

CHRIST INSPIRED WOMEN TO TAKE PART IN BODY MINISTRY.

The New Testament tells us that women were anointed by God to participate in the worship and ministry of the Church. Indeed, the Scriptures reveal that women sometimes led in God's work. Miriam, a notable prophetess, led the women in praise and prophecy; she is given the credit with Moses and Aaron for delivering Israel from Egypt. Exod.15v20,21. Micah.6v4. Deborah was not only a prophetess, she was also the leading judge of Israel; notice that she was not made the leader of Israel by men, God appointed her, and led her to victory over overwhelming foes. Through her spiritual power, Israel had victory for 40 years. Judges.4v1-5v31. The prophetess Huldah was the spiritual giant and spiritual leader of her day, when anyone wanted to have a word from God they went to Huldah. Jeremiah was alive at this time, but when good king Josiah needed a word from God, he sent the high priest to Huldah for God's guidance; she had a superior prophetic ministry, and could get the word of the Lord far quicker than Jeremiah. (See Jer.42v7., it took ten days for Jeremiah to get the word of the Lord.) Huldah's prophecy brought about Josiah's revival. 2Kings.22v13-23v25. Anna the prophetess was the person closest to God in Israel at the time of Christ's birth, Israel's male religious leaders were spiritually dead, and were spiritual babes compared to this godly prophetess. God used Anna to minister His love and life, and to meet the needs that they missed. God can, and often does, do the very same today. Lk.2v36-38. History reveals a vast army of godly women, like David's mother, "the handmaid of the Lord;" and Hannah, the mother of Samuel; Jochebed, the mother of Moses, and many others, who have been the channels of God's love and power to their children and their generation. They changed history by their prayers and spiritual ministries. When men have grown spiritually cold and formal, it has often been left to godly praying women to rekindle the fires of revival. Men nearly always monopolise the pulpits and positions of authority, women usually take the lead in love, spirituality, prayerfulness and faith.

The Devil and misguided men have tried to squash the ministry of women by misquoting certain texts.

An examination of these verses shows that both are concerned with domestic matters.

The first Scripture is 1Cor.14v34,35., "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; --- it is a shame for women to speak in the church." In 1Cor.14v34,35., we see that the wife had to ask their husbands at home, this was certainly not over teaching, for in the informal house meetings of the early Church there was always liberty to do this. Paul had just stated in 1Cor.11v4, 5., that women could pray and prophecy in the church, and you cannot do this and be silent, and an examination of 1Cor.11v16-20., proves that Paul had been considering church practice, not private prayer. 1Cor.14v4,5,22-24,29-33. Acts.2v16-18. Paul said they must not discuss domestic matters at church fellowship meetings. Paul had said in Gal.3v28., that in Christ there is neither male or female.

The word "speak," "laleo," in 1Cor.14v34., has been translated "chatter" by some scholars, because "laleo," literally means, to chatter like a bird, to talk much, to prattle. It is true that in the New Testament the word is more used in the sense, "to talk," "to speak," but who is to say that Paul was not using it in its basic meaning, which would make very good sense in the light of the Christian fellowship gatherings in the Middle East in Paul's time. The synagogues did not possess our modern order, propriety, formality and "reverence." While the synagogues did not have the drunken, uproarious and disgraceful revelry that accompanied heathen religions; they enjoyed a real freedom and informality. The word "silence" was spoken to the restless, emotional and talkative Orientals, Greeks and Latins in Corinth, who were not used to any discipline, routine and order, not even in the informality of the synagogue meeting. In the synagogues there was a very definite informality; extempore prayers were permitted, and those who desired to read the Scriptures and make comments upon them, could do so. Anyone who was thought to express wrong teaching in prayer or preaching was immediately stopped. Acts.13v45-47. 18v6,7. Dialogue freely took place in the synagogue meeting. Acts.17v2,17. 18v4,9. 24v12,23. "dialegomai," Mt.2v34. Jude.v9.

In "A New Testament Commentary," Howley, Bruce and Ellison, state with commendable honesty, that the verb "lalein," translated as "speak" in 1Cor.14v34., is used to generally to refer to any specific kind of speaking. They say that the suggestion cannot be ruled out, that Paul is merely speaking of irregular talking, in the form of soothing or rebuking babies, shouting out a remark or query, or just plain chattering. There can be no doubt that Paul is referring to unedifying abuses of their freedom to speak, pray and prophecy in church gatherings, which Paul says is their right in 1Cor.11v5,6.. Since two or three Christians could make up a New Testament fellowship, Mt.18v20., when two or three Christian women meet and pray together, they make up a church meeting, must they be silent? of course not! The New Testament meetings were nearly always informal meetings in a home, and it was certainly not disgraceful for women to talk in this social fellowship, which accompanied Christian fellowship. Satan is delighted over the restrictions that men have placed on the ministries of the Holy Spirit through God's handmaids; he knows that the Church has lost a great deal through these restrictions.

The ordinance in 1Cor.14v34., is said to be based on the law, "but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law," however, no Scripture states that a woman could not pray, prophesy or preach. In Gen.3v16., God warns women that men would ruthlessly dominate them; however, this was a warning of bad home relationships, not church

practice. In Gen.3v16., God did not curse women, it is a bad translation. See Appendix 1. In Eph.5v21-33., Paul instructs husbands to love their wives as Christ loves His Church, there is to be no bossing or hardness, there is to be the fellowship of love. In 1Pet.3v7., Peter warns that God will cut off and not listen to the prayers of a bad or inconsiderate husband. Ill-treatment of wives or women will have to be answered for on judgement day.

The second Scripture is, 1Tim.2v11., "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man," should be viewed strictly in the context of which they are spoken. In 1Tim.2v11,12., Paul is also referring to domestic matters, as the context clearly shows, for in v 13,14., Paul speaks of Eve's relation to Adam and to child-bearing. Paul said that women should not usurp a man's place, and this is certainly true in the home; however, if God gives a woman a ministry, she is not usurping a man's place, she is taking her Christ-appointed place, she is only usurping a man's place if God has given her no ministry. The trouble with the Church today, is not that women are usurping men's authority in the Church, but rather because men are usurping the God's authority over the Church, by their traditions and practices. It is true that Miriam tried to usurp Moses place and authority and suffered a very necessary chastisement from God for it. Numbers.12v1-16., However, there are far more cases in Scripture of men resisting and usurping God-appointed ministries, than there ever are of women. It is a fact that women have manifested apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, and pastor-teaching ministries. Women are ideally suited to a prophetic ministry, for God has given women a love and gentleness of spirit to care for their children and husbands, which is really the basic essential for a prophetic ministry. As Paul said, love towards others is the best and most powerful channel of spiritual gifts, and so women, who have developed love, by loving and caring, are often able to manifest the higher gifts of revelation, power and comfort, with great blessing. The women that do this are certainly not usurping men's authority; they are fulfilling the ministry that God has given to them.

Women certainly did not keep silent in the early Church, God told them to speak and minister.

Women were included in the great commission, they can proclaim the Gospel, and be used in healing the sick. Women first announced that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Mt.28v5-10,18,20. Mk.16v16,17. They also spoke out in tongues in the upper room, on the day of Pentecost. Acts.1v8,12-14. Women are looked upon in the same way as men regarding worship and ministry by the apostle Paul. Gal.3v28. We read in the New Testament of women who were recommended for their spirituality and ministry. There were the women without whose help Christ's ministry could not have continued in the way that it did. Lk.8v1-4. There was godly Priscilla, helper of Apollos, she had a church in her home. Acts.18v24-26. Rom.16v3-5,19. 2Tim.4v19. We see Paul's women fellow labourers, Junia, Rom.16v6,7.; Phebe, Rom.16v1,2.; and other women. Phil.4v3. Luke was impressed by the prophetic gifts of Philip's four daughters. Acts.21v8,9. Dorcas had a spiritual as well as a practical ministry; she was loved by all for her practical godliness. Acts.9v32-42. We read of the "elect woman" of 2Jn.v1., another notable spiritual woman. Besides these there were a multitude of women who prayed, prophesied and preached, as the Hebrew of Ps.68v11. states, "The Lord gave the word, and great was the multitude of women who published it." Blessed are those who publish the good tidings of Christ's Gospel. Is.52v7. I feel that it is dishonest and hypocritical to give a woman a place in the ministry in difficult mission fields, and refuse them the same place in much easier conditions at home.

Women can make their homes a ministry, and men should co-operate with them in this. Paul said that older women should teach younger women sound doctrine and wise practice in the home. Titus.2v1-5. 1Thes.4v11. It is often better for Christian women to minister to women's needs for prayer, where this is possible, to save from criticism. It is certainly very unwise and dangerous for men to pray with women on their own, if a man does have to pray with a woman, others should be present if it is at all possible. If we practice this it will save from appearance of evil, and will in particular save young people from emotional involvement, which can injure their feelings and spiritual growth, and cause even greater problems. Women, who have children, already have a congregation in their home, and they can minister love, faith and teaching to their children, which will never leave them. I owe an incalculable debt to my own dear departed mother for her constant love, concern, and support, and the inspiration of her prophetic ministry. God has often changed history through the ministries of godly mothers; think of godly Hannah, the prophetess, the mother of Samuel; Elizabeth the prophetess, the mother of John the Baptist; godly Mary the prophetess, the mother of our Lord. 1Sam.2v1-11. Lk.2v1-16. We thank God for women, like Hannah, who have made their grief, problems and frustrations, an incentive to seek God, and as a result have blessed whole communities and nations. Mary of Bethany was the one above all others, even more than John, to minister to Jesus in His hour of need. Mary's faith, genuine affection, concerned love, and fellowship of spirit, strengthened and sustained Jesus, and her name is recorded in the Gospel for all time because of it. Lk.10v38-42. Jn.12v3-8. Mt.26v6-13. Jn.11v1,2,5,6. Godly praying women are the spiritual backbone of most churches.

There are millions of Christian women today who are winning souls, blessing saints, preaching, prophesying, teaching, comforting the needy, and labouring on very difficult mission fields, with a ministry from Christ, out of a pure love for Him and mankind. May God richly bless every one of His handmaids! God puts His Spirit upon those He commissions, and Spirit-filled women have the right to minister as God directs. Numbers.11v29. God has poured His Spirit, not only upon His menservants, but upon His handmaids as well, and given them a very definite ministry and place in His Church,

therefore, those who resist women's ministry, resist God. Acts.2v15-20. Sister, obey God, not men's traditions. You must pray, prophesy, and preach as God leads and enables you, and do not allow anyone to make you bury your God-given talents, in the soil of silence.