

## The God ordained structure

Throughout the ages there have been differences on how the church should be structured. The church has varied widely from time to time and place to place on what a church should look like in structure. By structure I am referring to functional structures and not buildings.

Some churches have hierarchical structures such as Catholics and Methodists. Others have Congregational structures such as Baptists. Others are led by elders such as the Presbyterians and Brethren. Whilst others claim to have no structure at all.

With all the variety of structures in place Jesus didn't leave us with much idea of what He wanted for His church. That is because the structure of the church needs to serve the essence of the church being people who love God and love one another rather than the church revolving around the structure.

Paul does leave us with guidelines on a God ordained authority structure as pertaining to Husbands and wives in the church.

1 Corinthians 11: 1 – 16

### 1) The authority structure (v. 3)

- ⌘ The head of every man is Christ
- ⌘ The head of the woman is man
- ⌘ The head of Christ is God
- ⌘ Paul writes about this authority structure in Ephesians 5: 22 – 24
- ⌘ The Greek word for “man” here is *an'-ayr* which is the same word used for husband in Ephesians 5
- ⌘ The Greek word for the “woman” here is *goo-nay'* which is the same word used for wife in Ephesians 5.
- ⌘ The same Greek words are used in 1 Timothy 2: 11 & 12 “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she must be silent.”
- ⌘ Thus Paul is referring to husbands and wives in the church. There have been cases where men taught that all women should submit to all men. This is not so.
- ⌘ This idea of headship – submission and authority – must not give us the idea of inequality but rather a God ordained structure that he set in place at the time of creation i.e. before the fall.
- ⌘ In both cases – to the Corinthians and to Timothy in Ephesus – Paul appeals to the authority structure put in place with Adam and Eve.
- ⌘ A.H. Strong puts it like this: “Paul's injunction to women to keep silence in the churches (1Cor.14: 35; 1 Timothy 2: 11,12) is to be interpreted by the larger law of gospel equality and privilege (Col 3: 11) Modesty and subordination once required a seclusion of the female sex which is no longer obligatory. Christianity has emancipated woman and has restored her to the dignity which belonged to her at the beginning.”

### 2) Ministering under authority during worship (vs. 4 – 10)

- ⌘ Jewish and Roman men and women covered their heads when they prayed
- ⌘ Greeks did not cover their heads
- ⌘ Thus for a man not to cover his head and a woman to cover her head was something new and distinct to the church
- ⌘ Men ought to recognise that Christ is the true head of the church and that they cannot do anything what they please but are under the authority of Christ. If he does anything what he wants and brings disorder into the fellowship he will dishonour Christ. They are to treat their wives with the love and respect that Christ treats his Church with (Eph. 5: 25)
- ⌘ Women i.e. wives should have a sign of authority on her head when she minister's in the church.
- ⌘ A sign of authority was a veil in that time. In the culture of that time in Corinth if a woman did not wear a veil she could have been mistaken to be a prostitute who would shave their

heads and not wear a covering.

- ⌘ A sign of authority could merely be an attitude of submission to her husband recognising the God ordained structure that He has set for His church. Showing that she is under authority shows that she is not a loose woman but submits to God's set structures.
- ⌘ This does Not mean that women should not minister the Word of God in church. What it means is when they do they do it under the headship/authority of their husbands.
- ⌘ Paul writes “And every woman who prays and prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head...”
- ⌘ He didn't say that a woman should not pray or prophesy in church but rather when they do they should do it under the God ordained authority.
- ⌘ So what about 1 Corinthians 14: 33b – 35 “ As in all the congregations of the saints,<sup>34</sup> women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says.<sup>35</sup> If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.”
- ⌘ This does not say that a woman should not minister the Word of God in church through prophecy or other ways. The key is in verse 35 that they should ask their husbands at home if they want to inquire about something. The women were asking their husbands about things going on in the church during worship time and were disturbing the worship.
- ⌘ Then what about 1 Timothy 2: 11, 12 “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she should be silent.”
- ⌘ Once again the attitude of submission comes through. However let us be aware that the Greek word used here for woman is *goo-nay'* which is used for wife as we have seen before. And the word for man is *an'-ayr* which is used for husband as we have seen before.
- ⌘ Thus Paul is merely pointing out that wives should respect God's ordained order and submit to their husbands and not try and rule over them or take over their authority. However if they teach or prophesy under their husband's authority then the church should not object to them ministering in the church as they do it in a correct manner.

### 3) The interdependence of man and women (vs. 11 – 16)

- ⌘ Paul goes on to say that actually we need each other. Man is not independent of woman nor is woman independent of man.
- ⌘ The Message: “Don't by the way, read too much into the differences here between men and women. Neither man nor woman can go it alone or claim priority. Man was created first, as a beautiful shining reflection of God – that is true. But the head on the woman's body clearly outshines in beauty the head of her “head”, her husband. The first woman came from man, true – but ever since then, every man comes from a woman! And since virtually everything comes from God anyway, let's quit going through these “who's first” routines. Don't you agree there is something naturally powerful in the symbolism – a woman, her beautiful hair reminiscent of angels, praying in adoration; a man, his head bared in reverence, praying in submission.”

Let us recognise the God ordained structure/order in our churches but let us also recognise the God given gifts and ministries of all people in the church without discrimination of gender.