

Wonder Woman September 2018

Here's the phrase that has been in my mind and my spirit now for days...**The leadership of God – do not fear...do not frustrate...**

My journey – family: strong women, strong men, mutual partnership

- Enter into church arena – male dominated, power struggle, man on Philly street outreach – “Women’s place in the kitchen. Why aren’t you having children!”
- 34 years in ministry, I’ve often been the only woman in the room, Women in leadership in AG – 25% women
- I don’t have a feminist agenda, don’t hate men, didn’t burn my bra

My Quote

Women are powerful. They are a force, a living organism of world changers, a purpose driven group of highly capable females, fiercely feeling and loving, compassionately giving and serving in endless ways. They are intelligent, insightful and challenging to the status quo. Christian women are powerful in yet another dimension – that of the Spirit. They are open to being used by God to affect change. They are the Lord’s hands and feet to a hurting and bruised, sin-filled world. They carry with them the Word of the Lord; that which is living and active and always accomplishes its purpose. They are leaders who passionately strive towards the goal for the glory of God. They are humble servants who achieve a strength that men admire, rely upon and embrace.

“Your sons and daughters will prophesy . . . Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28,29; cf. Acts 2:16–18).

We are going to dissect the TOUGH scripture that are used to hold redeemed women back from becoming all that God intended.

****Note:** there are volumes written on both sides of this issue of women in leadership and ministry. It is an ongoing dialogue, but we believe on the side that the Bible does not restrict women in any role/gift/purpose that God may want to use her in service to Jesus and His Church.

****Note about bible interpretation:** to interpret scripture correctly:

The “must always do”:

- Exegesis – utilizing original languages and meaning of words and grammar
- hermeneutics –the context: original place, culture, and times.

The “must never do”:

- bias based proof texting- using just one text and omitting all others
- not comparing other translations,
- incorrectly deciding which texts are literal and which are figurative.
- These mistakes have led many to believe wrongly that women are unable to lead like men do. When studied correctly these assumptions promptly correct themselves naturally.

Categories of Meaning

- Timeless truths: these are the highest norms or standard of wisdom; they transcend time, culture, seasons, regimes; all other knowledge bows to these.
- Restricted regulations: having reference to a certain time, particular people and relevant to those to whom it was written, not necessarily for us in the modern present time.

*The **leadership of God** began for all of us in the very fact that we were created woman/ FEMALE. He designed woman purposefully.*

The “W” is for woman.

Image of God

What does it mean to be made in the **image of God**? “Then **God** said, Let **us** make mankind in **our image**, in our **likeness**, so that they may rule over the fish, birds, livestock, creatures...So God created **humankind** in His image, in the image of God He created **him**; male and female He created **them**” (Genesis 1:26,27 NRSV).

- This verse is **one of the main theological references to the unity, purpose and intent of the Trinity.**
- It also promotes the idea of **egalitarianism**, viewpoint that there are no biblical gender-based restrictions on ministry in the church. Unity, equality and purpose rise higher than gender or roles.
- Genesis 1:27 uses the word “man” not as male persons but as “human beings”, both created **equally** in God’s image.
- God is spirit – God is above gender, not male or female so *in both* we see the image and the unity of God.
- Adjectives that describe the image of God through the creation story

are creative, intelligent, leadership and relationship.

- Male/female both equal in being and function with team, mutuality, oneness and unity.

Authority and Dominion

Genesis 1:28 proceeds on to show the distribution of labor, dominion and authority to **both** Adam and Eve. "God blessed **them** and God said to **them**, 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion...'"

- Both of them were given dominion over the earth, not over people (and not Adam over Eve).
- There was no division of labor (roles) and both were to exercise godly dominion over the earth.
- Here is the leadership and unity found in the image of God that transcends into humankind.
- The truest image of the Godhead that we can ever see is when men and women lead as a **team**, unified by His Spirit and respecting and submitting to each other; either one without the other is incomplete.

Creation Order

The creation order is interesting too considering the rest of the verses. Adam was created first and Eve second but **it was not in conjunction with worth, rank or authority**. If so, then the animals would rule! Clearly, even the birth order doesn't necessarily merit preference when it comes to God's choice of leadership- example of Joseph and David – both younger.

The Helper – Gen 2:18 "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

- Not good to be alone – idea of unity, relationship
- The identification of a "helper" has also caused many to reference submission of the woman. In the Hebrew language however, ezer **never refers to subordinate or inferior**.
- God himself in Psalm 121 is referred to as our ezer, our helper indicating His ability to rescue, save, deliver and protect. The Holy Spirit is called comforter/counselor – the One called alongside to help = helper
- Also "suitable" - the Hebrew word, kenegdo seems to indicate one who corresponds equally, not just to keep company and bear children but

to be **an equal partner in ruling and having dominion.**

- Genesis 2:23 states, "this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.
- In the Hebrew "woman" is ishah. The Hebrew for "man" is ish. In neither of these words is any reference to submission or one as greater than the other. **Unity is the key.**

WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

- Miriam in the Exodus led with Moses and Aaron (Ex. 15:20).
- Deborah was a wise, decision making prophet and judge (Judges 4-5).
- Huldah was a prophet/theologian who King Josiah had authenticate the scroll of the Law found in the temple (2 Kings 22; 2 Chr. 34).
- Ruth, Naomi – powerful examples of godly women
- Queen Esther – risked life to save the Israelites from destruction
- Mary, the virgin – chosen by the Lord to carry our Savior
- Anna – prophet and worshipper in the temple who recognized Jesus

JESUS and Women

The world in Jesus' time discriminated against women.

- Jesus included women where Jewish piety largely excluded them.
- Women were excluded from participation in synagogue worship, restricted to a spectator role, and
- Forbidden to enter the Temple beyond the Court of the Women.
- A woman was not to touch the Scriptures, because she would defile them.
- A man was not to talk much with a woman, even his wife. Talk with a woman in public was even more restrictive.

He rejected the double standard and bias against women

- He held men and women to the same standards, the inner qualities of character versus ethnicity or gender
- He affirmed women by His manner, example, and teaching.
- He sat/spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4)
- Having already affirmed Martha by accepting her invitation to dinner, He affirmed Mary's choice of sitting at His feet to hear Him teach (Luke 10:39). These were his good friends.
- Jesus anointed by "a sinful woman" is amazing (Luke 7:36–50). Jesus let this woman touch Him and express her feelings toward Him.

- His first words after resurrecting from the dead “Dear Woman” and called her by name, “Mary” (John 20:15-16)
- Mary was chosen to speak the gospel for the very first time.

APOSTLE PAUL and Women: These examples in Paul’s writings demonstrate that Paul was a **strong advocate** of women’s leadership.

- In Acts 9:36, Tabitha (Dorcas) is called a disciple with a ministry of helps.
- Philip had four virgin daughters who prophesied in Acts 21:8, 9.
- Philippians 4:2-3 mentions Euodia and Syntyche as Paul’s coworkers, who partnered with him to spread the gospel.
- Priscilla along with her husband, Aquilla, were called Paul’s “fellow workers in Christ Jesus”, and her name often appeared first when the scriptures mentioned them (Romans 16:3, 4).
- In a list of ministers in Romans 16, Paul mentions many women along with the men.
- In referring to the minister Phoebe, Paul used the Greek word diakonos in describing her work in Cenchrea (Romans 16:1-2). Diakonos is recognized as the designation for an official leadership position in the Early Church (not just deaconess or one who serves)
- Junia, in Romans 16:7, is called an apostle by Paul, but because for many it was unimaginable to conceive of a female apostle, therefore the name was changed to “Junias” a male name. In writings of that time period, there are many mentions of Junia (woman’s name), however, “Junias” the masculine name can’t be found.

So we can see that Women, made in the image of God, were designed by God for equal dominion and rule, a partner with man for unity and purpose.

SO...the “W” was for Woman

The “O” is for Ominous Desire

- Gen.3:16...Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.
- Sadly, this is often used to show man’s authority over woman, **but** in the Hebrew, the word translated “desire” is (teshuvah) tshugah which can be translated as **a longing for control, tension with authority, negative desire for them to hurt, perhaps even a co-dependent type of relationship.** Our IMAGE was shattered and marred.
- This desire will push woman and man to want to rule. Women to

manipulate and seek to control men and man to dominate women.

- This **power struggle** - the **ultimate battle of the sexes** and leads the Hebrew nation to a male dominated society further alienating us from the harmony, unity and mutuality of the Trinity, the image of God.

SO...the "W" was for Woman – Image of God, authority/dominion

The "O" is for Ominous Desire – power struggle is from sin

"N" is for NOTHING NEEDED – your covering is Christ

The covering: I Corinthians 11:3 – the scripture is often used to restrict women or encourage the need for a covering – a man, or a veil

- the **context** of an orderly worship service in the Corinthian church, which was known for their *excesses and immorality*, mentions that man is the head of the woman. **The Greek word for head is kephale** - 3 possibilities
 - 1. decision-maker, superior rank or final authority. The idea that woman needs a male authority figure in her life before she can approach God.
 - 2. "source" or "origin." Both meanings are found in literature of Paul's time. Provider, prominence
 - The **head** of a person as the entity of their being – Your entire being: Thoughts, emotions, SOUL – Jesus covers these things.
- Taking the **passage as a whole**, the second meaning fits better than the first meaning, leading to the summary statement of verse 12: "As woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God."
- The 3rd meaning could be just as plausible in light of verse 11. "Nevertheless, **IN THE LORD**, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman".
- There is not sufficient evidence in kephale to deny leadership roles to women (in light of biblical examples of women in positions of spiritual authority, and in light of the whole counsel of Scripture).
- For centuries the church has insisted that the curse of subjection and degradation placed on Eve must forever remain on all women, even though Christ redeemed them from the curse. This concept nullifies the idea of redemption and cheapens the degree of purchasing power of the blood that Christ shed on the cross. He broke down every other religious means to accessing God the Father by His own body becoming the way. If we allow the idea of a "covering" or male "headship" to be involved in the redemptive work for women, we are

no different than the religious trappings of the Old Covenant. Christ fulfilled every requirement. That's why it is called the New Covenant!

- Galatians 3:26-28 "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have **clothed** yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, *nor is there male and female*, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
- The point is never who is in charge. Both are to submit to one another (Eph. 5:21). Both are covered by the redemption of Christ.
- **GOD HAS GIVEN YOU HIS COVERING** – You are covered by His blood, His redemption and His grace. **Your covering is Christ.**
- A thought on AUTHORITY – All authority is under authority. There is wisdom in many counselors, we are under authority, we all submit.
- REMEMBER: the **context** of an orderly worship service in the Corinthian church, which was known for their *excesses and immorality*.

"W" is for Woman – made in the Image of God, authority

"O" is for Ominous Desire – the power struggle is from sin

"N" is for NOTHING NEEDED – your covering is Christ

"D" is for DELIVER WITHOUT DELAY – find your voice

First Corinthians 14:34–36 –

- There are **only two** passages in the entire New Testament that might seem to contain a prohibition against the ministry of women (1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:12).
- **REMEMBER:** Alongside Paul's other statements and practices, these are not absolute, unequivocal prohibitions of the ministry of women.
- They seem to be dealing with **specific, local problems** that needed correction.
- Therefore, **Paul's consistent affirmation of ministering women among his churches must be seen as his true perspective**, rather than the apparent prohibitions of these two passages, themselves subject to conflicting interpretation.

Paul already in chapter 11 affirmed women who pray and prophesy.

Two of the BEST interpretations: There are others.

- 1) The chatter: women are speaking out of turn and interrupting
- 2) The Quotation: Paul is quoting factions (1:11) who are trying to silence women.

The Chatter: Paul uses a word the same word (sigato) for specific situations:

- speaking in tongues if there is no interpretation 14:28-30 if a prophecy is given to another person.
- Greek word: laleo – the word for “speak” simple chatter, street chatter
- Options include (1) chatter in public services, (2) ecstatic disruptions (3) asking questions during the service (4) calling to their husbands on the other side of the room
- Typically, in the first-century Mediterranean world, novices were expected to learn quietly, but more advanced students could be expected to interrupt public lectures with questions. Some believe that the Corinthian women may not have realized that interrupting the meetings with their very basic questions was culturally inappropriate, even shameful. They had not been allowed access to this type of learning prior, but because of the openness of first century church to women, they were encouraged and invited to learn. 14:34-35 was not aimed at silencing women with valid speaking ministries, but was intended to silence inappropriate, ignorant questions posed by uneducated women. They should begin to learn just as the men learn.

The Quotation: Paul is quoting factions that silence women.

- Correspondence: Paul’s response to a letter from Chloe’s people (1:11, 7:1)
- He quotes that letter many times in his response. Some scholars believe that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 may also be a quote. This would account for the way it does not seem to fit with what Paul is saying in the surrounding verses.
- Perhaps Paul quotes the faction’s injunction for women to be silent in 14:34-35, and then reprimands the faction, which includes men, with, “Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the **only ones** it has reached?” (1 Cor. 14:36) This is grammatically masculine and cannot refer to women.
- If Paul is quoting some others it offers a plausible explanation for the jarring change of tone which verses 34-35 bring into the text, and the subsequent abrupt change of topic, tone and gender in verse 36. If this explanation is the correct one, then Paul is not silencing women in

14:34-35. Rather, **Paul quotes and then rebukes the people who are trying to silence the women.**

***While the precise nature of Paul's prohibition in this text is a matter of ongoing study, we do conclude that it does not prohibit female leadership, but like the rest of the chapter, it admonishes that **"everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Corinthians 14:40).**

1 Timothy 2:8-15 **Remember again that Paul already has affirmed women in every area of ministry and leadership...even apostleship.*

There were obvious problems in **Ephesus**, some relating to women.

- Some women were evidently given to immodest apparel and adornment (1 Timothy 2:9).
- The younger widows were "into the habit of being idle . . . And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to" (1 Timothy 5:13).
- In his second letter to Timothy, Paul warned against depraved persons (possibly including women) who manipulated "weak-willed," or "gullible," women (2 Timothy 3:6).

Verse 11 is the controlling verse for this whole passage. "A woman **should** learn in quietness and full submission."

- "In all submission" is a synonym for "silence" here. Paul does not exhort women always to be submissive to men. Rather, "in all submission" and "in silence" - **they should learn as the men learn.**
- The women have not been silenced out of punishment but asked to be silent out of conviction because their teachers are worthy of respect.

The premise here is that women *must* learn *so that* they can teach.

- 1 Thessalonians 4:11 uses the same Greek word in a verb form as here in noun form; "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life", showing the universality of quiet humility as a virtue for a Christian, any Christian.
- Verse 12 is controversial because it seems to say that man should be in authority over woman. **But Paul is not prohibiting women from preaching, praying, exercising authority or pastoring. He is simply prohibiting them from teaching and using their authority in a destructive way.** This is an important distinction.

Verse 12 states, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet".

- The word translated 'authority' is in the Greek, authentein, and only appears one time.
- It is talking about something distinct, not just regular authority.
- It was a specific reference to something going on in that church.
- Here is where the **restricted regulation principle** applies. It is not meant to be a timeless truth but applicable to a certain people for a specific situation, not a timeless truth.
- The heresy may have been so serious that he had to say about the Ephesian women, "I am not allowing women to teach or have authority over a man."
- About 20% of Timothy is about false doctrine and heresy. One false teaching was Gnosticism that elevated special knowledge dividing spiritual as good and physical as bad. The people in Ephesus believed this too.
- So Paul commanded women to learn, understand the times, and good doctrine so they will teach truth in accordance with a solid foundation on Christ.

YOU have a voice use it! We are not to be silent. Our voice is needed

"W" is for Woman: made in the Image of God, authority/dominion

"O" is for Ominous Desire – the power struggle is from sin

"N" is for NOTHING NEEDED – your covering is Christ

"D" is for DELIVER WITHOUT DELAY – find your voice

"E" is for EVERY GOOD GIFT

James 1:16 "Every good and perfect **gift** is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. HE CHOSE to give us birth through the word of truth that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created."

God, in His creative wisdom, has gifted you. You were birthed through the Word of truth to produce. The gifts help you to produce for the Kingdom.

Do not frustrate the leadership of God by excuses, self-centeredness or limited expectations.

Do not fear the leadership of God. He is wise, strategic and always faithful.

Why talk about the Leadership of God tonight? Because the wonder of women is that God included us in everything. He is our Leader.

“W” was for Woman

“O” is for Ominous Desire

“N” is for NOTHING NEEDED

“D” is for DELIVER WITHOUT DELAY

“E” is for EVERY GOOD GIFT

“R” is for RELEASED

You are not restricted. You are not in bondage. You have been released.

God has called you WOMAN and you are WONDERful.

God has made Christ your covering so cast off the lid of restricting ideals and philosophies.

God has given you a voice so deliver the word without delay.

God has given you gifts so utilize them with wisdom, strategy and faithfulness.

God has released you from bondage so no more excuses, self-centeredness or limited expectations.

LET GOD LEAD YOU INTO THE NEXT PHASE OF YOUR GROWTH.

LET HIS SPIRIT MOVE YOU AND USE YOU IN GIFTS AND MINISTRY.

LET JESUS CONVINCING YOU THAT HE DIED TO REDEEM MANKIND AND THE TASK IS STILL NOT YET COMPLETED. YOU ARE NEEDED IN THE KINGDOM.

YOU ARE A WONDER WOMAN.

RESOURCES

My favorite book on women's issues – theologically sound and simply put.

Gill, Deborah M., Cavaness, Barbara L., *God's Women Then and Now*, Springfield, MO: Grace and Truth, 2004.

My favorite book about women in early Christianity, history and art.

Kienzle, Beverly Mayne; Walker, Pamela J.; *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998

My favorite books for theology about women and the Bible. They are thorough and stimulating.

Evans, Mary J., *Woman in the Bible: An Overview of all the Crucial Passages on Women's Roles*, Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983

Kroeger, Catherine and Richard, *I Suffer Not a Woman*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992

Spencer Besancon, Aida, *Beyond the Curse, Women Called to Ministry*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, Baker Publishers, 2010.

The Assemblies of God position paper on women in ministry.

<https://ag.org/Beliefs/Topics-Index/The-Role-of-Women-in-Ministry>

QUOTES to remember

Do not frustrate the leadership of God by excuses, self-centeredness or limited expectations.

Do not fear the leadership of God. He is wise, strategic and always faithful. You are made in His image.

God has called you WOMAN and you are WONDERful.

God has made Christ your covering so cast off the lid of restricting ideals and philosophies.

God has given you a voice so deliver the word without delay.

God has given you gifts so utilize them with wisdom, strategy and faithfulness.

God has released you from bondage so no more excuses, self-centeredness or limited expectations.