

BAPTIST MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

AN EXEGETICAL EXAMINATION OF LIMITATIONS PLACED UPON WOMEN
IN THE WORSHIP AND MINISTRY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED TO DR. W. K. BENNINGFIELD

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE COURSE
NEW TESTAMENT INTRODUCTION AND SURVEY II (NT512)

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FEBRUARY 12, 2002

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INTRODUCTION

The world has been greatly blessed throughout time by the efforts of godly women. Examples of such women are strewn through the New Testament, including a number who ministered to Christ Himself. It would be difficult to comprehend or fully appreciate the countless, and often unknown, efforts of godly women of the past and present.

The changing roles of women in society over the past decades have spawned an increasing desire by women in the church to expand their opportunities for ministry. This breakdown of traditional barriers and stereotypes may have provided women additional avenues of ministry that would have been culturally frowned upon in previous generations.

As old moors are laid aside one is forced to ask if there are any real limitations upon what women may do in the ministry and worship of the NT church. If cultural restrains are no longer holding them back is there anything that they can not do?

Certainly the modern Christian should first look to the Word of God for guidance in all that he does, and this is no less true in seeking to determine what, if any, such limitations should be placed upon women. As stewards of the word of God we must be swayed by neither the traditions of our elders on the one hand, nor the trends of our times on the other. We must place both past and current culture aside and investigate the directions found in God's Word.

This study will endeavor to find and examine the Biblical texts pertinent to the limitations placed upon women in the ministry and worship of the New Testament church. Effort will be made to filter out any influences of contemporary culture, in order to determine God's instructions on this most relevant subject.

I TIMOTHY 2:8-3:13

This passage is the largest section in the NT to directly deal with issues related to women in the worship and ministry of the New Testament church. A proper understanding of the principles within this section will greatly benefit efforts to grasp the meanings of the remaining passages that address this topic.

Universality. Paul first addresses the men then women. In addressing the men he uses the phrase "in every place," and later uses "likewise" as he shifts to the women. One can thus infer that the principles are not limited to a given locale, but have a universal application.

Within the Public Gathering of the Church. "The phrase **in every place** appears four times in Paul's writings. . . . All four times it refers to the official assembly of the church."¹ This focus on the public assembly of the church is also seen in Paul's stated purpose for writing this epistle (3:14-15), "I write . . . so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself *in the household of God*, which is *the church* of the living God . . ." (emphasis added).

Public Prayer. To the men (ἀνήρ), Paul states the need for prayer. According to Moulton ἀνήρ refers to "a male person of full age and stature, as opposed to a child or female..."² Thus, this passage refers to ". . . males who are to lead in public prayer."³

¹ John MacArthur, "1 Timothy," *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995): 74.

² Harold K. Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978): 29.

Comparable instructions are absent in the section addressing women (vs. 9-15), giving the natural inference that Paul intended for men and not women to lead in public prayer.

In this section addressed to men Paul also mentions “lifting up holy hands.” Except for one reference to Christ lifting his hands just prior to His ascension, this concept is found in the NT only here. This is “[a] common posture for prayer. . . .”⁴ MacArthur adds, “The Old Testament saints frequently prayed lifting up their hands. . . . But Paul’s emphasis here is not on a particular posture . . . [but] a holy life.”⁵ Thus, the only NT reference to the practice of “lifting holy hands” in the church is a reference not to a particular action but to one’s heart as he prays. Furthermore it is directed to “men” as separate from “women.”

Proper Adornment. As Paul’s focus shifts from the men to the women, he first mentions the need for modest dress and a life adorned by good works are necessary for women in the worship service. As has already been stated, the instructions in this section are for women “in every place,” and not in a unique locale or situation. “By the use of ‘similarly’ . . . the demeanour of the women, as the integrity of the men ([v.] 8), is related to the prayer-meeting,”⁶ i.e., the public assembly of the church.

The Requirement of Quietness. In verses 11 and 12 Paul twice states that women should be quiet. Paul uses ἡσυχία, which means “quietness, rest” or even “silence.”⁷ Bruce opts for the former definition for he states, “There is no question here of a ban of silence being imposed upon women. . . . The intention is rather to forbid a self-assertive attitude, and to require that women be marked by restraint and a readiness to display the qualities of ‘quietness’ and full submission.”⁸

To whom are these women to be submissive? Some argue that submission is towards their husbands. Others believe their attitude toward church officials is what Paul has in mind. However, since Paul doesn’t specify the object of that submission it seems best to conclude his concern is the need for a general attitude of submission.

Paul then states the negative of the same instruction: Women are not to teach nor to exercise authority over men. Teach (διδάσκειν) “has the unambiguous sense of ‘to teach,’ ‘to instruct.’”⁹ and ἀυθεντέω translates as “have authority, domineer,”¹⁰ “to govern one, exercise dominion over one.”¹¹ Addressing these two prohibitions Bruce says this “. . . relates to teaching in the church in the presence of men and to the fact that authority in matters concerning the church is not committed to women.”¹²

MacArthur makes special note of the tense of διδάσκειν. “By using the present infinitive instead of the aorist, Paul does not forbid women to teach under appropriate conditions and

³ Charles C. Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible; New American Standard Translation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978): 1817.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ MacArthur (1 Tim.), 75.

⁶ F. F. Bruce, *The International Bible Commentary with the New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986): 1477.

⁷ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979): 349.

⁸ Bruce, 1477.

⁹ Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964): vol. 2, 138.

¹⁰ Arndt, 121

¹¹ Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.): 84.

¹² Bruce, 1477.

circumstances, but [forbids them] to fill the office and role of the pastor or teacher in the life of the church.”¹³ As another present infinitive the same principles would apply to αὐθεντέω.

The concept of teaching in the public assembly is easy to envision, at least in a general sense. But the concept of having "authority" over others in the church may not be so clear in western culture. What did Paul have in mind as he penned this prohibition? As already noted αὐθεντέω means to have authority, to govern, or to exercise dominion, and Paul contrasts it to an attitude of quietness. Therefore, it would seem that this prohibition applies to positions of spiritual leadership, boards that dictate general church policy, and any other position in which a woman might be "bossing men around."

“Allow” (ἐπιτρέπω) is a word that is very fitting for modern times. This word “...is always used in the New Testament to speak of permitting someone to do what they desire to do.”¹⁴ One would likely be hard pressed to find a time when women wanted and labored more for positions of teaching and authority in the church. Paul’s message to such women is clear: “I do not allow it.”

The Reason for Quietness. Paul defends this requirement for a quiet spirit by two arguments. First, he states that the order of creation supports this principle. “Paul... establishes woman’s subordinate role not in the Fall, but in the divine order of original creation.”¹⁵ The implication is that since the woman was created as a helper for the man her position does not allow for her to rule over him or to give him directions.

The second argument is based upon the fact that in the Fall the woman was deceived. “A further plea for a submissive spirit is based on the fact that the woman in succumbing to deception revealed a tendency which disqualifies for leadership.”¹⁶ With a greater potential for failing to recognize sin, Paul reasons, the woman should not be given a position of authority or teaching in the institution designed to stand against such error.

In this defense Paul provides further support for the universality of the restriction. The order of creation and the deception of the first woman were as applicable to any church of the first century as it was to Ephesus where Timothy ministered. Furthermore, there is no reason that it is not equally applicable to the church at every point in her history, including today.

In studying this passage two exegetical questions arose concerning the phrase “to teach or exercise authority over men.” First, are these two prohibitions, or is there just one that is repeated? The second question is, from a grammatical viewpoint, are both verbs qualified by “men” or just to the latter one. Regrettably research to date has found no author who has offered an exegetical explanation for either of these questions.

The answer to the former question would probably serve little practical difference in application, except maybe limiting the scope of the authority to areas related to church teaching. However, until findings are made to support another view it seems best to understand this passage as two prohibitions.

Assuming there are two prohibitions, then the second question is material. Even within the limitations of the church’s public meetings (v. 8) there is an obvious difference in the prohibition to teach men and the prohibition to teach altogether. The latter would include the former, but would also exclude women teaching in any other public setting, including the instruction of other women and of children. While such a thought may go against the grain of

¹³ MacArthur (I Tim), 86

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁶ Bruce, 1477.

contemporary culture and practice, an honest exegetical study of the scriptures requires that one first understand the meaning of the scriptures and then judge customs by that understanding, not *visa versa*.

The broader application of the prohibition appears exegetically possible, if not probable. In the Greek text the second prohibition (οὐδὲ ἀθηνεῖν ἄνδρῶσ) is introduced by οὐδὲ, which normally provides a minor break in the sentence, much like a comma in modern sentence structure. In fact, the Greek New Testament by United Bible Society (USB) actually separates this phrase with commas.¹⁷

Paul's arguments for these prohibitions seem to provide a degree of support to both sides of the argument of limiting διδάσκειν to men. If the susceptibility of women to deception is the understanding of the argument in v. 14, there is no reason to assume that they are less susceptible to error when teaching other women or children. In fact, if this is Paul's reasoning it is these people who are more susceptible to deception (i.e., women and children) that one would *not* want to be taught by one susceptible to deception herself.

On the other hand, the other argument (the order of creation (v. 13)) lends itself to the understanding that διδάσκειν should be also be qualified by "men." The fact that the woman was created to be a help for the man and not *visa versa* (cf., I Cor. 11:8-9) would have implications on women teaching men. Yet it provides no apparent support for prohibiting women from teaching either children or other women. One may, however, contend that this argument addresses the second prohibition while the first prohibition is addressed by the argument in v. 14.

Some would interject that scripture elsewhere supports using women as teachers contradictory to the interpretation outlined above. In Titus 2:4-5 older women are instructed to encourage younger women in certain aspects of the faith. However, the subject matter listed in this passage is not the precepts of the faith but the practical applications of those precepts. More importantly, there is no indication that this encouragement was to be done in a public forum, let alone within the structured ministry the church. Certainly there is no indication that women were involved in teaching men.

II Timothy 1:5 implies that Timothy received his Christian faith from the care of his mother and grandmother. This, however, causes no conflict because there is no implication that such indoctrination was done in the public ministry of a church. In fact, while it may be implied, this passage does not expressly state that Timothy's mother or grandmother taught him. Such training could have been received in the synagogue or elsewhere.

To summarize the findings thus far, it can be stated with a large degree of certainty that God through the pen of Paul excludes women from teaching and exercising authority over men in the public assembly of the church. Their teaching of children and other women in the public assembly is exegetically unresolved.

The Scope of Application. Some would argue that since this section is within the setting of public worship then these principles only apply to the modern day "worship service" and not to other church ministries. Certainly there are limits to the application of these principles, but sufficient grounds are lacking to limit them to the Sunday 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. hours. The worship service of the NT apparently included time when various ones shared their insights and encouragement (I Cor. 14). The Bible specifically states that there were "prophets and teachers" (Acts 13) in the NT church, and it seems quite likely that they taught during this time of

¹⁷ Kurt Aland and Matthew Black, et al. *The Greek New Testament*. 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1968): 722.

corporate worship. It is therefore likely that the “Christian education” which is now assigned to Sunday school or other small group ministries was conducted in the setting of their worship service. Without a Biblical reason to the contrary, the modern Christian is left to assume that the rules of conduct for the public assembly in the first-century church also apply to the various public ministries that were once a part of the worship assembly, but are now conducted in a slightly different format.

A lot has changed in the two millennia since Paul's time. How is one to apply these instructions to teaching given in the form of the printed page, video or any other form of modern media? Is it proper to use such media if the materials are produced or presented by a woman?

The greater vulnerability to deception (v. 14) would seemingly be equally problematic in any media used for Christian education. And since this passage gives no hint of any media-related limitations it seems best to apply the same rules to all teaching regardless of the media type. If it is wrong for a woman to produce or present a certain lesson to a class in person, then it is presumably wrong for that class to listen to the same lesson via satellite feed or printed page.

Another question that regrettably must be regularly grappled with is what should women do if men won't do the job God has reserved for them? The answer is simply, “Leave it alone.” “Many women are tempted to go beyond their biblical roles because of frustration with Christian men . . . who do not responsibly fulfill the leadership assignments God has given them. . . . [However,] for a woman to take on a man's role because he has neglected it merely compounds the problem. It is not possible for a woman to substitute for a man in such things. God often has led women to do work that men have refused to do, but He does not lead them to accomplish that work through roles He has restricted to men.”¹⁸

Pastors.¹⁹ Having established the teachings found in 2:11-12, the discussion of women as pastors is a mute point. “Paul here applies the truth he taught in 2:11-15: Women are not to be the leaders in the church.”²⁰ However, since there are additional arguments for disallowing women to hold the position of pastor, verses 1-7 of chapter three will be briefly examined.

The Greek text in v. 2 describes the pastor as *ανηρ* (“man”) which, as discussed earlier, refers solely to one of the male gender. Verse 4 also states that the pastor must be one who rules his own household well. It is the clear teaching of scripture (Gen. 3:16, Eph. 5:23) that the man is the one God assigned to rule the family. For a woman to be a pastor would require that she rule her husband, which is contrary to the Bible's teaching that he is the head of the family and she is to be subject to him. Surely God is not the author of such confusion.

Deacons. The same two arguments used in the discussion of the office of pastor also apply to the discussion of deacons. The Greek text uses the same words for “men” and “rule” here as in the previous section.

Some understand v. 11 to contain a parenthetical statement that addresses the office of deaconess. It is felt that the absence of directives to the wife of the “higher” position of pastor would make the presence of directives to the wives of deacons unlikely. This argument is logical, but finds no real support from the text itself.

On the other hand, it could be logically argued that the verse deals with deacons' wives. It would be an awkward flow of thought for Paul to address the position of pastor (vs. 1-7), move to deacons (vs. 8-10), then to deaconesses (v. 11), then back to deacons (v.12-13). This point of

¹⁸ MacArthur (I Cor.), 393.

¹⁹ Since Titus 1:5-9 is essentially a parallel to this passage it will not be considered separately.

²⁰ MacArthur (I Tim.), 95.

view has the support of the much stronger exegetical argument based upon the use of γυναῖκας in v. 11. This is the common word for woman and wife. It is translated as “wife” twice in this very context (vs. 2, 12). Thus, there is reason to believe that God had no intention for women to fill the office of deacon.

ACTS 18:26

This passage contains the historical record of Apollos receiving a fuller understanding of “the way of God” under the help of Priscilla and Aquila. Specifically, the scriptures state that this couple “explained” (ἐξέθεοντο – third person plural) these things to him.²¹

Although Priscilla was a part of this “team” that instructed Apollos this is not in contradiction to Paul’s directives for women in I Tim. 2 discussed earlier. Acts specifically states that the two “took him aside,” i.e., out of the public arena, in order to teach him.

GALATIANS 3:28

Only a brief notice will be made of this passage. Some claim that the phrase “... there is neither male nor female, for you are one in Christ” indicates all distinctions between the genders have been abolished. MacArthur aptly addresses the matter when he pens, “Oneness in Christ did not obliterate the distinctions between Jews and Gentiles. Nor did it remove the functional differences between slaves and masters. . . . Why, then, should we assume it did so between men and women?”²² This passage, therefore, has no relevance to the topic of this research.

I CORINTHIANS 14:33b-35

This passage may be considered as a specific application to the general principles found in I Timothy 2. But before a study of the passage is undertaken the question of authenticity must be considered. Fee points out that the authenticity of vs. 34 and 35 is questioned, yet later admits that “...they are missing from no known manuscripts and are found in the majority of witnesses at this point....”²³ Since UBS gives these verses a “B” rating (i.e., having only a small degree of doubt to the text's authenticity), this study will assume them to be genuine.

The broad context of this passage begins in chapter 12. Over the course of this three-chapter section Paul addresses the question of spiritual gifts. As he progresses into chapter 14 his focus narrows primarily to the gifts of tongues and prophecy. It is within this context of spiritual gifts, and these two gifts in particular, that this passage is found.

The first items to be considered is the placement of last part of v. 33. According to the TR, AV and others the whole of v. 33 provides the concluding thoughts of the previous sections. USB, along with Nes, ASV, NIV and others place a paragraph break mid-way through the verse.²⁴ Thus the new paragraph would begin, “As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches....” (NIV)

The second half of verse 33 seems to fit best with verse 34. The phrase **as in all the churches of the saints** is not logically related to God’s not being a God of confusion.

²¹ A measure of caution should be taken at this point. The instance cited is given as a historical account of events that took place, with no specific statement made concerning the validity of those actions. Although one is probably correct in assuming that the actions taken by Priscilla were acceptable to the Lord, the passage lacks specific proof of such acceptance.

²² MacArthur (I Tim.), 85.

²³ Gordon D. Fee, “The First Epistle to the Corinthians,” *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987): 701-702.

²⁴ Aland, 611.

The phrase does, however, make a logical introduction to **Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak.** Paul was emphasizing the fact that the principle of women's not speaking in church services was not local, geographical, or cultural, but universal, **in all the churches of the saints.**"²⁵

In looking at the passage under consideration the large degree of commonality it has with I Timothy 2 is striking. As previously alluded to (v. 33b), the universality of the forthcoming principles is found here as well as in the Pastoral Epistle. Both command women to have a submissive spirit (ὑποτασσω). The statement here that this principle is established in the Law may be compared to vs. 14-15 in I Tim.

The need for quietness is also stated, but the audience and context of this passage may have influenced Paul to select a stronger word than he used with Timothy. Instead of ἡσυχία Paul uses σιγάτωσαν. This is the present imperative form of the verb meaning "to say nothing, to keep silent."²⁶ "Despite protests to the contrary, the 'rule' itself is expressed absolutely,"²⁷ which would mean that Paul allowed not deviation from this "rule."

"Not permitted to speak" loosely parallels I Timothy's prohibition "to teach," but there are some notable differences. The prohibition here is likely in reference to speaking in tongues and prophesying, which is the subject of the immediate context. "Whatever this restriction means, it must include tongues and prophecy."²⁸ There is also the conspicuous absence of any qualifier (e.g., "to men") to this prohibition.

Whatever tongues (γλωσσῶν) may be, it along with the interpretation of tongues ". . . are temporary sign gifts that are not genuinely active in the church today."²⁹ As such this gift is irrelevant to the purpose of this study. Prophecy (προφητεία) ". . . simply means 'to speak forth, to proclaim. . . . [P]rophesy is the proclaiming of the Word."³⁰ This at times included the ability to proclaim coming events or other direct revelations of God, but it normally involved proclaiming the truths found in the written Word of God. It is closely related to the concept of preaching. The four daughter of Philip were called "prophetesses" (Acts 21:9).

Verse 35 is problematic. In English this verse appears to deviate inexplicably from not only the immediate context of prophecy and speaking in tongues but even from the broader context of spiritual gifts. If removed from this context then women must refrain from not only the simplest question but also even the smallest noise in the public assembly.

The introductory phrase in v. 35 (Εἰ δέ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν) is pivotal in gaining a proper understanding of this verse. τι is translated "a certain [thing],"³¹ and θέλουσιν means "to be resolved or determined, to purpose."³² Thus, the phrase is more literally translated as, "But/And if [the women] determine to learn a certain thing...."

The use of μαθεῖν requires a more in-depth examination. "The basic meaning [of μαθηθῆναι in the Greek world] then gives us 'to experience.'"³³ The noun form (μαθητής,

²⁵ John MacArthur, "I Corinthians," *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984): 392.

²⁶ Arndt, 749.

²⁷ Fee, 706.

²⁸ Ryrie, 1746. (See also MacArthur (1Cor.), 392 and F. W. Grosheide, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians," *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953): 341.

²⁹ MacArthur (1Cor.), 306.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 303.

³¹ Thayer, 625.

³² *Ibid.*, 285.

³³ Kittel Vol 4, 391.

“disciple”) “. . . is the usual word for ‘apprentice.’”³⁴ Since “. . . Paul never uses [μαθεῖν] for mere information . . . ,”³⁵ more is obviously involved in μαθεῖν than asking a simple question.

This idea of protracted learning meshes well with the context of women who were exercising their gift of prophecy, even as a student, in the public assembly. These women may have been prompted by their gift of prophecy to ask in-depth questions, with the effect of focusing the service towards “a certain [subject] she chooses.” Paul says such an exercise of the gift of prophecy by a woman, even if genuinely prompted by the desire to learn, is inappropriate. Thus a woman is not able to dodge the prohibition of using the gift of prophecy by simply stating that she's only a student trying to learn.

Furthermore, in v. 32 Paul precluded another objection: that the woman can not help but follow the stirring within her. Paul gives the principle that the believer is not powerless to control the prompting of the spiritual gifts.

Fee holds that these verses are not authentic because they “stand in obvious contradiction to 11:2-16. . . .”³⁶ Consideration will now be given to this latter passage and determine if, in fact, such an unavoidable contraction is present.

I CORINTHIANS 11:3-16

This passage primarily focuses on the need for subjection among the women at Corinth, and it particularly addresses their abandoning the “symbol of authority” (v. 10, NASB). “Underlying Paul’s reasoning is the principle of subjection.”³⁷ Thus, at the heart of this passage we find it in agreement with the passages already discussed (I Cor. 14, I Tim. 2): The need for a submissive attitude among women in the church.

For the purposes of this study a full exposition of this passage is not necessary. There is, however, a need to address some of the specifics. Specifically, v. 5 makes reference to praying and prophesying by women, and the shame that the Corinthian women bring upon themselves when they do so with their head uncovered. The indication that women were praying and prophesying seems to be in direct conflict with the understandings of I Tim. 2 and I Cor. 14.

Some argue that this is not a contradiction with chap. 14 because there is no specific mention of public worship here.³⁸ While no mention is specifically made of this being in the public assembly, it is hard to imagine from the description that the setting is any other than a form of public worship.

Since the main subject of this passage is the inappropriateness of abandoning the symbol of submission, v. 5 must be seen as only an example highlighting that inappropriateness. In other words, the subject of women praying and prophesying in the public assembly is only incidental to the main subject of submission. This being the case, it is only natural that Paul did not wish to deviate from the main issue in order to address yet another error committed by the women at Corinth. Paul’s silence in addressing the issue of prophecy and praying at this point should not be misconstrued to imply his acceptance of the practice. “. . . In the light of what he says in 14:34-35, it is doubtful that Paul approved of those activities by the women at Corinth.”³⁹

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 416.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 408.

³⁶ Fee, 702.

³⁷ Bruce, 1370.

³⁸ W. Harold Mare, “1 Corinthians,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976): 277; Grosheide, 342.

³⁹ Ryrie, 1741.

Paul did in fact discuss this second error in the section on spiritual gifts, which begins in the following chapter.

In the study of this passage no contradiction was found between it and I Cor. 14, or with any other passage previously considered. Contrary to the observations of Fee mentioned earlier, this passage dovetails with all that has been discovered in this study.

CONCLUSION

That women were very active and prominent in the early NT church is beyond question. Chloe, the “Elect Lady”, Phebe, Priscilla and a host of other very key ladies can be found in the life of the NT church.

The dependence upon godly women in the work of the church is just as great today. Many ministries simply would not survive were it not for the efforts of such women.

There is, however, clearly limitations given in the NT concerning women in certain areas of ministry and worship. A summary of these limitations includes:

- 1 Women are to be characterized by a submissive, quiet spirit in the public ministries and worship of the church. This is the key issue in each of the major passages dealing with women in the church.
- 2 Preaching or other proclamations of the faith (i.e., prophesying) or speaking in tongues during the public assembly would be contrary to such a spirit.
- 3 Teaching, at least being the teacher of men in a public assembly, would be contrary to such a spirit.
- 4 Having a position of authority over men would also be contrary to such a spirit.
- 5 Apparently the leading in public prayer is intended to be limited to men.⁴⁰
- 6 The acceptability of women teaching other than men in any public assembly of the church is inconclusive, exegetically speaking.
- 7 Evidence is not conclusive, but appears to lean in favor of the acceptability of women exercising any and all God-given gifts and ministries outside of the public assemblies. The instances cited of women prophesying and even teaching men theology are given in a light that suggests the acceptability of such action.

MacArthur’s comments provide a sobering perspective to this research, and will be quoted again as a conclusion: “Women may be highly gifted teachers and leaders. But those gifts are not to be exercised over men in the services of the church.... When any part of His order is ignored or rejected, His church is weakened and He is dishonored.... He cannot be in control where women take upon themselves roles that He has restricted to men.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ This student assumes that it would be acceptable for women to lead in public praying when among a group composed solely of women. While not specifically addressed in the passages in this study, such would not contradict instructions found in them.

⁴¹ MacArthur (1Cor.), 392.

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