

## Does I Corinthians 14:34-35 Forbid Women From Speaking In A Class?

### Intro: I Corinthians 14:34-35

- A. Does this mean a woman cannot talk in a building owned by the church?
1. The church is certainly not a building (**I Corinthians 12:27**).
  2. A woman must be able to speak, at times, even within the worship assembly (**Ephesians 5:19** and **Romans 10:10**).
  3. Really, a woman is even permitted to teach in the worship assembly if she is expected to sing (**Colossians 3:16**). Doesn't that show us that **I Corinthians 14:34-35** needs to be thought through rather than coming to a hasty conclusion?
- B. Does this mean a woman cannot talk whenever and wherever the saints are assembled for whatever purpose (**Acts 5:1-11**)?
1. Is there just one reason the church may assemble or may the church assemble for reasons like appointing someone to carry out a duty (**II Corinthians 8:19**)?
  2. Would women be expected not to speak at times when churches would assemble for reasons other than worship? What would that mean about **Matthew 18:15-17**?
  3. While women are not to exercise authority or teach over men (**I Timothy 2:11-12**), are they not part of the body being expected to contribute to the edifying of others (**Ephesians 4:15-16**)?

**Body:** We must gain a greater understanding of the word “church”, the context under discussion, for what reasons the church may assemble, and even the difference between the work of the church and work of individuals like we are doing tonight (**II Timothy 2:15**).

- A. For us to begin understanding the assembly discussed in **I Corinthians 14:34-35** we first have to establish what the words “church” and “churches” in those two passages mean.
1. While a language study does not constitute all authority (**Matthew 28:18**), we must understand the meaning of words to teach and know the truth (**Nehemiah 8:8; 8:13** and **I Corinthians 14:19**; cf. **II Timothy 2:15**).
  2. I Corinthians 14:34-35 says: “(34) *Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. (35) And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.*”
  3. The word “churches” and “church” used in these two verses is translated from the Greek word “ekklēsia” (Strong’s # 1577). Thayer defines this term: “a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly. 1a) an assembly of the people convened at the public place of the council for the purpose of deliberating. 1b) the assembly of the Israelites. 1c) any gathering or throng of men assembled by chance, tumultuously. 1d) in a Christian sense. 1d1) an assembly of

Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting. 1d2) a company of Christian, or of those who, hoping for eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, observe their own religious rites, hold their own religious meetings, and manage their own affairs, according to regulations prescribed for the body for order's sake. 1d3) those who anywhere, in a city, village, constitute such a company and are united into one body. 1d4) the whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth. 1d5) the assembly of faithful Christians already dead and received into heaven" (Thayer's Greek -English Lexicon of the New Testament pages 195-196).

4. We see this same word used in talking about the "universal church" (**Matthew 16:18**, **Acts 2:47** and **Hebrews 12:23**) the local church (**I Corinthians 1:2** and **I Timothy 3:15**), a plurality of local churches (**Romans 16:16** and **Galatians 1:2**), and even a mob (**Acts 19:29**) seeking to kill Paul was called an "ekklēsia" (**Acts 19:32; 39; 41**). We can see that Thayer was right. Any time a group of people assemble the terms "assembly, congregation, church, etc." could be used.

5. Therefore, we must understand that the purpose of a group assembling identifies what that group is and is doing. The assembly in Acts 19 was seeking to kill Paul. So, what was the assembly in I Corinthians 14 doing where women were instructed not to speak (they weren't out to kill Paul)?

B. The context of I Corinthians 14: The assembly [church] discussed in I Corinthians 14 is the assembly of Christians in the local church at Corinth for the purpose of worship.

There was chaos in the worship assembly at Corinth. Here's what we know...

1. The Lord's Supper was being abused in that assembly (**I Corinthians 11:18-34**). We'll notice the same wording used in **I Corinthians 11:18; 22** as in **I Corinthians 14:23** clearly denoting a worship assembly.

2. The context reveals:

a. Prophesying was more profitable for the edification of the church (v. 4) than was speaking in tongues (**I Corinthians 14:1-13; 21-22; 39**).

b. We learn that the assembly had praying and singing which were to be done with understanding (**I Corinthians 14:14-17**).

c. Paul says he'd rather speak in the church (clearly an assembly of the local church) in words he understands rather than an unknown tongue (**I Corinthians 14:18-20**).

d. A church full of prophets serves teaching more than one full of tongues (**I Corinthians 14:23-25**). Clearly, at this point, we can see that the church in Corinth had folks speaking in tongues during worship much like modern day Pentecostals pretend to be doing.

e. Confusion was occurring. One is singing, another is teaching, another has a revelation. The confusion needed to stop (**I Corinthians 14:26-33**).

i. Stop here for a moment. Does what we've read thus far describe a "Bible Class"?

ii. Does I Corinthians 14 show that the same chaos that surrounded the Lord's Supper invaded the whole worship service in Corinth?

f. The Scriptures under discussion (**I Corinthians 14:34-35**).

- g. Paul asks if they think they're the source of truth (**I Corinthians 14:36**).
- h. If a prophet was there they could testify that Paul is speaking the truth, if not, they should remain silent in ignorance (**I Corinthians 14:37-38**).
- i. The summary, things need to be done decently and in order (**I Corinthians 14:40**). This tells us the opposite was occurring!
- j. The application of our Scriptures in question, the women prophets needed to remain silent. Yet, even the men were told only to speak two or three and that be it! Purpose – TO END THE CHAOS in the worship assembly.
- k. Can't we see that even the "ask their husbands at home" cannot apply to all women?

C. We must also establish that the local church has authority to assemble for reasons other than a worship assembly. Notice how several of these would require women to speak at times!

- a. Disciplinary reasons (**Matthew 18:15-17**). *\*Women would have to speak at times.*
  - b. To send preachers (**Acts 11:22**). *\*If women had information, such would need shared (cf. **Romans 16:17-18** or **Philippians 3:17**).*
  - c. To hear about the needs of other saints (**Acts 11:26-30**). *\*Women would have to speak at times.*
  - d. To receive reports from preachers (**Acts 14:27; 15:4**).
  - e. For the WHOLE CHURCH to discuss and study through matters (**Acts 15:6-22**). *\*Women would have to speak at times.*
  - f. For epistles to be read (**Colossians 4:16**).
  - g. Obviously, for worship (**Acts 20:7**, etc.). *\*Women would be singing!*
- D. Understand that a class here at my house is not the local church at work, but individual Christians assembling for a Bible study.
- a. We have authority for this (**Acts 5:42; 20:20; 28:30-31**).
  - b. We have authority to have social activities here (**Acts 2:46** and **I Peter 4:9**).
  - c. If the local church is at work or assembling we could not have coffee and snacks (**Romans 14:17** and **I Corinthians 11:22; 34**).
  - d. If the local church were meeting here for worship as is authorized (**Philemon 2**), we certainly would be acting differently (**I Corinthians 14:40**).

**Conclusion:** We seek not to move the boundaries God has put in place upon godly women (**Titus 2:3-5**), but we also cannot remove faithful sisters from good works (**Acts 18:24-28** and **Romans 16:1-2**).