



1 CORINTHIANS  
THE  
CHURCH

*The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Church*

**1 Corinthians 11:2-16**

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**Pastor Juan Sanchez**

I. Introduction

A. Gender-Neutrality in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

II. Proposition

A. Women offer valuable, God-honoring service in the church, including public gatherings for worship, when their service recognizes male headship and maintains gender distinctions.

III. Exposition

**A. Women offer valuable, God-honoring service in the church, including public gatherings for worship, when their service honors male leadership and maintains gender distinctions (11:2-6).**

1. The Principle (11:3) – Men and women are equal before God, yet different in their roles as male/female.

a. The man and the woman are both equally created in God's image (11:3; cf. Gen. 1:26-27).

1). As equals, both male/female were free to pray and prophesy in the assembly (11:4-5).

a). This was part of the new covenant promises (Acts 2:14-21; address 14:30).

b. Nevertheless, in creation God also established distinctions in gender roles (Gen. 2:18ff).

1). The man was created to lead, provide and protect the woman.

2). The woman, as his helper, was created to affirm, receive and encourage strength and leadership from worthy men (Piper).

c. The Lord God does not do away with the gender roles He established in the garden; He is redeeming male and female in both their equality and distinctions.

1). Christians are to display both gender equality and distinction as designed by God.

a). In their personal lives – husband/wife; father/mother; singles . . .

b). Also, in the corporate life of the church.

2. The Issue (11:4-5) – Male leadership was being discarded and role distinctions were being distorted in public worship.

a. Commendation (11:2) – [Yes!] Paul commends something they have embraced-perhaps freedom?

b. Correction (11:3) – [But] Paul corrects something that they have distorted – gender roles.

1). Men were praying/prophesying with their heads covered (11:4).

2). Women were praying/prophesying with their heads uncovered (11:5).

3. To confuse or obliterate gender role distinctions is to bring shame upon oneself and those under whose authority one exists (11:6).

4. Paul's Charge: The Corinthian women praying and prophesying were to wear a head covering because doing so honored male leadership by maintaining gender distinction in public worship (11:6).

5. Principle: Women are to look, dress and act like women and men are to look, dress and act like men.

a. ILLUS: Olympics – K. D. Lang (opening ceremonies); Male figure skaters.

b. Contrary to what our feminized and homosexualized culture may push, gender distinctions are appropriate and good.

**B. God Himself established gender equality and distinction in creation (11:7-12).**

1. Paul argues for gender (role) distinction from creation (11:7-10).
  - a. Men are to lead, protect and provide; women are to affirm male leadership (singles, marrieds).
2. Paul argues for gender interdependence from procreation – the man needs the help (11:11-12)!
  - a. Both are from God: creation and procreation, thus, equality and distinction (11:11-12)!

**C. Christians are to express gender role distinctions as is culturally proper, natural & customary (11:13-16).**

1. For the sake of the gospel, we practice what is proper, natural in relation to gender distinctions (11:13; 9:19-23).
  - a. Is your dress proper and naturally gender distinct?
    - 1). Ladies could your brother wear your clothes?
    - 2). Men are you buying into the trends in clothing toward gender neutrality?
2. For the sake of the gospel, we practice what is customary in relation to gender distinctions (11:16; 10:31-11:1).
  - a. Traditionally, many cultures have customs that expose God's ordained creation order related to gender.
    - 1). In 1<sup>st</sup> century Corinth, it was customary to wear a head covering. Not so today.
3. Contention: Though some in Corinth (and Austin) will want to rebel against God's ordained order, Christians and churches do not accustom themselves to such rebellion (see Genesis 3:16).
  - a. Ladies, are you inclined to rebel against authority at home, relationships, work, High Pointe?
    - 1). Gossip (revenge, bitterness) – You DON'T believe the gospel!
    - 2). Criticism (control) – You DON'T believe the gospel!
  - b. Men, are you inclined to abdicate leadership at home? In relationships? At High Pointe?
  - c. Ladies, do you want to humbly submit to leadership or do you continually buck the system?
  - d. Men are you tyrannical and unwilling to allow women to serve in appropriate roles in home/church?
4. The gospel is the only thing that can address our contention and rebellion against gender roles (Eph 5:22-33).
  - a. By faith, men, we must confess our temptation toward passivity (and/or tyranny) and our need of Christ and ask for grace to lead with His love.
    - 1). As we see in Ephesians 5, Christ does not ask us to do anything He Himself is not doing.
  - b. By faith, ladies, you need to confess your rebellion and your need for Christ and ask for grace to follow in humility.
    - 1). As we see in 11:3 and Philippians 2:5ff, Christ does not ask anything of you that He Himself has not done.

**IV. Application**

- A. What may women do in the church if they do so under male leadership and honor gender distinctions?
  1. The Prohibition – 1 Timothy 2:9-15
    - a. Clearly, then, women may minister to other women in various capacities – i.e., Titus 2.
  2. The Possibilities: any role in which women are not teaching doctrine to men and are not in authority over men – and further, the role is fulfilled in humility, under the leadership of the elders.
    - a. Prayer (of course, not limited to women): one of the most vital ministries in the church.
    - b. Evangelism and missions: either as single women or as helpers to a husband.
      - 1). Schreiner (*BM&W*, 223): "I think women can proclaim the gospel to men in [international missions] cultures, for 1 Timothy 2:11-15 prohibits only authoritative teaching to a group of Christians within the church, not evangelism to those outside the church."
    - c. Speaking to groups, even with men, when authoritative teaching is not involved.
      - 1). Schreiner (*BM&W*, 223): "There are also some ways in which women can instruct both men and women, in my opinion, if the function of the authoritative teaching to men is not

involved. Thus, it is appropriate for women who travel as speakers to address a mixed audience as articulate and thoughtful representatives of a feminine perspective on many experiences in life. One thinks here of Elisabeth Elliot, whom God has used significantly. Moreover, women can exercise their creative gifts through writing of curriculum, fiction, non-fiction, scholarly writing about Scripture, and editing. Several of today's most widely read Christian books have been written by women."

- d. Servants (deaconesses) in various ministries within the local church: 1 Timothy 3:11
  - 1). Examples: Erin Wyman & Mary Kopydlowski (children); others (music), etc.
- e. Servants in various ministries outside the local church – Denise Marshall – PPRC.
- f. Wife and Mother – the most glorious role of a woman!

B. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few! Ladies are you serving? Are you serving joyfully and humbly?

C. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few! Men are you serving? Are you willing to lead?