
Words of Truth

“Let The Woman Learn In Silence”

By: Brian A. Yeager

In recent months I have had several questions regarding I Timothy 2:11-12. In Paul’s letter to Timothy the evangelist, he wrote many things. The context from which our study is taken starts back in what we know as the first chapter. Paul was teaching Timothy about warring a good spiritual warfare and keeping the faith (I Timothy 1:18-20). As we read what we have as the second chapter of this letter, Paul wrote: *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men”* (I Timothy 2:1). That sentence ties backwards to the previous chapter. From that sentence, he went on to teach Timothy about praying for all people. We have studied this in a previous article (<https://www.wordsoftruth.net/wotvol16/wotbulletin03202016.html>).

As you continue reading Paul’s instructions to Timothy about the peace that comes from praying for others, we read this: *“I will therefore that men pray **every where**, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. **In like manner also**, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety”* (I Timothy 2:8-15).

Two of the questions people often present to me about verses eleven and twelve are: (1) What does it mean that the woman is to be silent? (2) Does this mean a woman cannot speak in a mixed assembly of worship or Bible study?

Defining Silence As It Is Used In This Context

The word translated “silence” [ἡσυχία] in I Timothy 2:11-12 means: “stillness, i.e. desistance from bustle or language: — quietness, silence. Quietness; description of the life of one who stays at home doing his own work, and does not officiously meddle with the affairs of others” (Strong’s # 2271). I underlined the latter portion of the definition above. That definition fits how this word is used in II Thessalonians 3:12. That definition also fits how a godly woman is to behave herself in all settings (I Peter 3:1-6). A woman is not supposed to be loud or one

who is meddling in the affairs of others. This is made clear in discussing the remarriage of younger widows in the greater context of what widows are “widows indeed” (I Timothy 5:3-16). Understanding this is imperative as we proceed further in discussing our next question.

Can A Woman Speak In A Mixed Assembly Of Worship Or Study?

All saints are commanded to sing (Ephesians 5:19). There may even be a time when a woman would need to speak among an assembly of the saints to confess faults (James 5:16). Furthermore, women ARE permitted to teach during mixed assemblies. Women are permitted to teach when we are singing together (Colossians 3:16). So, what if she has a question to ask someone other than her husband?

A woman is not out of line by simply asking an honest question (John 4:1-28). Questions are often good. However, there has to be caution in what is asked and how. Even with men, the motives behind questions can make the inquiry sinful (II Timothy 2:23 and Titus 3:9-11). However, to declare that any time a woman asks a question, to someone other than her husband is wrong; that is a false conclusion. So, what about I Corinthians 14:34-35?

Those two verses are in a context discussing the abuse of spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12:1-14:40). That context reveals that the worship assembly in Corinth had become out of order, chaotic. The first century had not only male, but also female prophets (Acts 21:8-9). These female prophets were being told to hold their questions until they were at home. This context cannot be directly applied today. The principle does apply. The principle is that a woman, even if gifted, must respect her God-given role of authority.

When I quoted the context of I Timothy 2:8-15 earlier in this article I underlined and bolded “every where” and “In like manner also.” The silence a woman is to exhibit is not about any particular assembly. It is to be every where. Therefore, if a person says this context means a woman is not permitted to ask or answer questions, that then has to be applied to every where. In truth, a woman is to be submissive to man in every setting. This speaks even to the appearances of men and women. It is why a woman is to have long hair as her covering and a man is not to have long hair (I Corinthians 11:3-15).

Conclusion

I Timothy 2:11-15 is talking about a woman portraying herself discreetly, in a submissive manner in all settings (Titus 2:3-5). When you test the conclusion of a woman not speaking at all in a mixed assembly (I Thessalonians 5:21), that conclusion fails the test. The context is about “every where”. Be careful. The wrong conclusion would even prevent women from fulfilling various instructions that would require them to speak up in mixed assemblies (i.e. Matthew 18:15-20, Romans 10:10, I Corinthians 6:1-8, etc.).