when certain men came from James, "he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision" (Galatians 2:12). This was a clear case of duplicity. Now, the question is: does the hypocrisy of Peter vitiate the divine truth he had proclaimed on the day of Pentecost, and in the house of Cornelius and in the discussion in Acts 15? No! Even though just censure of motives may be charged against the person, such does not impeach the truth proclaimed. The converse is equally true. The very best of motives and purity of character does not in any way establish the truth of that which is taught by such persons. Therefore, we should maintain a proper attitude by making a distinction between principles of divine truth and personalities.

Third, in maintaining proper attitude in dealing with differences among our brethren, we should practice "the golden rule." In Matthew 7:12, our Lord Jesus teaches, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." The import of this is that since you would not want to be misrepresented, do not misrepresent the brother with whom you disagree. Since you would not want mean and cruel attacks to be meted out to you, do not pour invectives on the other person. Since you would not be delighted to have somebody to disparage your personality, do not cast aspersion on the personality of the other fellow. Caustic remarks, misrepresentation and sarcasm designed to hurt the personality of the other person do not advance the cause of truth. Rather, they can only succeed in veiling the truth. We should have it at the back of our minds that, "though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4). On the other hand, since you would want to be considered honest and sincere in your convictions, give the same consideration to the other person. Remember the golden rule!

Fourth, another proper attitude we wish to highlight is stated in Ephesians 4:15. "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." In discussing our doctrinal differences, we should be willing to demonstrate a spirit of brotherly love, kindness, compassion and patience (Colossians 3:12-14). Never should a spirit of ill-will that borders upon hate for one another be allowed to rear its ugly head in discussing our differences. Certainly, as the saying goes, we can disagree without being disagreeable!

Fifth, be humble like Apollos and avoid a "know-it-all attitude." In Acts 18:24-28, we are introduced to this good man with several admirable characteristics. He was an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures; "and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John." When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they knew he was in need of further information concerning Jesus so they took him aside and told him he was incorrect in some aspects of his teaching. After learning the truth accurately, Apollos with all humility corrected himself in teaching and continued to be useful in the vineyard of the Lord. "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5:5-6). Be humble enough to admit the possibility of your being in error. Be humble enough to learn from anybody, even from those who are much younger than you both in age and in the faith. No man is perfect. No man knows it all! Remember, "the way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise" (Pro. 12:15).

Sixth, "speak evil of no man" (Tit. 3:2). Involved in evil speaking is the practice of backbiting and casting aspersion

on the other person; or trying to degrade him by slander and making defamatory statements about him. This is summed up in our modern expression: "running each other down." Commenting on this passage, renowned scholar, Albert Barnes says:

The idea is, that we are not to slander, revile or defame any one. We are not to say anything to anyone, or of any one, which will do him injury. We are never to utter anything which we know to be false about him, or to give such a colouring to his words or conduct as to do him wrong in any way. We should always so speak to him and of him in such a way that he will have no reason to complain that he is an injured man... We should exaggerate no circumstance. We should never attempt to express ourselves about his motives - for we know not what his motives were... We should not make the bad traits of his character prominent, and pass over all that is good. In a word, we should show that we would rather find him to be a good man than a bad man - even if the result should be that we had been mistaken in our opinions. It is better that we should have been mistaken, than that he should be a bad man.

(Albert Barnes, Barnes Notes on the New Testament, Kregel Publications, p. 1198)

So, avoid the temptation of "all evil speakings" (1 Peter 2:1). "Speak no evil one of another, brethren..." (James 4:11). Let us be reminded, beloved brethren, that backsliding, slander, using unkind words and epithets and caustic remarks on another brother because of doctrinal differences, or other things, is not a display of strength; rather it is a demonstration of weakness and sinfulness. It is the hallmark "of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth" (1 Timothy 6:5).

Much of what is said here about proper attitudes towards doctrinal differences could equally be applied to personal differences with the Lord's teaching in Matthew 18:15-18 as the basis. And the list could be lengthened, but space will not permit this. Let us keep these few points in mind as we "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

Jamaica Patois Wisdom - # 21

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

The Jamaican Patois dialect is colorful, unique and humorous. It is my desire to share some of the philosophy shown in this mix of colorful phrases that are witty, as well as thought-provoking. I hope the readers both profit and enjoy. In my quarter-century plus of teaching there, I have come to appreciate some things about their culture. - JDT

PATIOS - When di gal dem dress like prostitute, it comin like pig a roll ina mud. Mi we get attention from pigs mose of all dough.

ENGLISH - When a girl dresses like a prostitute, it's like a pig rolling in the mud. The girl will get attention, but mostly from pigs.

MEANING - When a girl dresses immodestly, she will attract attention, but mostly the wrong kind of men.

Why do some women/girls dress the way they do? I suppose there are various reasons, which would include comfort, fashion/style, to impress, to attract, to display, etc. To display? Display what? Their body, of course! Why else do they wear low cut and/or tight fitting and revealing outfits that call for the world to "Look at me! See my beautiful body! Aren't my short shorts cute?"

I know not all women who dress immodestly have that foremost in their minds, but I wonder if they really look at themselves in the mirror before they leave the house. Or how about young girls that dress that way. Don't they have parents? Especially fathers, who obviously know how men think. Why would husbands or fathers want human pigs leering at their wives and daughters?

The women that I know would be highly offended if some man propositioned them. But if you have nothing to sell, then you are guilty of false advertising. I remember teaching a group of high school students at a summer camp years ago, and the question came up as to why girls wear revealing clothes. The answer the students gave was "Advertising!"

For years my wife and I have taken several young people with us to do mission work in Jamaica, where the rate of sexual immorality is off the charts. At times when a group of us are walking around town, we are approached and asked, "Are you Christians?" Why would that be suspected of us? Because we are dressed modestly, and most tourists are not so attired. And of course this sometimes presents an opportunity to have a discussion and/or study with the questioner.

Job made a covenant: "I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?" (31:1). Obviously, we cannot help seeing an immodestly dressed woman, but men can choose not to stare and allow lust to enter their hearts. "...every one that looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). Thus if a woman dresses in such a way as to cause a man to lust after her, she has committed sin herself.

So, ladies, you have two choices. Solomon wrote about a foolish young man, "And behold, a woman comes to meet him, Dressed as a harlot..." (Proverbs 7:10). And then Paul wrote about the fairer sex: "Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness" (1 Timothy 2:9-10). Not that it's wrong to wear jewelry or braided the hair, but that women should emphasize good works more than appearance. Which do you choose?

There is nothing wrong with dressing nicely and being attractive, but a woman should be known for her godly life rather than by how much cleavage she shows. God said the wife is to "cleave" to her husband, not show her "cleavage" to all men.

Themes of Proverbs : Parental Instruction

Tanner Campbell | Rapid City, South Dakota, USA

The first nine chapters of the book of Proverbs are addressed by Solomon to "my son," and "my children." A literary technique, no doubt, but one that is personal, affectionate, and authoritative. However, there is more to be considered. Is not Solomon's counsel a pattern given to the parent? It is at Solomon's feet that parents learn what to emphasize to their children as they grow. He provides for parents a vision of himself talking to his own children, and how he spoke to them about challenging things, and gave them guidance in their quest toward wisdom.

The first chapters of Proverbs demonstrate the importance of parents meeting their duty to train their children toward godliness. Solomon's efforts spent on describing wisdom as something to be desired and sought after above all other things should not be ignored by parents. Parents who rely on the Sunday morning bible class teacher to provide the majority of spiritual instruction have only passed off their responsibilities for an inferior result in their children. Children need a lot of time spent on education. Parents would feel irresponsible if they allowed their children to spend only two hours a week in secular schooling, but many of them seem satisfied with two hours a week of spiritual learning by a bible class teacher. Solomon demonstrated his personal responsibility to teach his children the great appeal of living by godly wisdom. The Old Testament is also a witness to God's view of parental instruction; Deuteronomy 6:7 commands God's word be taught by parents to their children. Specifically, the word of God should be taught "diligently," according to the Scripture. The Hebrew word translated "diligently" literally means to point, sharpen, intensively to pierce. The parent's responsibility here is to make very clear what the will of God is. The text continues by addressing the when and the where to fulfill this command: you "shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Does this suggest the idea that parents can neglect their duties and limit the spiritual education of their children to two hours a week at the assembly? Certainly not. And the New Testament carries along the same ideas that we see in the Old; Ephesians 6:1-4 calls upon fathers to head up the spiritual education of their children, saying "bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." The book of Proverbs is a grand example of Ephesians 6:4. Fathers and mothers alike should take great consideration to the discussions Solomon has with his children in chapters 1-9. Consider what is important in these discussions. Look at the emphasis he places on the attraction that wisdom has. Consider all of the "what's in it for me?" mentality that children (and some adults) possess. He makes sure his children understand what's in it for them if they choose wisdom over immorality. Parents, may we all take great care in proving to our children that the everyday life of a Christian is the way that they should choose when they are older. However, for some Christian parents, their

children see their lives as full of anxiety and discontentment. Why would they want that life for themselves too? Brethren these things ought not be so. So we see then the importance of diligent training, and a daily proving that the training leads to a satisfying life in Christ, here and in eternity.

If one were to read through the pages of Proverbs chapter one through nine, they would see a father speak often to his children about obtaining godly wisdom, but they would also hear him speak almost as much about sexual immorality. But fathers generally don't like to speak of such a topic. It's forbidden! No it's not. Rather, it would seem sensible that part of the training would be to demonstrate why one shouldn't choose any other option than godliness. The "father" in the text has a very clear purpose in mind when dealing with the subject of sexual immorality, which is to tear away all of its attraction, to show how ugly, miserable, and deadly it really is. It is interesting that the world tries to portray the immoral woman as someone appealing, but "the father" in Proverbs, makes great effort to describe the immoral woman as who she really is, while painting a very attractive picture of wisdom. Today the problem remains the same. The world continues to educate children that immorality is the most attractive lifestyle option. Who will teach them otherwise? God answered that question: fathers and mothers. Therefore, we see that the training of children is not just a simple education, but it is also a battle against the teachers of worldliness that are always trying to educate our children, whether through worldly friends, television, internet, and even schools. Nevertheless, God has provided parents with the weaponry needed to overcome the world and its influences, through His word. Now then, will parents choose to use it?

Paul, To The Ephesians | Ephesians 2:1-3

The Way It Was

Patrick Farish | Lancaster, Texas, USA

The Gentiles, and the Jews, at one time were dead: dead in "trespasses and sins."

The behavior that got them to this condition is described in verses two and three. They "once walked" in trespasses and sins; in so walking they were following "the course of this world."

What does following "the course of this world" mean? In 1 John 2:15-17 the "world" of our passage is discussed: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life - is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever." The Holy Spirit says that the desires of the flesh and of the eyes and pride of life are "all that is in the world." Some say that these three are not "all that is in the world," but they never suggest what should be added. James adds the warning, "You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (4:4).

To follow the course of this world is to be conformed to this world. This is contrary to the instruction of Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind..." People who follow "the course of this world" are conformed to it; and they are dead in "trespasses and sins."

Further, they were following "the prince of the power of the air." Jesus said, "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters" (Matthew 12:30). One who has not yielded to Jesus is against Him; he is serving the devil. This is folly; Jesus partook of flesh and blood that "through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). To follow the prince of the power of the air is to follow one who has been judged, and destroyed. Be not deceived: to yield to temptation to pursue the easy way through the wide gate is to follow one who is already defeated.

The devil is "the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience." If you follow him, as sons of disobedience, you "are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires" (John 8:44). Children by and large take on the appearance of their parents; this is the thrust of Matthew 5:44, 45. Those who follow the devil take on his appearance, and are recognized as "sons of disobedience."

Paul says, we all used to be like that, living among the sons of disobedience, yielding to sinful desires. As such, "like the rest of mankind," we "were by nature children of wrath." What is "nature"?

We are told that "nature" is something we got from Adam that makes us liable to sin. We are not told, if that is the how of it, what - or Who - made Adam liable to sin.

To the contrary, as R.L. Whiteside wrote, "By nature a person does what he is in the habit of doing. When you began to drive a car, you were awkward; but by practice you reached the point where it became part of your nature to do things a certain way" (Doctrinal Discourses, page 132). So (in the old days) you depressed the clutch pedal and started the engine and pulled the gear-shift into "low" and then eased the clutch out and pressed the accelerator - and with much jerking and neck-snapping, the car began to move. It kept on that way until you became so accustomed to the process that, first thing you know, you didn't have to think about all those things, and you began to do them, smoothing, without thinking about them: by nature!

So, yielding to the passions of the flesh and the desires of the body and the mind, it became natural to yield to temptation and gratify appetites irrespective of right or wrong - more or less without even thinking about it.

And that is the way it was, with those who "once walked, following the course of this - world."

Mark Well Her Bulwarks - No. 5

Tommy Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

Another bulwark that must be zealously marked if the church Jesus built is to remain His church is "**The Worship Of The Church.**" The importance of this bulwark can be seen as one notes that the church is designed to be **God's temple, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17**. Peter reminds his readers of this as he writes, *"you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"* (**1 Peter 2:5**). He continues, *"you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"* (**v 9**). Note also that when Paul writes of the church as the temple, **1 Corinthians 3:16-17** he reminds his readers that this spiritual house/temple must not be defiled by human hands and worldly standards.

So, if the church is to remain God's temple, it must maintain a distinctiveness from the world. The word "church" itself suggests this. The Greek word for church (**Acts 2:47**) is "**ekklesia**" a compound word of "**ek**" (out of) and "**klesia**" (called), thus, "the called out." Called out of what? Paul writes that God calls His people to *"...come out from among them (the unbelieving world - t.t.) and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you"* **2 Corinthians 6:14-17**.

When God designed the church as His temple, He was limiting both the people from whom He would accept worship, and also the place where the worship could be offered. The only people from whom He would accept worship are those who comprise His temple, His spiritual house **1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 2:20-22**. These are the saved ones He has added to the church **Acts 2:47** and have become the living stones, **1 Peter 2:5**, of which the temple is built. God does not accept worship from non-relatives (unsaved alien sinners) **Matthew 7:21-23; 12:48-50**.

God did not design His temple as something where man could worship Him through their human wisdom, nor to use it for worldly entertainment. He expects worship to be directed toward Him, to honor and glorify Him, not to satisfy people's fleshly cravings. He is the only being worthy of worship **Revelation 4:11; 22-8-9**. Jesus tells us in **John 4:23-24** true worship must not only be directed toward God, it must also be according to His dictates, *"in spirit and in truth,"* His prescribed manner. To follow the teachings of men, instead of God's truth makes people's worship vain and void. **Matthew 15:7-9; Colossians 2:20-23**.

To worship God *"in spirit"* means one must have the proper motive, be in the right frame of mind, as he/she offers worship to God. It is not enough to go through a form of worship, to mouth a beautiful prayer or sing a psalm, hymn or spiritual song if it does not come from the heart. Those who see and hear these things done publicly may be impressed, but I assure you God is not impressed in the least if the heart is not right.

"In truth," means whatever is placed on God's altar, whether prayer, praise or service, in public or private, it must be done by God's authority found in His word **Colossians 3:17**. If not, it profanes (make common) spiritual worship. According to truth **John 17:17** God requires His people to publicly assemble together on the first day of each week, in the local church where they hold membership, to engage in the worship activities we learn about in His word **Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2**. From the New Testament we learn that saints assembled on the first day of each week to break bread (partake of the Lord's Supper) **Acts 20:7**. While assembled they also laid by in store (contribution) **1 Corinthians 16:1-2**. They learned by hearing the apostles' doctrine (inspired words, spoken or written) **Acts 2:42** They also prayed to God, and sang psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, vocally, without the aid of mechanical instruments, to praise God and teach one another **Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 14:15**.

The things written above are meant to establish God's bulwark of what is true, acceptable worship. But as with many things, God's will is no longer considered as important. Men have grown dissatisfied with God's bulwarks, and have quit guarding them. As they crumble and collapse, the world is able to enter in and capture the local church in many places. Today, we find people who want to be known as members of the "church of Christ" that meets in (you fill in the place) yet they have trampled down the bulwark of worship.

These churches no longer ask for Bible authority for worshiping God. They compromise the truth in order to attract a following. Their preachers and teachers promote things to entertain the masses instead of educating them in God's word. They hold a Bible in their hands and pretend to talk about the truth, God and Jesus Christ, but they don't teach it. They are giving people what they want, not what God wants. **Judges 17:6; 21:25** tells us *"In those days there was no king in Israel, everyone did what was right in his own eyes."* They are defiling God's altar. I plan to explore some of this in the next article.

A Follower of Christ

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

In Luke 10:57-62, Jesus teaches us some valuable lessons on one becoming a follower of Him. Many claim to be followers, yet in life they deny this assertion. Some will say they want to be a disciple, but are not willing to fully submit to the Lord. Either they are not ready to give up some sin they want to cling to or they refuse to do something required of them. In our text, we see Christ inviting one man to follow Him, while two others said they would follow.

The first man who volunteered to follow the Lord was told, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (v 58). Jesus wanted him to be aware of the cost involved in being His follower. Our Lord had no home of His own. While traveling from place to place teaching His great gospel message, there were no hotels or nice comfortable Inns for rest at night. How many days and nights did the Lord find Himself out in the elements of the weather with no shelter? Was this man willing to make such a personal sacrifice to follow the Lord?

Jesus clearly pointed out if one wanted to be His disciple sacrifices had to be made. Three times, in Luke 14:25-35, the Lord uses the expression, "Cannot be My disciple" (vv 26, 27, 33). One must come to Him hating his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters and even his own life (v 26). Matthew 10:37 is a good commentary on the meaning of hating one's family, etc. Christ must come first. Those who follow Him must bear their cross (v 27). A disciple must crucify himself, bearing any shame, reproach and persecution involved in serving Him. There is a forsaking of all one might hold near and dear to be a disciple (v 33). This is the price one must be willing to pay to be a follower of Jesus Christ (vv 28-32).

The second man in this story, Jesus says, "Follow Me" (Luke 9:59). His response was needed to first go bury his father. This certainly seems to be the respectable thing to do, showing honor to a deceased loved one. yet the Lord said, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God" (v

60). Those who are spiritually dead can provide the burial for those who are physically dead. This seems, at least to us, to be harsh and unreasonable. Yet I believe the Lord is teaching us a valuable lesson in having our priorities in order. Far too many Christians put other things in life ahead of serving God.

Jesus shows us the importance of preaching the gospel to a world of lost sinners. His apostles were told, "Go make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:18); "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). "It pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21). The gospel is still God's power unto salvation today (Romans 1:16). Churches of our Lord and individual Christians have placed other things ahead of preaching the gospel. Where are our priorities?

The third man in Luke's story steps forward, saying, he would follow he needed to first go bid those of his house farewell (Luke 9:61). This seems harmless enough; and if he only said "goodbye" surely this would not have taken very long. Was there to be some festive activities associated with his departure, wasting valuable time? Would those of his house persuade him to change his mind? Regardless, there is always danger in delay. Christ said, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). His focus needed to be on the Lord and His kingdom.

How difficult is it to plow a straight row if one is looking back and not where he is going? Christ said, "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32). The story of this woman, and what she did, is recorded for us in Genesis 19. As Lot, his wife, and two daughters were escaping the destruction of Sodom, they were told not to look back. His wife failed to obey and became a pillar of salt (v 26). Was she looking back longing for the things she had enjoyed in the city, not wanting to give those things up? As a follower of Christ, we must never take our eyes off heaven. Our hearts or minds must be upon those things above (Colossians 3:2). How easy it is for us to look back to the world, from where we came, wanting either to remain friends with it or still loving those sinful things we have given up (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17). One of the reasons why the men and women, in Hebrews 11, were successful in serving God, they never lost sight of the country to which they were going (vv 13-15).

Want to be a follower of Christ? Be determined to make any sacrifices necessary, counting the cost, realizing the rewards far outweigh the hardships one might be called upon to endure. Always have your priorities in order, putting the Lord first; He will provide the things we need. And never lose your focus in life; keeping your spiritual eyes turned toward heaven. If you will heed His instruction, you can successfully be His follower.

Is That Really What It Means?

Don't Judge Me!

William J. Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Has this ever happened to you? You share a few words with a friend, neighbour, family member, co-worker or fellow Christian out of concern for their soul, and in return, you are accused of being judgmental, and from those who are mildly familiar with the Bible, you're told that Jesus condemns judging another.

Check it out. Open up to Matthew 7:1 and read the words of Jesus. See, Jesus told us not to judge! Now, close your Bible. ... I'm serious - close your Bible. OK, is it closed now? Good. Do you know why I asked you to close your Bible? It's simple; this is what I've seen people do after quoting this verse to me. You read the verse, and then you close your Bible - that's how this verse works.

As we mentioned in last month's article, context is important. It is not necessary to cite the context of a verse every time we use it, but we need to make sure our understanding of a verse is consistent with its context. Generally I suggest that folks read 7 verses before and after the verse being considered. In most cases, a 15 verse span should be sufficient to be sure our use of a verse is in harmony with the context. That said, there are times we may need to read more - perhaps even a chapter or more. Plus, we need to be sure that our use of a verse is consistent not just with it's local context, but with the rest of the Scripture as well.

Those using Matthew 7:1 to condemn others for pointing out sin that must be repented of or areas needing improvement in our service to God have demonstrated either ignorance or dishonesty, for they have pulled the verse away from its context.

Looking back 7 verses from Matthew 7:1, we find ourselves reading the last bit of chapter 6 about the need for us to seek the things of God and not worry. In this case, there is a change of topic from chapter 6 to chapter 7, but that is not always so. Keep in mind, the chapter divisions are put there by men, not God. Therefore, when considering the context of a verse, ignore chapter divisions.

Going ahead 7 verses from Matthew 7:1, we find the context of this statement. It becomes evident that verse 1 is not intended to be a stand alone verse. In fact, those who cite verse 1 alone have grossly misrepresented what Jesus said. Notice with me:

For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (v 2-5)

Jesus didn't exclude all judging; He gave parameters so we can judge righteously (cf. John 5:30; 7:24).

The proverbial adage in verse 2 is basically, "you will get what you give." This concept is in the same context of our works (6:1-6), forgiveness (6:14-15), and actions toward others (7:12). What measure should we measure by? God's word is the standard - to judge by anything else is not the kind of judgment the Lord condones.

Verses 3-5 then illustrate the difference between righteous and unrighteous judgment.

Some are glad to point out the sins of others while ignoring or hiding their own. It is not that one must be perfect in order to judge another (Paul hadn't attained, but did not hesitate to judge the fornicator in Corinth, Philippians 3:12; 1 Corinthians 5:3). However, it is hypocritical to judge someone regarding a sin while being guilty of the same thing ourselves (cf. Romans 2:1; John 8:1-11).

In Matthew 7:15-16, the Lord warns about false prophets. How do you know a false prophet? It requires a judgment to be made. We compare the word of the teacher to the word of God. If it's the same, great; if not, then he's revealed as a false teacher.

Judge not, that you be not judged. Void of it's context, this verse is a shelter for sin. In context, it is a guard against sin. May we use it rightly.

Pure Religion

Sean P. Cavender | Raymore, Missouri, USA

Many people today seem to be turned off by "organized religion." They do not want to hear about the church, morality, or responsibility towards God. There is an arbitrary distinction that people have drawn between being spiritual and being religious. Being "spiritual" is portrayed as having a direct connection with Deity; while being "religious" is thought to be a useless endeavor of "going to church." These distinctions are arbitrary and rather silly.

The Scriptures teach us about pure and undefiled religion. *"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world,"* (James 1:27). Being religious is not merely equivalent to being a regular church-goer. Being religious does not mean that a person is a theologian. Being religious is something much more important - it is how you live your life in accordance with God's word. Thus, being religious is being spiritual (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:12-15).

In the context of James' epistle, he reminds us of the attitude we must first have towards the word of God. We must be "swift to hear." At all times we should be ready to hear and receive instruction from God's word because that is how we will receive the righteousness of God (James 1:19,20). Furthermore, James instructs us to put aside evil

deeds, receiving the word of God that is able to save our souls (James 1:21). The one thing that will prevent the word of God from taking full effect in our lives, thus making us a non-religious person, is wickedness. If our hearts and minds are set on wrath, anger and filthiness then we will never be as religious and committed to God as we should be.

Then James begins to really describe the attributes of the religious man in James 1:22-27.

1. Be a doer of the word.

You can listen to the word. You can appease your friends or family members by hearing the word of God and sermons that are preached. But until you become a doer and act upon those words you are deceiving yourself. *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves,"* (James 1:22). The wonderful illustration James uses is timeless. He compares a "hearer only" as someone who would look at themselves in a mirror, does not fix anything and forgets what he looked like.

However, those that are blessed will be saved are those who look into the perfect law of liberty, examine their hearts and attitudes and become doers of the work that is set before him (James 1:25). The first step in becoming a religious person is doing what God tells you to do.

2. Control your tongue.

The next aspect of being religious is controlling your tongue. *"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain,"* (James 1:26).

Being religious means it not a mere show or act, but that it must penetrate our heart which will be evident by the way we speak. James warns about a vain and useless religion. This vain and useless religion is practiced by someone who is inconsistent and hypocritical. He merely "seems to be religious" and his heart is deceived. Perhaps what is the saddest part is that this man believes he is religious, but he is so deceived that he does not know he is wrong.

If a person who is a child of God and is a doer of the word, then he must also bridle his tongue. He must control and regulate his speech. The words that cross his lips to the stories and jokes he participates in - everything must be consistent with what God's word teaches.

If there is one thing that is able to show a person's inconsistency with what the Bible teaches, it is our speech. If we gossip, like, curse our brethren or neighbors, then we are practicing useless religion. If we do not use our speech for good, seasoned with salt, teaching others about the grace of our Lord then our religion is void (Colossians 4:6).

Our speech will show our interests - are we genuinely interested in spiritual and religious matters? Or are we so deceived to the point that we have a defiled heart and we just do not know it?

3. Care for those in need.

A responsibility of every Christian is to "visit the fatherless and widows." We are to provide care, comfort and necessities for those who lack the fortune of having someone to provide for them. Christians are called to be selfless caregivers. We may provide for the needs of the needy. God has established and provided a way for those who are lonely to be a part of a family. *"God setteth the solitary in families..."* (Psalm 68:6).

If we are to truly be religious then we must make certain the needs of the needy are met. We are not to ignore those who are in need. God judges those people who treat the poor, widows and orphans unfairly. *"Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless,"* (Isaiah 10:2).

True and undefiled religion calls upon Christians to serve those who are in need. We are to provide and see that they are cared for. We are called to have mercy upon our fellow man and be Good Samaritans, loving our neighbor as our self.

Pure and undefiled religion calls us to act. It is never self-serving, but it is about obeying God. True religion is never satisfied with a mere form of godliness, but it pierces the heart. Those who are religious, in the Scriptural sense of the word, obey God, regulate their speech and care for those in need. Being religious is a good thing and should never be criticized. Yet, being religious also means we must be vigilant. There cannot be room for hypocrisy in our lives. We must continue to serve God faithfully each and every day.

Homosexual Absurdities

Mike Thomas | Beaver Dam, Kentucky, USA

Homosexuality is a sin (Romans 1:24-27). Always has been. Always will be. Not only that, there are things about this sin that are absurd and contrary to life on earth.

Corrupts the nature. A male professes to be attracted to men, yet will dress and act like a woman to attract other men, or will look for feminine qualities in other men. A woman claims to like women more than men, yet will look and act like a man in her relationship with another woman, or will look for such qualities in a woman. If men are attracted to men who act feminine, and women are attracted to women who are masculine, why not accept things the way God designed them? Why corrupt the natural affection for the opposite sex with something that is deviant and shameful? This is absurd. "Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lust of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves" (Romans 1:24).

Contrary to nature. A homosexual must deny what is evident in nature to have an affection for the same sex (Romans 1:26). No homosexual would have life had it not been for the union of opposite sexes. Not once in the history of humanity have two men given birth to a child, nor has a woman conceived without a man. Every human ever born had to have a mother and a father for conception. The only exception to this rule was when Mary conceived without human interaction (Matthew 1:20, 23), and even that was not through homosexuality. The normal order of things for life on earth requires heterosexuality.

Violates design of marriage. Same-sex marriage is now a reality in the United States. Only God's judgment will fully remove it from the land (2 Peter 3:10). Until then the advocates of homosexual marriages must consider one question: Where did marriage come from? They want to rewrite the traditional arrangement of such a sacred relationship, but from whom did the concept of marriage originate? The only answer to that question is found in the Bible (Genesis 2:18) - the same book that condemns a union between same sexes. God says marriage is to be between a husband and wife (Matthew 19:4-5), with no sexual activity apart from that union (Hebrews 13:4). Those who want to redefine marriage must first get permission from its Designer to do so. But God has clearly demonstrated that He will not condone homosexuality, and says, "Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7).

Clearly, homosexuality is not only eternally wrong, it is contrary to everything good and natural for life on earth.. Only a person given to rebellion would want to practice something so contrary to nature. Those who are guilty of this sin must repent and obey God's word if they are to know and understand the One who placed them in a heterosexual world (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

from the e-book, "And They Shall Become One Flesh"

Dealing With Disagreements

William J. Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respect her husband. (Ephesians 5:33)

One Another's Interests

At times it seems the closer we are to someone, the more comfortable we are to disagree or argue with them. Consider that rivalry is more likely to appear in a sibling relationship than it is to rise between co-workers. Likewise, spouses are more likely to openly disagree than an employee with an employer.

That we feel more comfortable to disagree with someone does not justify our doing so. In fact, we need to be cautious, for disagreements, if handled incorrectly, can drive wedges in relationships.

Though it certainly is not true of all dissension, many disagreements do result from selfishness. We must guard against such. MEism is strong fuel for a fight; but will harm our relationship and display immaturity, discontent and unthankfulness. Consider God's instruction regarding the pursuit of what interests ME. The Lord tells us to put others first in our relationship with fellow Christians (Romans 12:10, 16; Galatians 5:26; Philippians 2:3-4; James 3:14; 1 Peter 5:5); and also in our relationship to folks in the world (Romans 12:18; Hebrews 12:14).

If we are to look out for the interests and concerns of others in our relationship to other Christians and people in the world in general, then should we not also have an equal focus on the interests and concerns of the one with whom we are "one flesh"? Husbands and wives need to be focused on how to please one another, not self.

Paul commanded that each render the affection due the other (1 Corinthians 7:3). It is not my place to decide exactly how much affection my spouse is due. The apostle continues,

...the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. (1 Corinthians 7:4)

However, if we are seeking our own interests, rather than how to please our spouse, we will fail to obey this commandment of God.

Of the married man, the apostle bluntly states,

...he who is married cares about the things of the world - how he may please his wife. (1 Corinthians 7:33)

He does not say this in a reproachful way, but as a matter of fact. The faithful husband should seek to please his wife, and the faithful wife should seek to please her husband. To accomplish this, we must be focused upon one another, not upon ourselves. When selfishness is removed from the equation, most disagreements will simply dissolve.

When Disagreements Persist

Disagreements come in a variety of magnitudes. Disagreements might fall into three classifications:

- Minor, momentary and insignificant in the grand scheme of things (ie. what's for supper; what are we doing on Saturday, etc.). We need to grow up and quit complaining.
- Not so minor, but nor really major things (ie. do we make this purchase or not; visiting family, etc.). We need to have a serious discussion and feedback from one another.
- Major, life changing things (ie. are we moving; do we take in cousin Cecil, etc.). We need to be on the same page here.

Ideally, through selflessness, we are able to dissolve most differences. However, it may be that some persist. Here are some important principles to keep in mind.

- What is God's will? God may have settled our disagreement already. If a disagreement is over something which deals with our spiritual walk or morality, it doesn't matter what my position or my spouse's position is - what does God say? (ie. gambling; meeting with this church or that church; is this a job I should be working; etc.). God's word has the answers for life (2 Peter 1:3). We need to be perpetually searching, learning and applying His will (Ephesians 5:17).
- Am I being submissive to my husband? Both husband and wife will have an opinion on what should and should not be done. Neither opinion is less important than the other; but God has given the role of leadership to the man (1 Corinthians 11:3). As such, after prayerful discussion about a matter over which there is disagreement, the wife ought to willingly concede to and accept her husband's authority (Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5). If, however, he has chosen to lead the family in a course contrary to the will of God, she is bound to obey God over her husband (Acts 4:19; 5:29).
- Am I loving my wife as Christ loves the church? Immediately after Paul commanded the woman to submit to her husband, he addressed the nature of the husband's authority.
 - The husband is to love his wife, just as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25).
 - He will seek what is in her best interest (Ephesians 5:26, 29)

- He will do what he can to give her honour (Ephesians 5:27)
- He will consider harm felt by her equal to harm he feels himself (Ephesians 5:28)
- He will keep in mind that they are one flesh (Ephesians 5:31)

With authority comes responsibility. He must make choices that are not self-serving, but take into account the welfare of his wife. Thus, he will follow the best course of action for his family, whether that means pursuing his opinion or his wife's. Remember, Jesus went to the cross for us, not for Himself!

May a Woman Be a Preacher?

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

I recently watched a Youtube video of Lauren King, preaching intern of the Fourth Avenue Church of Christ in Franklin, Tennessee. Yes, Lauren is a feminine name, and Lauren King is a young woman, a graduate of Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee, recommended to Fourth Avenue by Lipscomb University and accepted by that congregation in the role of "preaching intern." The video introduced Lauren as a preaching intern, showed her preaching to the church and leading the church in prayer, and presented a defense by her, "Senior Minister" Patrick Mead, and "Minister of Administration" Nancy Baughman of Lauren's role as a woman preacher.

Does the Lord approve women doing the work of preaching to the church?

Women Authorized to Teach the Bible

I unequivocally affirm the right of a woman to teach the Bible. In fact, in every way the New Testament gives the right to act, the Scriptures authorize women to teach the Scriptures.

The apostle Paul directed Timothy, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). The word "men" in this passage translates the Greek term "*anthropois*," which means "universally with reference to the genus or nature, without distinction of sex, a human being, whether male or female" (Thayer. 46). Part of a preacher's work is teaching faithful people, both men and women, to teach the Word of God. Thus, by statement, the apostle authorizes faithful women to teach the Scriptures.

The apostle Peter commands all Christians, men and women, to equip themselves to defend the faith (1 Peter 3:15). Paul instructs Titus to command aged women to teach practical scriptural truths especially applicable to the feminine gender to younger women (Titus 2:3-5). Thus, Scripture commands women to teach the Bible.

Priscilla, with her husband Aquila, explained to Apollos, an eloquent preacher who only knew John's baptism, "the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:24-26). Thus, approved examples authorize women to teach the Word.

Several passages indicate women received the gift of prophecy (e.g., Acts 2:17; 21:8-9; 1 Corinthians 11:5). Since the function of a prophet was to teach (1 Corinthians 14:4), it is necessarily implied that women may teach God's will.

The Scope of a Woman's Right to Teach the Scriptures

Several traditions among some brethren concerning the limitations of a woman's teaching role are without scriptural support. Although some brethren stoutly deny it, a woman may teach a man the will of God (Acts 18:24-26). Furthermore, since the command to sing in worship applies to women as well as men, since all saints are taught to sing each to the other, and since we teach when we sing, the Scriptures authorize women to teach in the public worship assembly (Ephesians 5:18-19). And, since this singing is done when both men and women are present in the worship assembly, women have both the right and obligation to teach men in the assembly (Colossians 3:16).

In fact, the Scriptures, by necessary implication, authorize women to teach the church. The gift of prophecy was to edify (build up by teaching) the church (1 Corinthians 14:4). Certain women had the gift of prophecy (Acts 2:17; 21:8-9; 1 Corinthians 11:5). Therefore, certain women were to edify (build up by teaching) the church.

These passages do establish a basic principle. **A woman may teach any scriptural truth to anyone, anywhere, in any arrangement, unless there is a Bible restriction prohibiting it.**

Scriptural Limitations on Woman's Teaching

Two New Testament passages establish one limitation on the woman's teaching role. The first is First Corinthians 14:34-35.

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. 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.

What restrictions do these verses place on women as teachers of the Bible?

This passage is part of a long context in which the inspired writer gives the fullest discussion of miraculous spiritual gifts in inspired literature (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:1; 13:1; 14:1). In chapter fourteen the apostle regulates the use of these gifts in the public worship assembly. In fact, Paul makes direct reference to spiritual gifts in twenty-one of the forty verses of the chapter. The assembly of First Corinthians chapter fourteen cannot be duplicated today. It is a gross violation of the rules of Bible study to apply the details that regulate supernatural gifts to our assemblies today.

However, the chapter does contain four universal principles that always apply, and the apostle Paul clearly identifies each one. Three times he uses the comprehensive term "all" to point out a permanent truth, and once he states that the principle was true even under the law. These universal principles are:

- "Let all things be done for edification" (verse 26).
- "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (verse 33).
- "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" (verse 34).
- "Let all things be done decently and in order" (verse 40).

Now look at the passage itself. It is obvious that "churches" in verse 34 and "church" in verse 35 are references to the public worship assemblies of the local church. The immediate context pertains to tongue speakers and prophets addressing the worship assemblies (verses 27-33).

What were the women to do? The apostle enjoins, "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak" (verse 34). Does this mean no woman may utter a word in the public worship assemblies? If so, women cannot sing (Ephesians 5:19), confess their faith (Romans 10:9-10), or confess sin (James 5:16) in church.

The contrast in First Corinthians 14:34 establishes what kind of speaking women are forbidden to do. Opposite to this kind of speaking, "they are to be submissive." The apostle prohibits women from engaging in the kind of speaking of the context - authoritatively addressing the public worship assembly. By doing this women cast off their role of subjection to man. From the very beginning the principle of feminine submission has been true (verse 34; cf. Genesis 3:16). The lack of subjection demonstrated by the women in Corinth was shameful. The principle is that women must not speak in the assembly in such a way that their subjection to man is violated.

The other restrictive passage is First Timothy 2:11-12. "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence."

The purpose of Paul's first letter to Timothy was to teach him as an evangelist how to conduct himself relative to the church (1 Timothy 3:14-15). These principles are primarily fulfilled in the local congregation, the only organized relationship divinely authorized for the church.

First Timothy 2:9-15 gives divine legislation peculiar to godly women and reasons for these commands. Verses nine and ten regulate the dress of women. These requirements apply both in and out of the assembly. Verses eleven and twelve limit the woman in her roles of learning (verse 11) and teaching (verse 12). Verses thirteen and fourteen state the reasons for the woman's subjection, and verse fifteen assures her she can be saved. These truths do primarily apply to her relationship to the local congregation, in light of the general context, but their application is not limited to the public worship assembly.

Verse eleven regulates a woman's learning. Her activities as a Bible student have two limitations not placed on men: "in silence with all submission."

The term "silence" is from a different Greek word than that used in First Corinthians 14:34. It can either mean "quietness: descriptive of the life of one who stays at home doing his own work, and does not officiously meddle with the affairs of others" or "silence" (Thayer. 281), depending on the context. The New American Standard Bible translates the verse: "A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness." The English Standard Version renders it, "Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness." The apostle Peter directs women to manifest a "quiet spirit" (1 Peter 3:4). The word "quiet" in First Peter 3:4 is a different form of the same word translated "silence" in First Timothy 2:11.

The principle behind all peculiar limitations on women as students and teachers of the Bible is feminine subjection. In an arrangement, such as a Bible class, where questions and answers are invited, and a man is in charge, a woman may ask a question or offer a comment as long as she is not disruptive or domineering without violating the divine principle of submission. To demand that women not utter a word in congregational Bible study arrangements would contradict the truth that prophetesses could edify the first century church.

I conclude that "silence" in First Timothy 2:11-12 refers to "quietness," the attitude of one who is not domineering. The term "submission" means "a yielding of power or surrendering of person and power to the control of another" (Webster. 2277). In short, in all the woman's learning activities in the local church, she must be submissive to male leadership.

Verse twelve limits women as Bible teachers in the local church. Women are forbidden to do two things in the local church in reference to men. They are not to "teach" or "exercise dominion over" men. We have already seen that the Lord authorizes women to teach men, even in the local church. The Scriptures do not contradict themselves.

The law of contrast will again help us to see the apostle's point. Men, in relationship to the church, are to pray everywhere, i.e., in all situations (1 Timothy 2:8). Paul contrasts the role of women with that of men (verses 9-15). It should be obvious, since women silently pray with the man who leads, that verse eight refers to men leading in prayer.

In contrast, women are not to teach men, i.e., they are not to take the leadership position in teaching men. Nor are women in any other way to "exercise dominion over" men in the local church.

The principle is the same as that of First Corinthians 14:34-35. Women, in their roles as students and teachers of the Bible in the local church, must be submissive to men.

Practical Application

This limitation on the teaching of women means there are certain things a woman must not do in expounding the Scriptures. A woman may not be a preacher. Evangelists are to speak "with all authority" (Titus 2:15). This phrase, all of which is translated from one Greek word "*epitages*," means "with every possible form of authority" (Thayer. 244). It is the precise opposite of the phrase "to be submissive" in First Corinthians 14:34, which restricts the woman in her teaching. Literally, the woman in her teaching role, relative to man, must be under authority; whereas the preacher, in his teaching, is to be in authority over. The work of preaching is a role a woman cannot fill.

Furthermore, the fact the woman must be submissive to man in her teaching forbids her to take any leading role in the assembly of the church when men are present. This is the reason the apostle makes special reference to woman's submission when he forbids her to do the kind of speaking some women were doing at Corinth (1 Corinthians 14:34-35). Everything done in the assembly of the church is to be for edification, i.e., building up by teaching (verse 26; cf. Hebrews 10:24-25). By taking a leading role in the assembly where men are present, the woman would be teaching over a man. This is the reason women must not make announcements, wait on the Lord's table, lead prayers, lead singing, or take the collection in worship assemblies where men are present.

Additionally, a woman must not be the teacher in charge of a Bible class where men are present. This would place her in the role of exercising dominion over men, in violation of First Timothy 2:11-12.

But there are many avenues through which women may properly employ their ability and knowledge as instructors of the divine Word. The most obvious and important task a woman can have in Scripture teaching is to instruct her own children in the way of the Lord (cf. 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15). Since fathers must be gone much of the time to earn a living for their families, who have more opportunity and responsibility to teach God's word to their own children than mothers?

Women may also teach both men and women in arrangements where they are not in authority over men (Acts 18:24-26). This could simply be in a Bible class of men and women, where a man is in charge, but women are called upon to make comments.

Women certainly are generically authorized to be in charge of classes composed of women or children (1 Corinthians 11:5; 14:4). Congregations should see that children and women receive the teaching they need by arranging for godly women to teach such classes.

Older women are specifically commanded to teach young women their proper role as women, particularly in the home (Titus 2:3-5). More congregations should arrange classes for young women to be taught by a godly "mother in Israel." I have known of several instances in which young women desired such instruction, but it was not available, and I have known of instances where a godly, older woman was willing to teach the young women, and they weren't interested.

It is perfectly scriptural for able, knowledgeable women to share their knowledge with both men and women in arrangements in which they are not over men. For example, a column by a respected woman in a gospel paper is very much in order. For years Sister Irene Sowell Foy wrote a wonderful column that did much good in Preceptor magazine.

In summary, I defend a woman's right and even responsibility to do important work for the Lord and in the local church, to teach the Bible, to teach the Bible to men, to teach in the public worship assembly of the local church, and to teach men in the public worship assembly of the local church. **The issue is may women teach the Bible over men or in any other way be over men in the local church?**



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