

God's Plan of Cooperative Dominion | The Importance of Group-Specific Fellowships

# THE SOWER

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## Should Women be Silent in the Church?



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# Opening Letter

## Women in the Church

Fundamental to success in the task of Building on the Firm Foundation of Jesus Christ is a deep realization that continuing in his words, that is, putting them into practice, will bring liberty (John 8: 31-32). In this issue of *The Sower*, we tackle a subject that has kept the female half of the world's population in varying degrees of bondage for millennia.

Most brands of faith have adopted a sometimes underlying, sometimes blatant dogma that women are not as capable, or are even forbidden, to function in the same ways or to the same degree of effectiveness as men. Due to our natural physical differences, that might be true in endeavors such as lumberjacking or weight-lifting, but when it comes to the Church this belief stems largely from misunderstanding and mistranslation of Scripture and binds the ministries of a large percentage of the Body of Christ!

In Genesis, chapter 3, God gave a heads-up about one of the consequences of the fall of mankind. He said to Eve, "Your desire will be for your husband, and *he will rule over you*" (Gen. 3:16b). Sadly, this verse has historically been misconstrued as God's will. Similarly, when God warned the people of Judah that the consequences of their idolatry would be captivity in Babylon for 70 years (Jer. 25:11 and 12), He didn't mean it was His desire, but that their actions had so far removed them from His loving protection that it was inevitable.

From a study of history, we can see that Genesis 3:16b has played out in precisely the way that God said it would. Even though the founding fathers of the United States of America strived to honor and follow the one true God with the Bible as the foundation of our democratic Republic, it wasn't until the year 1920 that women were granted the right to cast ballots in official elections, and *that* was after many very courageous women made great sacrifices in some pretty fierce battles. Understanding that the declaration in Genesis 3:16b was prophetic rather than mandating the will of God will shed brilliant light upon the unique role of women in the Church and in the global culture. It can also help to clarify why it seems to be such an uphill battle for many women to discover and get moving in their callings.

We can learn much from a close look at Genesis 1 about God's opinion of His creation. After speaking light into existence and setting the life-supporting elements in place, He finally crowned His creation with the human race, including man **and** woman. He looked at **all** that He had created and declared that it was "**very good**" (Gen. 1:31).

I pray that the truth set forth in these pages will bring peace to your heart and inspire a freedom that results in blessing and support to both men and women in the Church, bringing glory to God and honor to our Lord Jesus!

With love and prayers for mighty blessings to you,

*Janet Speakes*

# God's Plan of Cooperative Dominion

by Karen Theisen

The book of Genesis gives God's plan in creating humankind and in it we discover that it was His goal to display His glory by creating two distinct genders that would cooperate together to display God's dominion on earth.

## **Genesis 1:27 NLT<sup>1</sup>**

So God created humans in His own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female He created them.

The male gender displays some of the traits of God such as provider and protector. Men in general have greater physical strength than women. The male brain structure facilitates linear thinking. This explains men's ability to detach from emotions in crisis, allowing singular focus on survival. Anthropologists speculate this is why men have been the primary warriors in all cultures throughout history. God reveals Himself as a warrior.

## **Exodus 15:3**

The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name.

The female gender also displays traits of our heavenly Father such as nurturer and care-giver, often involving self-sacrifice to safeguard the family unit. God has designed the female brain to have more connectors between the left and right hemispheres compared to males. This structural difference contributes to a woman's greater ability to multitask, an important quality in the rearing of children and homemaking. God's ultimate act of self-sacrifice was the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, whose life, sacrificial death, and resurrection, make it available for everyone who wants to become a member of the family of God to do so.

It is no coincidence that humans are most similar to our Creator-God within the covenant of marriage. Two distinct genders that both reflect characteristics of God come together in a celebration of covenant love and "create." Children are the fruit of marriage and the primary reason why God warns against divorce.

## **Malachi 2:15**

Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

Though angels were created first, God's intent in creating humankind was to reflect His glory in a unique way via the cooperation of two distinct human genders. God's original mandate for males and females involved a cooperative dominion:

## **Genesis 1:28**

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule..."

Our heavenly Father's vision of men and women sharing dominion was impaired as a result of the fall, and so rather than cooperation, gender competition has occurred throughout history. Mutual dominion was often replaced by male domination.<sup>2</sup> The Old and New Testaments, however, are filled with records of obedient servant-leaders who walked out God's vision of cooperative dominion.

### **Micah 6:4b**

I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam.

Moses, along with his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam, played a key role in the Exodus of Israel from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. A prophet speaks for God. All three siblings are identified as prophets, though Moses' humility contributed to God's designation of Moses as the chief prophet (Num. 12:1-8). God, however, had no objection in empowering a woman to be a spokesperson for Him.

### **Exodus 15:20**

Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand...

After Pharaoh's armies were drowned and Israel was safely across the Red Sea, Moses and Miriam led the congregation in praise and worship. The "Song of Moses and Miriam" is recorded in Exodus 15:1-18 and Miriam's song is recorded in Exodus 15:21. These siblings' cooperation contributed to God's plans of deliverance for Israel.

Another powerful partnership was Deborah and Barak. Deborah is the only judge in the book of Judges who is also identified as a prophet or prophetess.<sup>3</sup> Her prophetic counsel to Barak, the commander of Israel's armies, led to the overthrow of Jabin, the Canaanite King who had harassed God's people for twenty years.

### **Judges 4:4-7**

(4) Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time.

(5) She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided.

(6) She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead the way to Mount Tabor.

(7) I will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.'"

Beaten down by twenty years of Canaanite oppression, Barak was initially leery of this daring military strategy. He obviously respected Deborah's prophetic ministry and agreed to the plan with one contingency—that she would join him on the battlefield. Deborah challenged his initial lack of faith in God's revealed plan by disclosing that military victory would be given to a woman. True to God's prophetic Word, Sisera was defeated by a woman, Jael. Imagine the cultural disgrace for such a renowned Canaanite warrior! Judges 5:7 states Deborah arose as "a mother in Israel" while Barak is listed in the heroes of our faith.

### **Hebrews 11:32 and 33**

(32) And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets [this would include the female prophets!],

(33) who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised;...

The fruit of Deborah and Barak's alliance was many years of peace (Judg. 5:31b).

Let's examine another instance of gender teamwork fulfilling God's plan of dominion. King Josiah ascended to the throne of Judah when he was only eight years old, following the assassination of his idol-worshipping father, Amon. Amon had sapped the financial resources of the kingdom by paying tribute to foreign governments in order to secure political 'peace.' The child-king Josiah inherited a weak, spiritually anorexic people who not only were untrained in God's Word but who had become well practiced in idol

worship, sexual fertility rites, and even were sacrificing their children to pagan gods.

### **Jeremiah 7:30 and 31**

(30) “The people of Judah have done evil in my eyes, declares the LORD. They have set up their detestable idols in the house that bears my Name and have defiled it.

(31) They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire—something I did not command, nor did it enter my mind.

God, the ultimate protector and warrior of the family, is a holy God. The idea of sacrificing the fruit of marriage—children, as a form of worship was so foreign to God that He used the figure of speech *tapeinosis* (understatement) to emphasize it. He says He did not command it, but actually He had strictly forbidden such a practice (Lev. 20:1-4). This demonically inspired practice was well entrenched in Judah when Josiah ascended the throne. Josiah, however, had a hunger for the one true God which began to blossom when he was fifteen years old.

### **2 Chronicles 34:3 and 4**

(3) In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David. In his twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles, carved idols and cast images.

(4) Under his direction the altars of the Baals were torn down; he cut to pieces the incense altars that were above them, and smashed the Asherah poles, the idols and the images.

In the eighteenth year of King Josiah’s reign, at age 25, he ordered that the Temple be restored. In the process, the High Priest Hilkiah found the Book of the Law which had likely been hidden for safekeeping years earlier. Imagine the joy to again have access to God’s written Word! It was at this point that King Josiah realized that over and over again in the Mosaic Law God warned His people that if they abandoned Him, they would be destroyed.

### **2 Kings 22:11 and 13**

(11) When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes.

(13) “Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the LORD’s anger that burns against us because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us.”

No doubt Josiah was concerned about being conquered and enslaved by the superpower, Babylon. Faithful Josiah was struck to the core by the Word of God, and sent a messenger to Huldah the prophetess to ask God about the situation.

The prophetess Huldah was the wife of Shallum, Josiah’s valet (2 Kings 22:14). Perhaps because of Huldah’s proximity to the king due to her spouse’s job, she, rather than Jeremiah was consulted to give a prophetic word.<sup>4</sup> It is significant that her gender did not preclude her from being thought capable of giving a prophetic word. Huldah confirmed that there would be wrath from the LORD, but added that it would not occur during King Josiah’s lifetime.

### **2 Kings 22:18-20**

(18) Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard:

(19) Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people, that they would become accursed and laid waste, and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares

the LORD.

(20) Therefore I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place.” So they took her answer back to the king.

The prophet Jeremiah confirmed that Judah would be destroyed.

### **Jeremiah 25:8 and 9**

(8) Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: “Because you have not listened to my words,

(9) I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,” declares the LORD, “and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants...I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin.

The sin of the people of Judah had become so great, and they had ignored God’s warnings for so long, that He could no longer protect them from destruction. Yet even in terrible circumstances, His mercy and grace abounded, because He said Judah would only be a captive nation for 70 years, at which point Babylon would be destroyed:

### **Jeremiah 25:11 and 12**

(11) This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

(12) “But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,” declares the LORD, “and will make it desolate forever.

Eventually Jeremiah’s prophecy came to pass. Persia conquered Babylon, which is how the Judean Mordecai came to be in Persia during the reign of King Xerxes (Esther 2:5-7). Mordecai, with Esther’s collaboration, was instrumental in her ascent to the Persian throne as queen. Mordecai and Esther then worked together to interrupt the demonic plot of Jewish genocide that was mandated under unwitting King Xerxes (Esther 3:8-15). Satan’s plot behind the genocide was to destroy the Jews so that the Messiah could not be born. However, God acted powerfully through courageous people so that the Judeans were not destroyed, and eventually, from the nation of Judah and tribe of Judah, the Christ was born.

God’s plan to bring the Messiah was accomplished centuries after the Babylonian Captivity through the obedience of a simple Jewish girl, Mary<sup>5</sup>, who with the partnership of her betrothed, Joseph, provided a protective family for our Jesus to mature until he was ready to begin the redemptive work of His real Father, God.

Satan was unable to prevent the birth or resurrection of our Messiah, Jesus. That does not mean that Satan does not work diligently to thwart God’s plans and harm His people in any way he can. Since early after the resurrection, Satan’s efforts to thwart God’s dominion can be seen in his attempt to silence half of the church via misapplication of Scripture (a tactic he attempted with Jesus in Matthew 4:6):

### **1 Timothy 2:11-13**

(11) A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.

(12) I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.

(13) For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

In Timothy’s time, only males were allowed to attend academies of learning where they learned in quietness (also translated “tranquility”) and submission. Verse 11 means females should have similar educational opportunities in the Word. In verse 12, the Greek verb *authentain*, translated “to have authority over” could also

be translated “to declare oneself to be the author of.”<sup>6</sup> The context of this section of Scripture refers to the Gnostic infiltration that asserted that women were created before men and were therefore superior to men. This falsehood is contradicted in Genesis. The intent of 1 Timothy 2:11-13 was not to silence the voice of women, but rather to control the spread of false doctrine by making sure proper doctrine that fit with the whole Word was being taught.<sup>7</sup>

The voice of women is recorded in the New Testament including Mary the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:46-55), Elizabeth (Luke 1:42-45), Anna the prophetess (Luke 2:36-38), and the daughters of Philip the evangelist who were identified as prophetesses (Acts 21:9). If God’s plan was that women were to be silent, why would He choose to have women’s words recorded in His Word? God’s plan of cooperative dominion remains, and men and women have the privilege of cooperating to accomplish His purposes in this day and age.

**Notes:**

1. Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the *Holy Bible, New Life Translation*, copyright 1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.
2. Bevere, Lisa, *Fight Like a Girl* (Faith Words), New York, NY 2006), p. 122.
3. Barker, et al. *NIV Study Bible*, (Zondervan Publishing House), Grand Rapids, MI, 1985), note on Judges 4:4.
4. Barker, et al. *NIV Study Bible*, (Zondervan Publishing House), Grand Rapids, MI, 1985), note on 2 Kings 22:14.
5. For further study on this amazing woman read “Mary, the Mother of Jesus: Defining True Greatness” at [TruthOrTradition.com/mary](http://TruthOrTradition.com/mary)
6. Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman* (Baker Book House), Grand Rapids, MI, 1992), 87-98.
7. For further study visit our research website, [TruthOrTradition.com/role](http://TruthOrTradition.com/role)

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# The Contender Should Women be Silent in the Church?

by John W. Schoenheit

Let me say from the outset of this article that it is not in any way my intention to cause doubt about the text of the Bible in the minds of believers. Most textual scholars will attest to the fact that the Greek text of the New Testament is amazingly close to what was written in the original letters by Paul, Peter, Matthew, John, and others.<sup>1</sup> The “Big Lie” that the New Testament text has been copied so many times that it is not reliable is just that: a big lie. However, occasionally a scribal change to the Greek text became generally accepted, and one of those scribal changes is the subject of this article.

For many centuries women have not been allowed to lead or to teach in churches based in part upon what God supposedly stated in 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35.

## **1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35 (NASB)**

(34) Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says.

(35) And 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.

There is good evidence that these two verses were not part of Paul’s original writing, but were added to the text by scribes or copyists. It is never desirable to change Christian practice by omitting a verse of the Bible. Nevertheless, it is honest to recognize that occasionally the biblical text was changed, and in this case there are a number of pieces of evidence that certainly seem to warrant removing these verses that say women should be silent in the church. Before we examine those, however, it must be admitted that if these verses are an addition to the Greek text, it would have been an early addition, because the verses appear in the Greek manuscripts of 1 Corinthians.

## **Copying the Bible**

There are about 5,700 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament in existence today. Only a few of them are referred to as “complete,” meaning they contain every book of the New Testament. All the other manuscripts are only parts of the New Testament, and many of those are small, with some being much less than a page of Scripture. No two New Testament manuscripts are identical. While at first that might make any believer nervous, there are good explanations for it. Copying manuscripts was usually done by professional scribes, who sat in scriptoriums (rooms especially designated for copying manuscripts). Since it was their “job” to copy, they copied day after day, if they were hot or cold, if they were sick or well, if they were tired or wide awake. The scriptoriums were generally not well lit, and often the copyists wrote as someone in the front of the room dictated to a group of them. As we can imagine, this practice led to errors created by “mishearing,” and to spelling errors. These are easy to catch and correct, just as spelling errors are easy to catch in English. Sometimes someone will say, “No two Greek manuscripts are alike” as if it was a huge revelation that cast doubt on the whole New Testament. While it is true that spelling and grammatical errors do make manuscripts different, those errors do not usually cause a problem in reconstructing the original text.

However, there were times that scribes either wrote the wrong thing, or skipped a phrase or a line. What did they do then? They did not have erasers, so they wrote the correct reading in the margin of their manuscript. That way, when the manuscript was copied again, the correction could be added back into the text. However, in

the early days of the church as well as today, people wrote notes and commentary in the margin of their Bibles. Occasionally one of those notes would be copied into the text by the next scribe. That is almost certainly what happened with the text about women in 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35, and we will now examine why we think those verses were an addition to the text.

### **Additions to the Text Appear in Different Places**

When today's scholars encounter a word or sentence that is in some manuscripts but not in others, they have certain tests they apply to see whether the phrase was added or omitted. However, even the scholars do not always agree on a conclusion. One piece of evidence scholars look at to determine whether a phrase has been added to the text or omitted from it is its placement in the text. If a phrase is in the original text, then obviously, when it is omitted, it is always omitted from the same place. However, if a phrase is not in the original text, when a scribe adds it, another scribe may add it in a different place, or, thinking it does not fit, move it somewhere else.

1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35 do not appear in the same place in every manuscript of 1 Corinthians. Although it is still possible that the verses are original and some scribe simply moved them, that does not happen very often, and shows that in any case, the scribes were uncomfortable with the verses being where they were. In this case, however, given the weight of other evidence that indicates the verses were not part of the original text, the fact that these verses appear in different places in a few manuscripts of 1 Corinthians has helped some scholars conclude they were added to the text by a copyist. Alan Johnson writes, "A growing number of modern scholars believe that verses 34-35 (36?) are a later interpolation (gloss) added at an early stage in the manuscript transmission."<sup>2</sup> Richard Hays writes, "All things considered, this passage is best explained as a gloss [addition] introduced into the text by the second- or third-generation Pauline interpreters who compiled the pastoral epistles."<sup>3</sup>

### **Additions to the Text Often Break the Context**

Scholars have long noticed that 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35 break the flow of the passage, which makes perfect sense without them.

#### **1 Corinthians 14:29-37 (NASB; without verses 34 and 35)<sup>4</sup>**

(29) And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.

(30) But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent.

(31) For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted;

(32) and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;

(33) for God is not a *God* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

(36) Was it from you that the word of God *first* went forth? Or has it come to you only?

(37) If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.

As we can see from reading the above verses, verse 36 makes perfect sense after verse 33, because the prophets who spoke had a revelation (v. 30), but they still must listen to other prophets. The word of the Lord had not come "to you only," i.e., only to those prophets. However, if we add verses 34 and 35, we create contradictions in the text, and we will examine some of them in the pages that follow.

### **Has the Word Come to You Women Only?**

One of the contradictions created by the addition of these verses is that there is no evidence any women thought the Word of God came to them only, as verse 36 asserts.

#### **1 Corinthians 14:34-36 (NASB)**

(34) Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says.

(35) And 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.

(36) Was it from you that the word of God *first* went forth? Or has it come to you only?

Any woman who might have been speaking in the church certainly knew her place in society, since in both Jewish and Greco-Roman society women's roles were quite tightly defined. The evidence is that Jesus Christ himself began to liberate women to minister more freely, and by the time Paul wrote Corinthians he had already written Galatians, affirming that there is neither male nor female in Christ (Gal. 3:28). However, there is nothing in Greco-Roman or Jewish culture, or in the context of these verses, that leads us to think that the women in Corinth asserted that the Word of God came only to them, or only out from them. The fact that the women of Corinth wore head coverings as a sign of the authority over them (1 Cor. 11:5) is evidence that they were not being rebellious or acting as if God was speaking only to them.

Worth pointing out is that Paul's comment in verse 36 seems especially inappropriate if addressed to the women because it is harsher than a simple statement, it is biting irony, or as Robertson and Plummer point out, actually sarcasm.<sup>5</sup> Being sarcastic to the women seems very inappropriate and out of place. There is no evidence it was warranted. On the other hand, writing the phrase about the Word of God coming to "you only" would make perfect sense if it were written to one of the prophets. A prophet who got a revelation from God, as is indicated in verse 30, might have felt so strongly about his revelation that he might try to persuade the entire congregation of his point of view no matter how other prophets saw the situation. History is replete with examples of people who think they hear from God and are so convinced about it that no one can persuade them otherwise, no matter how ridiculous their "revelation" seems. Since it can take a real jolt to convince a prophet to let go of his idea, if the sarcastic sentences in verse 36, and the phrase, "has it come to you only" is applied to the prophets in verses 29 and 30, they fit perfectly. Thus, the fact that verse 36 applies to the prophets of verse 30 and not to the women of verses 34 and 35, is good evidence that the verses about the women being silent were added.

### **Ask Your Husbands?**

The phrase about the women "asking their husbands" at home is another indication that these verses were added to the text. Although the meaning of the Greek word translated "husbands" has a broader application in Greek than in English, the wording of the Greek text most naturally refers to husbands. Would God be so insensitive as to tell the women not to speak, adding that if they had any questions they could ask their husbands at home? Remember, it was only seven chapters earlier that he had specifically singled out the "widows" and said, "But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I [Paul]" (1 Cor. 7:8 NASB). How "good" would it be to remain as a widow if it meant that you could not express yourself in the church and also had no husband at home to ask questions? It seems quite insensitive and disingenuous for God to say in chapter seven that it would be good for a woman to remain single and then in chapter 14 to say she cannot express her opinions in church, and to ask her "husband."

Another problem with limiting women to asking their husbands is that not every husband could answer the questions of their wives. Some husbands were uneducated, some did not care, and some were not even Christian, a point that was made in 1 Corinthians 7:13. Calvin admits this and tries to solve the problem. He says, "When he [Paul] says *husbands*, he does not prohibit them from consulting the Prophets themselves, if necessary. For not all husbands are competent to give an answer..."<sup>6</sup> However, Lange points out, "'Their own' (*idious*) is emphatic, confining them to their own husbands to the exclusion of other men."<sup>7</sup> Thus, the wording of the text would leave the women who had no husbands, or whose husbands could not answer their questions, with no clear instruction about what God wanted them to do. It certainly seems that our loving God would not put the women in that precarious situation, but would have said something to clarify the situation. Another problem with the phrase about "asking the husbands at home" is it unrealistically limits the reasons that women speak in meetings. Note that in the context, women are not supposed to speak because, "if they desire to **learn** anything, let them ask their own husbands" (v. 35). God knows that women speak in the church for a lot more

reasons than just to ask questions so they will “learn.” Surely we will all acknowledge that women have good ideas, important opinions, and profound insights. It certainly seems that if these verses were genuinely from God who gave the holy spirit to both men and women, He would have said more than the women could “ask” at home.

If these verses really were to guide the Church concerning women, it certainly seems God would have mentioned that the women could influence the congregation by talking with their husbands, or other men if their husbands were not interested, who could then bring their valuable insights back to the congregation. It also seems He would have added some guidance as to how the widows were to get their opinions and insights to the congregation. Of course, all that “extra explanation” is unnecessary if verses 34 and 35 are not in the original text because the women could speak up.

### **Women Were Publically Prophesying in the Congregation**

Another clear contradiction caused by 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35 can be easily seen by reading the rest of the New Testament and realizing that the women were in fact speaking in the Church. The immediate context mentions prophecy, so that is a good place to start examining the subject of women speaking in the congregation.

#### **1 Corinthians 14:31-35 (NASB)**

(31) For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted;

(32) and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;

(33) for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

(34) The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says.

(35) 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.

The verses about women not speaking come right after the verses about everyone giving a prophetic message. Even scholars who believe that women should not lead or teach admit that God allows women to prophesy in the congregation. Even the Jewish religion of the Old Testament, which strictly excluded women from public ministry in the Tabernacle and Temple, recognized that women could prophesy or lead if they had the spirit of God upon them. Influential prophetesses in the Old Testament include Miriam, Moses’ sister (Ex. 15:20); Deborah, who was one of the Judges of Israel (Judg. 4 and 5); and Huldah, who advised the great King Josiah (2 Chron. 34:22). There were also recognized prophetesses around the time of Christ. For example, Anna prophesied in the Temple about the newborn Christ (Luke 2:36-38). Other women, perhaps not even recognized as prophets, spoke prophetic words that have come down to us in the Word of God. Elizabeth, John the Baptist’s mother, is an example (Luke 1:41-45).

The Christians, as well as the Jews, recognized women could prophesy in public. At the very start of the Church, on the Day of Pentecost when the gift of holy spirit was poured out, Peter made it clear that both men and women would receive holy spirit, and both would prophesy. Joel had foretold that they would (Joel 2:28 and 29), and Peter confirmed what Joel said. While quoting Joel, Peter said the Lord would, “...pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...Even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit And they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:17 and 18). Thus the expectation was set from the first day of the Christian Church that women would prophesy. Where would that generally occur? The same place the men would prophesy: in the meetings of the Church.

Philip the Evangelist had four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9) and the context of their prophecy makes it clear that they prophesied to Paul about his situation. By the time Corinthians was written, somewhere around 25 years after the crucifixion of Christ, women and men were actively engaging in prophecy, and that certainly was the case in Corinth, where sometimes everyone in the church had a prophetic word (1 Cor. 14:24).

However, as we saw above, women were told to prophesy and pray in public with their heads covered as a sign of the authority over them (1 Cor. 11:5).

Since it is quite clear even from Paul's epistle to the Corinthians that women could prophesy and pray openly in the church (1 Cor. 11:5), it makes no sense that Paul would immediately follow a verse about them prophesying with a verse saying they had to be "silent" and not speak. The contradiction between 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35 and Paul's other writings has been commonly seen. For example, Richard Hays writes,

"One of the strongest reasons for regarding these verses as an interpolation [addition] is that their demand for women to remain silent in the assembly stands in glaring contradiction to 11:2-16...Furthermore, all the other available evidence indicates that women played an active role in preaching, teaching, and prophesying in the early Pauline communities..."<sup>8</sup>

It seems quite clear that if Paul were going to say women should be silent, he would have to explain it more fully so that the people of Corinth would not be confused. However, although it makes no sense that Paul would seemingly contradict himself here, it makes perfect sense that a copyist who had strong feelings about women not speaking up would make a marginal note to that effect; a note which got copied into the later manuscripts.

The scribes or copyists were professionals, and the task was one that required an advanced education, so they almost always came from what we today would refer to as the "upper middle class," and perhaps even had family roots in either the Jewish or Greco-Roman temple system, which limited the participation of women. Among the Jews, both the Jewish culture and the fact that synagogues were built so that the women were separated from the men kept the women from speaking in the Synagogue, so this note could have come from a person with a Jewish background, especially because of his comment about the Law.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, it was specifically part of Greek culture that the more educated Greek men teach their less educated wives, so the comment about asking the husbands at home fits equally well in Greek society.<sup>10</sup> We can easily imagine such a copyist reading the text in verse 30 about everyone, women and men, prophesying in the congregation and making a marginal note, or perhaps even a textual addition, expressing his feelings that women could prophesy in the congregation, but that was all they could do, and beyond that they should be silent and ask their husbands.

### **Speaking Up in the Congregation**

One of the clear pieces of evidence in the Word of God that God did not command women in the Church to be silent is that it is quite clear that they were regularly speaking up besides just giving prophecy. One verse that gives evidence for that is 1 Corinthians 14:26.

#### **1 Corinthians 14:26 (NASB)**

What is *the outcome* then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification"

When the congregation gathered at Corinth, everyone participated. Of course, someone might argue that the word "brethren" makes the verse refer only to the men. However, the word "brothers" is often used to refer to both men and women (Matt. 25:40, Rom. 8:29, Eph. 6:23, Rev. 12:10). In this case both the context of the verse and its contents make it clear that everyone, not just the men, were speaking.

Taking a close look at the list of things that Paul mentioned in verse 26 as being done out of order, the women were apparently participating in all of them. This solidly confirms that the women were speaking up in the congregation. The women could speak up if they got a "revelation," because by definition when a person had a revelation and spoke it, that was prophecy, and the women could prophesy in the church (1 Cor. 11:5, 14:24). Also, the women were both allowed and encouraged to speak in tongues (vv. 5, 23). Furthermore, interpretation followed naturally after tongues, so women who spoke in tongues would have been encouraged to interpret (v. 5). Also, since the women were praying in the congregation (11:5), it makes sense that they would

occasionally be praying a psalm or reciting a psalm of praise, so the word “psalm” would also sometimes include congregational participation by women. That leaves only “teaching” out of the list, but arguing from silence, i.e., asserting that women did not teach because Scripture never says they did, is a weak argument. The fact that the early Church Fathers spent time condemning teaching by women seems to be a good ancillary argument that they did occasionally teach, something confirmed in 1 Tim. 2:12.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, in the book of Revelation, the prophetess Jezebel is castigated because “she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit *acts of* immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols” (Rev. 2:20 NASB). It is important to note that she is not reprovved for teaching in and of itself, but for teaching error. The context makes that abundantly clear, because the next verse says that she was given time to repent, but the thing she needed to repent of was her sexual sin, not the fact that she was teaching.<sup>12</sup>

### **What Does the Law Say?**

Another piece of evidence that 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35 were added to the text is the phrase, “as the Law also says.” Scholars have long had a problem with this phrase, because the Law does not clearly say that. Gordon Fee, after pointing out that nowhere else does Paul use the Law to dictate Christian practice, writes: “More difficult yet is the fact that the Law does *not* say any such thing” (emphasis his).<sup>13</sup> Commentators wanting to support Paul have tried very hard to justify Paul’s supposed statement by coming up with verses from the Law which would support the idea that women should be silent. Many say that Paul was likely referring to Genesis 3:16, that men would rule over women, but that is not what Genesis 3:16 is saying. Genesis 2:20-24 has been cited, and Job 29:21, but like Genesis 3:16, these verses do not say women should be silent.<sup>14</sup> The fact is that although the general tenet of the Mosaic Law was that women had a subordinate role to men in society and worship, there is nothing in the Law about them being “silent.”<sup>15</sup>

One of the verses that is often quoted to show God’s disapproval of women teaching is in 1 Timothy.

#### **1 Timothy 2:12 (NASB)**

But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

This verse, when properly translated and understood, confirms that women can teach in the Church.<sup>16</sup> But for the sake of argument, let’s say it was well translated and properly understood to say that a woman could not teach or lead men in the Church. If that were the case, it would be actually more lenient than the verses in Corinthians that teach women should not speak in the congregation. Timothy is a leadership epistle, and it was written a decade or so after Corinthians was written.

It is a general tenet of the epistles of Timothy and Titus, which are written to leaders, that the directions within them are more specific and more stringent than the directions within the epistles written to the Church in general. For example, the qualifications of the leaders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are quite stringent and much more specific than what is mentioned in the other Church Epistles. Also, the directions about what to wear, what kinds of conversations or people to avoid, how to fight for the faith, and how to raise up others in the congregation are more specific than what is in the general epistles. Therefore, if 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35, which say women should not speak, are actually in the original text, then why would Paul say women should not teach men in Timothy? They should not be speaking at all, much less teaching the men!

Could it really be that Corinthians, written to every believer, says women should not speak, but Timothy, written years later for leaders, just points out that they should not teach or lead men? Imagine being a leader in the first century church and running very disciplined home meetings where women were not allowed to speak, but then getting the epistle to Timothy saying they could not teach or lead men. That would only result in confusion. Would Paul’s new letter mean that women could now voice their opinions as long as they did not teach? Does Timothy override Corinthians? Actually, no such confusion likely ever occurred. First, because the book of Corinthians that the believers were reading when the epistle to Timothy arrived did not have 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35 in it. Second, because they would have properly understood and applied Timothy,

realizing that women were indeed to teach and lead, but like the men had to watch their doctrine closely.

### **The Common Practice of the Church**

One thing that Christians can be thankful for is that when something is wrong with Christian doctrine, the spirit of God usually moves powerfully in people to overcome the problem. That certainly is the case when it comes to 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35 and women being silent in the congregation. Perhaps no supposed command of God is as regularly ignored as this one. In churches and fellowship halls around the world, in denomination after denomination, women speak up. Even in many denominations that do not allow women to teach the congregation, they are allowed to contribute before or after the sermon.

Their speaking up is even more apparent in the many house churches and cell groups that are being run all over the globe. In those small settings, women often openly share the Word of God, their testimonies, ideas, and opinions. This is important, because when Corinthians was penned by the Apostle Paul, around the middle of the first century, house churches were the only “churches” there were. Were first-century house church meetings so different from ours today? Could it be that a spirit of rebellion is running rampant in today’s Christian women who speak up in spite of the command not to, and Christian men either cannot seem to hear the spirit of God or are too spineless to force the women to be silent? That is not likely. It is much more likely that God did not tell the women to be silent in church, but rather that was the opinion of a copyist or scribe that years later became copied into the Bible text.

### **Additional Evidence that the Verses Were Added**

Another piece of evidence that Paul did not write 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35 is that those verses contain some vocabulary that is not characteristic of Paul. This is something that has been pointed out by a number of Greek scholars, and in and of itself would be a weak argument that the verses were not written by Paul. However, given the other weighty evidence that the verses were a scribal addition, the unPauline vocabulary is more evidence that leads us to the conclusion that the verses were not part of what Paul originally wrote.<sup>17</sup>

### **Explaining the Verses**

Due to the fact that the verses appear in the Greek manuscripts, many scholars feel that they must be original, even though they are “difficult.” This has led to a large number of ways, some of them quite imaginative, that these verses have been explained. It is important to mention some of these explanations, but before we do, we should notice that they fall into two general categories. The first is that the verses are literal and women should not speak at all, and the second is that women can speak, but there are limitations as to who and when.

Commentators who fall into the first category, saying that women are to be silent in public worship, must explain the verses that say they can speak. John Calvin is such a commentator, and he argues that the verses that say women must be silent are clear and literal, while the verses in 1 Corinthians 11 about women praying or prophesy as long as their heads are covered, do not really mean what they seem to be saying. His note on 1 Corinthians 11:5, which says it is a shame for a woman to pray or prophesy with her head uncovered, says:

It may seem superfluous for Paul to forbid women to prophesy with her head uncovered, while elsewhere he wholly prohibits women from speaking in the Church. It would not, therefore, be allowable for them to prophesy even with a covering upon their head, and hence it follows that it is to no purpose that he argues here as to a covering. It may be replied, that the Apostle, by here condemning the one, does not commend the other. For when he reproveth them for prophesying with the head uncovered, he at the same time does not give them permission to prophesy in some other way, but rather delays his condemnation of that vice to another passage, namely in chapter 14.<sup>18</sup>

What Calvin just said in very elevated vocabulary is that even though God says women are to cover their heads when they pray or prophesy, actually that is not permission to do so, and they are really not to speak in

public at all, which he refers to as a “vice.” Most modern commentators reject this kind of thinking.

The second way scholars deal with the command in 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35 for women to be silent and not speak is to say that it cannot be God’s true intention to have all women be silent and never speak, so therefore the verses must mean something other than what they literally say. Some commentators say that Paul only meant for these difficult verses to apply to Corinth, but the language Paul uses does not lead to that conclusion. Some say that these verses apply only to married women, but again, the verses do not say that, and besides, married women such as Prisca (or Priscilla in some versions) did lead in some ways and are commended by Paul. Other commentators say that these two verses were not Paul’s position at all, but that of people opposing him and that he was actually refuting that position. However, again, a straightforward reading of the verses does not show that. It has also been set forward that the Greek word translated “speak,” *laleō*, refers to “chatter,” speaking that is not pertinent to the meeting. However, a study of *laleō* even in just the 34 times it is used in the epistle of 1 Corinthians shows that it has a wide range of meaning, so saying it means “chatter” in this verse is arbitrary; an explanation without actual support. No wonder that Gordon Fee and other commentators point out if these verses are part of the original text, no explanation of them “is free of difficulties.”<sup>19</sup>

### **If Verses 34 and 35 Were Original**

In spite of much evidence that 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35 were added to the text, we must still admit to the possibility that they were original. If they are original, then they need to be understood and acted upon like the other verses that are in the original text but are specifically applicable to the culture of the time when Paul wrote. What they say must be understood in a limited sense that would apply to the church at Corinth due to the customs and culture of the time. In that sense, they would be similar to other verses such as those that say women should wear a head covering when they pray or prophesy, or those that direct women not to cut their hair but leave it long. These are understood to have applied to the church at Corinth but are not generally applicable today.

In the first century, in both the Roman and Judean cultures, women were generally uneducated and thus were not prepared to always understand the theological issues being discussed by the men in the church. In contrast, the husbands were usually more educated, which was why the women could ask their husbands at home. If God wrote these verses due to the specific circumstances of the first century, then it should be obvious that today, when women are as educated and equipped as men to minister in the church, they should be allowed to do so, especially since it is clear that there is neither male nor female in Christ. Thankfully, women are leading and teaching in the Church today, and the evidence from congregations around the globe is that they are as spiritually able to minister as the men.

### **Conclusion**

The weight of evidence leads to the conclusion that 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35, which say women should be silent and not speak in the church, was not part of the original God-breathed Word, but was written by a copyist who had strong feelings about women’s participation in Christian meetings. However, if the verses are original, then as we have seen above, it seems very clear that they were written to deal with the specific constraints of the first-century culture, and were not God’s intention for women for all time. The Bible makes it clear that every Christian, every man and woman in the Church, has an important place in the Body of Christ and a calling of God to do something for Him. Our Adversary, the Devil has worked overtime to keep Christians from fulfilling their God-given calling. Let’s not allow the Devil, or people who have been tricked by him, to limit the effectiveness of half of the Body of Christ by some mistranslations and misunderstood verses. Women, you have a place in the Body of Christ and a calling on your life. Find out what it is and get about acting on it. May God bless your efforts!

**Notes:**

1. Many scholars say 99% or better. Cp., John W. Schoenheit, *The Bible: You Can Believe It*. The most current redaction of the Greek text of the New Testament is Nessle-Aland 27 and the fourth edition of the Greek New Testament published by the United Bible Society.
2. Alan F. Johnson, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series; 1 Corinthians* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 2004), p. 271. Some commentaries give the names of scholars who believe 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 were added. Cp. Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (A Michael Glazier Book; The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1999), p. 515; Simon Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians* (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, 1993), p. 511; Richard Horsley, *The Abingdon New Testament Commentaries* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1998), p. 188; Anthony Thiselton, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Epistle to the First Corinthians* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 2000), p.1150.
3. Richard Hays, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: 1 Corinthians* (John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1997), p. 247.
4. We use the NASB in this article because it starts a new sentence in verse 34. Scholars differ as to whether or not the last phrase in 14:33 is meant to be the close of 33, as in the KJV and NASB, or is the first part of the sentence in verse 34, as in the NIV and ESV. While we recognize that the last phrase in verse 33 may be part of the first sentence in verse 34, and if so would be part of what a copyist added to the text, we nevertheless use the NASB in this article to keep verse 33 separate in its own sentence for ease of consideration.
5. Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh), p. 326.
6. John Pringle, translator, *Calvin's Commentaries: First Corinthians* (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, reprinted 2005), Vol. 20, p. 469.
7. Philip Schaff, ed., *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures; Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical by John Peter Lange: Romans and Corinthians* (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, reprinted 1980), Vol. 10, p. 297.
8. Richard Hays, *First Corinthians: Interpretation, A Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1997), p. 246.
9. C. K. Barrett, *Black's New Testament Commentary: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1968), p.331.
10. Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (A Michael Glazier Book; The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1999), p. 522. The Greek writer Plutarch said that a woman should feel shame at being heard in public just as if she was being stripped (reference in C. K. Barrett, *Black's New Testament Commentary: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1968), p.331). See also, Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; 1 Corinthians* (William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, MI, reprinted 1995), p. 197. While not all Greeks would agree with Plutarch, his statement does show that some Greeks were very conservative when it came to women speaking in public.
11. Although this verse has been mistranslated and misunderstood, and taught to mean that women cannot teach, it actually says quite the opposite, and actually just addresses something they cannot teach. See, *The Role of Women in the Church at TruthOrTradition.com/role*, and Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1992).
12. Some versions say simply, "immorality," but the Greek word *porneia* is sexual sin, as versions such as the ESV, KJV, and NRSV make clear.
13. Gordon Fee, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1987), p. 707.
14. Alan F. Johnson, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series; 1 Corinthians* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 2004), p 272.
15. One of the obvious reasons for the woman's subordinate role in worship was that, by virtue of their menstruation, which made them "unclean" both during their period and for seven days afterward, and since priests and Levites served from age 20 to 50, they were Levitically "unclean" about half of their lives and therefore would have been unable to serve.
16. Catherine Clark Kroeger and Richard Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1992) pp. 79-113.
17. See Gordon Fee, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1987), p. 702. Roger Gryson, *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church* (The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1980), p. 7.
18. John Pringle, translator, *Calvin's Commentaries: First Corinthians* (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, reprinted 2005), Vol. 20, p. 356.
19. Gordon Fee, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1987), p. 702.

# Salvation Blurb

Throughout history men and women have been divided in many ways. Although God created the two genders to help each other, things have not always worked out that way. The different ways men and women think, address problems, relate to others and relate to life has been the source of gender competition, and usually male domination of women, for millennia. Thankfully, there has always been one privilege that has been equally available to men and women, and that is the privilege of living forever.

God is offering salvation through Jesus Christ to every person, every man and woman, on earth. Salvation through Jesus Christ is God's offer for people to live forever in a wonderful place with wonderful friends and company, great food, peace, joy, and of course, the presence of God and Jesus Christ.

For most people this life is short and difficult. Don't allow this life to be all the living you get to experience. Make the choice to live forever. It is easy because it is a gift. God bought it for you with the price of His Son's life, and Jesus willingly gave his life so every person could be saved. All you have to do is confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead.

Look at how easy the Bible says it is to be saved:

**Romans 10:9**

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Salvation is a privilege. God never forces anyone to get saved. But why wouldn't you? Don't let this imperfect life be your only one. Get saved through Jesus Christ and enjoy eternity with God.

**Watch a quick 10-minute video on how and why to get saved.  
This video goes further in-depth and answers common questions.  
[TruthOrTradition.com/becoming](http://TruthOrTradition.com/becoming)**

# Partner Profile

Pam Keck

I have been a part of this ministry since I was in diapers! My father used to bring me to the meetings when I was a small child, and then later when I entered the rebellious teenage phase he brought me (somewhat reluctantly) to my first Live Out Loud youth conference. I was expecting something similar to most church youth group events, but boy, was I wrong! How encouraging it was to listen to the teachers, to dance during praise and worship, and to fellowship with all of these amazing new people! For three days I was surrounded by teens and twenties who believed the same things I did and were so friendly! In fact, I am still friends with some of those people many years later! Since then, I have willingly attended all of the camps and conferences that I could. It is such a tremendous blessing to me, to see how people of all ages have had their lives transformed by spending a week or just a weekend immersed in God's Word and His people.

I have for years now wanted to become a Spirit & Truth Fellowship partner, but have always held back because of my income. I have a job that I adore, but never seem to have very much left over at the end of the month. I would say, "Next month, next month I can do it!" and then the next month would come and I would need to buy a bridesmaid's dress, or fix my car, or income was lost because of illness. I finally realized that if Satan had his way next month was NEVER going to come! So I sat down again with a calculator and decided that there were still a few things I could cut back on and I finally sent in my partnership commitment.

## **2 Corinthians 9:7 (ESV)**

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

I have not been a partner for very long, but I can joyfully say that Satan is not having his way and that I plan to cheerfully give to this ministry for many years to come! My small gift might not seem like a lot to many people, but if I can help fund another Teens & Twenties Camp that will change a young person's life or enable a few more people to access TruthOrTradition.com, then I know that my gift really does make a difference. God's blessings to you!

Your sister in Christ,

Pamela Keck  
Fishers, IN

**Partner with Spirit & Truth Fellowship International!**  
**Sign up online at [STFonline.org/partnership](http://STFonline.org/partnership)**

# Fuel for the Fire

## Entering the Battleground with Our Lord

by Hannah Trigg

Until recently I had not thought much about the spiritual battle. The reason is that what happens in the spiritual world is sometimes really hard to see because we are all busy and often very distracted. I have come to understand that the reality is that people's *lives* are being fought over in the spiritual realm. Thankfully, I have been saved, and because of the truth that I know, my life is healed and full of joy. But, will those who are not yet saved ever feel the loving hand of Christ and turn to him? Or will they die, to be forever dead, never having seen real light? I don't know how to make this sound as dramatic as it really is, but just think about what the spiritual battle means: **People's Lives**. The Enemy is trying—and succeeding daily—to **steal** from them, **kill** them and **destroy** them (John 10:10). If nobody stands up to fight for these people who are being robbed and murdered, guess who wins? That sounds bleak, and it is, but praise God that there is more to the story!

Greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4)! Amen a hundred times! We can be the light of Christ in all the darkness of the world. We can make the decision to ignite ourselves with the power of Christ so that people will *not* remain in the cold blackness. We *can* fearlessly stand in the face of spiritual darkness. We have Christ in us, so we are fully equipped for this. Our power in Christ is spoken of throughout the Church Epistles.

### Colossians 2:9 and 10 (REV)<sup>1</sup>

(9) For in him dwells all the fullness of the divine nature bodily,

(10) and in him you have been made complete—he who is the head of all principality and power.

I am starting to learn how I can take advantage of the fullness I have in Christ as I step into battle each day. It all rests on knowing Christ: I have to see his heart; I have to get in touch with my identity in him. It is important to have my own deep needs met in Christ before I can really work with others who are also in dire need of him! I have to understand that I am one hundred percent unconditionally loved by my God and my Lord Jesus. This is a daily, moment-by-moment process of feeding myself the truth of the Living Word. I have to fight the constant lies I hear by *replacing* them with the raw truth about myself and accepting it regardless of my feelings. Then I have to transfer that unfathomable kind of love to others.

Let's act for Jesus by caring. Let's allow ourselves to feel the hurt of others so that we can have compassion for those around us, just as our Lord does. We must think about what Christ would do if he were standing right where we are. We must be aware of what is going on around us wherever we are, and always be **prepared** to represent Christ. We must think about all the ways we can get ready to stand for Jesus. Let's each make our relationship with Christ our *own*.

I'd like to encourage you that no matter where you are in your walk with God and the Lord Jesus, you can still make great advances in the fight for lives. Don't focus on your qualifications but rather on God's love for you and His extreme faithfulness and power to work with you as you allow Him to. And remember that "small" acts are just as valuable as "big" acts—don't ever feel that what you are doing is "not good enough." God sees your heart, and He can do a lot with a little.

It is my prayer that these words have stirred your heart and that you also feel spiritual hunger pangs for Christ. Be richly blessed as you continue to immerse yourself in his love!

**Note:**

1. John W. Schoenheit, *Revised English Version® (REV®) and The REV Commentary of the New Testament* (Spirit & Truth Fellowship International, Inc., Martinsville, IN, 2009). Available online at [STFonline.org/rev](http://STFonline.org/rev)

# Figures of Speech

## Eironeia (Irony and Sarcasm)

by John W. Schoenheit

The ability to communicate with words is one thing that sets mankind apart from all other creatures. God is the Author of language, and no one has ever used language as precisely as God does in the Bible, including His use of figures of speech, of which there are more than 200 varieties in Scripture.<sup>1</sup> When most people say, “a figure of speech,” they are speaking in general terms of something that is not true to fact. However, genuine “figures of speech” are legitimate grammatical and lexical forms that add emphasis and feeling to what we say and write. In the Bible, God uses figures of speech to emphasize things that He wants us to see as important. Many people who read the Bible never think to ask themselves, “How do we know what God wants emphasized in His Word?” God uses figures of speech to put emphasis where He wants emphasis, so it is important that we recognize and properly interpret the figures of speech in the Bible. Knowing the figures of speech God uses in the Bible helps us to understand the true meaning of Scripture and enables us to more fully enjoy its richness.

The figure of speech we are going to study in this issue of *The Sower* is referred to by E. W. Bullinger as *Eironeia* (Ā-rō-nā-ū), or “irony,” and it includes sarcasm. Irony is using words to express a meaning other than their literal and straightforward meaning; usually the opposite meaning. “Sarcasm,” which we might define as “biting irony,” comes from the Greek *sarkasmos*, “to tear the flesh” (from the Greek root *sarx*, “flesh”), and it is a remark meant to cut or give pain. It may seem strange that the Word of God contains sarcasm. That is because when most people use sarcasm it is just to hurt others, with no motive beyond that. Sarcasm is a way for an angry, unkind, or prideful person to inflict pain or humiliate someone. However, irony, and even sarcasm, can be redemptive if they are used to cause pain in order to “wake someone up,” and cause him to repent. When it comes to irony and sarcasm in the Bible, we must keep in mind who is speaking. Some of the irony and sarcasm in the Bible is God speaking and some of it is God quoting what people have said:

### **Judges 10**

The Israelites abandoned Yahweh<sup>2</sup> and worshiped idol gods. When they went back to Yahweh for help, He replied sarcastically, “Go and cry out to the gods whom you have chosen; let them save you in the time of your distress” (Judg. 10:14, ESV). Yahweh’s sarcastic remark had its desired effect, and the people redoubled their effort to win His favor, putting away all their idols.

### **1 Samuel 26**

While Saul was chasing David in the desert regions, David snuck into Saul’s tent at night and could have easily killed him. The next morning, David chided Abner, who was responsible for guarding Saul. David said to Abner, “Are you not a man? Who is like you in Israel?” (1 Sam. 26:15, ESV). This is pure sarcasm. David did not really want Abner to improve his protection over Saul. He did, however, want to show Saul that he had no intention of harming him.

### **2 Samuel 6**

Michal was a daughter of Saul and one of the wives of David. When David brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, he took off his royal robes and danced before Yahweh with all his might. This offended Michal, who felt that as the king, David’s behavior was not appropriate. In anger, she made a sarcastic remark about his honoring himself. “How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants’ female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!” (2 Sam. 6:20, ESV).

### **1 Kings 18**

The prophet Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal as to who was the true God, Yahweh or Baal. In a contest

that was to be determined by fire from heaven, Baal was not making himself known. Elijah used biting irony against Baal's prophets, which no doubt terribly embarrassed them, but Elijah's words were really designed for the people of Israel, to show them how pointless it was to worship Baal. "And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, 'Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened'" (1 Kings 18:27, ESV).

### **Job 38**

Job had been speaking very confidently about his situation, as if he really understood it, until God showed up and started asking him questions. God said, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" This mildly sarcastic question, and the questions that followed it, were designed to get Job thinking more correctly about how little he really knew, and it worked well. After God had finished speaking, Job said, "Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you... I will proceed no further" (Job 38:4 ff and 40:4 and 5, ESV).

### **Amos 4**

"Come to Bethel, and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgression; bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days" (Amos 4:4, ESV). The people of Israel were worshipping pagan gods at places such as Bethel and Gilgal, and so, via sarcasm, God invites them to continue their practices and "multiply" their transgression. Since Israel had been plagued with famine, drought, blights, molds, locusts, and more, as is clear from the context, it should have been apparent to them that worshipping idols had not done them much good. God's sarcastic statement was meant to highlight that fact, but the people missed the point of God's statement and continued their idolatry until eventually the nation of Israel was destroyed.

### **1 Corinthians 4**

Some of the people in the church at Corinth were arrogant and out of touch with how much they needed to improve. The Apostle Paul used a sarcastic remark to get their attention. "Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings!" (1 Cor. 4:8, ESV). A few verses later he wrote: "I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children" (1 Cor. 4:14).

### **1 Corinthians 14**

Some of the prophets in Corinth were putting too much weight on the revelation they received, without listening to the other prophets. Prophets are not flawless, so every prophet needs to be meek to correction, and others must carefully weigh his or her message. Also, all the prophets who receive a revelation need to be given a chance to speak; there should not be too much emphasis put on the message of one or two prophets. Paul reproved those prophets who overemphasized the revelation they received by a mildly sarcastic remark: "Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?" (1 Cor. 14:36, ESV).

No prophet would want to say he or she was the only one who got a revelation message, so Paul's remark would wake people up to the fact that they needed to listen to others.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Notes:**

1. E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, reprinted 1968).
2. "Yahweh" is the personal name of the God of the Old Testament. It is translated LORD in most English versions, and "Jehovah" in some.
3. Although 1 Corinthians 14:36 seems to apply to the women, it applies to all of the prophets of verses 29-33. See The Contender article in this issue, "Should Women be Silent in the Church?" by John Schoenheit.

**For many more figures of speech used in the Bible visit  
[TruthOrTradition.com/figures](http://TruthOrTradition.com/figures)**

# The Vine

## The Importance of Group-Specific Fellowships

by Rachel Darr

This world is extremely tough for women, in so many different ways. On a daily basis, women are constantly inundated with images of what we should look like, expectations of how we should act, and are expected to stand strong through difficult circumstances. It is, however, much too unrealistic to expect women to adhere to the world's standards and still stand strong in their faith.

Women in today's world need a place to belong, a safe-haven where they don't feel judged by the world's standards, and a setting where they can go to be re-fueled. Women have a great desire to be surrounded by people who love them by Jesus Christ's standards. Jesus is the optimal example of unconditional love, peace, gentle reproof, steady grace, mercy, and faithfulness in relationships. It is for these reasons that a small group of my own close friends decided to start our women's fellowship.

Our fellowship is designed as a small group of close friends that come together in the midst of our busy lives to go deep, support one another, and journey through this season in our lives together. We purpose to do these things in an effort to jointly pursue God and Jesus Christ. Our cozy sisterhood is designed to strengthen and encourage one another, which in turn enables us to go out and be God's hands and feet. Each one of us is unique in our personalities, experiences, circumstances, and relationships. One of the beautiful things about our fellowship is that each of us can bring our own individual experiences and meet one another where we are.

A quick poll of some of the dearest women in my life revealed a great truth to me: most women seek fellowship for many of the same reasons!

### **Getting Real (Finding Authenticity)**

Every woman desires a place where she can be real and genuine, where she can trust in and depend upon those around her. A women's fellowship modeled after the life of Jesus Christ can provide just the right place for her to feel safe enough to be her own, authentic self. Jesus showed these qualities in his daily life with everyone he met. There wasn't anywhere he could go and not have followers, and he didn't get many chances to rest. Yet, Jesus taught his followers everything he could, while still being his genuine self along the way. He may have gotten angry from time to time (like when he overturned the money changers' tables in the Temple, Matt. 21:12 and 13), but he continuously showed great mercy and love (he healed a man born blind, John 9, and many others).

### **A Place of Refuge**

Every woman needs a place where she can feel safe in who she is as a woman, and to feel safe as a woman in this world. This world holds many dangers, and if you are like me you always keep an eye over your shoulder wherever you go. How refreshing it is to be in a setting where women can gather and know for certain that they are safe and loved, and for a short time don't have to be wary about the world around.

### **Psalm 91:9-12**

- (9) If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the LORD, who is my refuge—
- (10) then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.
- (11) For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;
- (12) they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

## **Finding Strength**

Life throws some pretty crazy things at each and every one of us. Many times you get hit with things successively, and it feels like you'll never be able to get out from under what you've been hit with. Sometimes a fellowship of women can help you find the strength and determination to persevere (2 Thess. 3:5) and overcome any challenge! I have often found that a simple verse brought forth from a fellow sister-in-Christ was just what I needed to hear in order to regain the strength to endure hardship.

### **Romans 8:28**

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

## **Search for Inspiration**

It's very easy in our daily lives to lose inspiration. After all, it's hard to find the time to delve into God's Word amidst our busy days because of the constant demands on our time. It's no wonder that women seem to lose inspiration! Women's fellowship can provide just the inspiration you need, and the reminder that God's Word really does speak for any and all situations.

### **Matthew 19:26b**

...with God all things are possible.

## **Cultivating Friendships**

Friendships are a very important part of every woman's life. We all need other women who can spur us on in the great hope we have in Jesus Christ. Building strong, faithful, lasting friendships with other women is important in our walk with God and Jesus Christ. Friendships with Christian women can support and encourage us in that walk and help keep us on track. Likewise, spurring on our sisters-in-Christ also strengthens their friendships, which often become life-long via the common faith shared between them.

### **Proverbs 13:20**

He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.

## **Longing to Hear God's Voice**

All women encounter times in life when their faith wanes. In these times we often feel abandoned by God because we've blocked our hearts from being able to hear His voice. Good relationships with other rooted Christian women who speak God's words to us and build us up again are often just what we need to start hearing God's voice again.

### **Ecclesiastes 4:9 and 10**

(9) Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work:

(10) If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

## **Maturing in Christ**

Most of us know we cannot grow in our relationship with Christ on our own. We all need a little help in learning to study and decipher the Word, and in relating to the Word in our own lives. A great women's fellowship can provide just the setting to learn how to delve deeper into the Word and into our relationship with God and Jesus Christ.

### **Ephesians 4:15 and 16**

(15) Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

(16) From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows

and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

There are seasons in life when specialized or group-specific fellowships can be very beneficial to an individual. Some of those groups might include Men's, Teens, Business, Children's, Retired Folks or a Women's fellowship, like the one I have described. Our women's fellowship has been a great gift in my life, and I wouldn't want to go back to life without it. I encourage individuals everywhere, if you are not involved in a fellowship, please consider getting involved in one, or starting one of your own. I promise it will bless your life immensely, probably in ways that you never imagined!

**[STFonline.org/network](http://STFonline.org/network)**

# Dear Sower

## Videos on Hell

Thank you for these two videos (on what the Bible really says about hell). I am a Catholic who has been worried for some time over the doctrine of eternal torture. I always found it to be an awful idea and so unlike what I thought of Jesus. But I was afraid my ideas or fears weren't biblically backed. Now I see that I can believe God is loving; that God does not torture people forever and that this is what the Bible teaches.

A YouTube Fan

### Editor's Note:

Visit [TruthOrTradition.com/hell](http://TruthOrTradition.com/hell) for further study on Hell.

## Our Books on the Kindle™

Woo Hoo! I just bought "The Bible: You Can Believe It!" on my Kindle™. I'm so glad. When you speak to someone it is easier to show info on a Kindle than carrying all those books. You guys rock!

Marilyn Holzmann  
Germany

### Editor's Note:

We will soon have all of our books available on Amazon's Kindle and all the other eBook readers. See [STFonline.org/eBooks](http://STFonline.org/eBooks) for more details.

## Women in the Church

[Feedback on our article, "Should Women be Silent in the Church? A Biblical Study of 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35."] Great! I really needed to hear that. I have a thing for context and those verses definitely threw me off!

Shalonda Jeanette  
Facebook fan

### Editor's Note:

To read and share this article visit [TruthOrTradition.com/silent](http://TruthOrTradition.com/silent)

## Video Series on Tattoos

Just watched your tattoo series on YouTube. Very insightful. Well researched and fairly-balanced. Thank you for providing in-depth spiritual communication on issues like this. I have been thinking about a tattoo for a long time and this has been a big help for understanding purpose and caution. Thanks again!

Daniel Taylor  
A Facebook Fan

### Editor's Note:

To watch this free video series visit [TruthOrTradition.com/series4](http://TruthOrTradition.com/series4)

### **Did God Forsake Jesus?**

Thank you for that teaching on Jesus' last spoken words....eye opening and inspirational! I added it to my favorites. May the Lord bless you! Love In Christ!

Gayle Marie  
A MySpace friend

#### **Editor's Note:**

To watch a video on what Jesus meant when he quoted from Psalm 22 on the Cross, visit [TruthOrTradition.com/forsake](http://TruthOrTradition.com/forsake)

### **A Source of Spiritual Healing**

THANK YOU FOR THIS SITE!!! IT IS AN ANSWER TO PRAYER! I've been making the Gospel so difficult, following after teachers that taught the feast days, Sabbath, etc.... I have just begun looking at your site [TruthOrTradition.com], but I can already tell it will be a source of spiritual healing for me. I know God led me here.

Thank you!  
Lisa Robinson

**Editor's Note:** Thanks to your support, we are hearing from folks like this from all over the globe!

### **More Kindle™ Feedback**

[Some feedback on the announcement that our book, *The Bible: You Can Believe It!*, is now available on Amazon's Kindle.] Awesome. I just got my Kindle this week. How exciting is this?!

Rebecca Teets  
Lorain, OH

**Editor's Note:** We will soon have all of our books available on Amazon's Kindle and all the other eBook readers. See [STFonline.org/eBooks](http://STFonline.org/eBooks) for more details.

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