



Should We Be Gender Neutral? (Part II)

Acts 10:34: (NASB) *Opening his mouth, Peter said: I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality.*

A few weeks ago, we opened up the ever-volatile topic of gender roles, the Bible and the 21st century. From what most of us know about the Bible, it sure doesn't seem to fit in today's world when it comes to defining men, women and their relationships today. We will continue to look at several Scriptures that sound harsh in their treatment of women as well as focusing on the questions: What did Jesus do? How did Jesus treat women and did the apostles follow his lead?

Let's review our conversation two weeks ago and set a basis for our discussion today

Complementarianism = Not equal - subordinated -cannot teach, preach, no leadership or authority, particularly over a man.

Egalitarianism = Co-equal - made that way by Christ and in Christ - teach, preach and be in positions of authority

The big carryover questions are: How did Jesus treat women, what can we apply from his example and do the teachings of the Apostles agree with the teachings of Jesus? Although he did not talk much about this subject, we can see how he acted. What we already saw two weeks ago:

WDJD - JESUS SPOKE TO FOREIGN WOMEN: This was unheard of in that society! John 4:7-10: *The "Following Jesus" Lesson: Women, no matter who they are, are worthy of respect.*

WDJD - JESUS HAD WOMEN FOLLOW HIM: Luke 8:1-3 *The "Following Jesus" Lesson: Women as disciples have just as much to offer in the service of the Gospel as men!*

WDJD - JESUS TREATED WOMEN AS RESPECTFULLY AS MEN: Luke 13:10-16: Jesus heals the woman who was crippled for 18 years and calls her a *daughter of Abraham*. Did you know that the phrase *daughter of Abraham* is not found anywhere else in the Scriptures? This was a *name of respect* from Jesus. The Pharisees consistently called themselves *sons of Abraham*. Jesus was making a proclamation as to how important women were in the Jewish culture. She was not "less than" them. She had a right to be healed on the Sabbath the same way anyone who needed to be rescued on the Sabbath had the right.

The "Following Jesus" Lesson: Be outward in our respect for women as being special before God.

The original curse for sin put upon Eve and Adam: Genesis 3:16

Interesting comparison to the curse on the man - who got the bigger "lecture?"
Genesis 3:17-19

Because of sin, both of them ended up in a different place than they began - a status different from God's original design.

Notice, in this curse on the woman - she will bear children in pain. In spite of that, her desire (longing) still will be to her husband. Another part of this curse is that her husband will *rule* over her.

Rule: Strong's #04910 1a) to rule, have dominion 1b1) to cause to rule 1b2) to exercise dominion

So, if the Bible is full of "male privilege" does that mean our attitude should be as well?

Ephesians 5:22-23: (NASB) ²²Wives, be **subject <5293>** to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife...

Submit: Strong's #5293 hupotasso; to subordinate; reflexively, to obey

This statement by itself can be amazingly inflammatory. For those who want this to be a simple cultural and out of date statement, they cite all of the horrible misapplications of it to show how outdated, cruel and un-Christian it is. But let's look at the context of this. The idea of "being in submission" is not just for the husband/wife relationship.



Here the same word/same meaning is used: Ephesians 5:21: Why would a wife choose to be subject to her husband? There is a VERY SPECIFIC reason we must adhere to the female "submission and not teaching" standard: Ephesians 5:22-28

- Our adhering to this picture is actually showing our total devotion to Christ.
- The responsibility for the husband to *agape love* his wife is not only stated as a one-way street, but it is explained in great detail to show the extraordinary depth of the responsibility of being the "head."


1 Corinthians 13:4-7

WDJD - WOMEN CONTINUED WITH JESUS THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE CRUCIFIXION EXPERIENCE:

Luke 23:27-28 Matthew 27:55-56: It is interesting how Jesus continually acknowledged women, even here near the end and in the midst of his great trial and pain.

The "Following Jesus" Lesson: Notice, appreciate and acknowledge the heart of those women around you.

According to the Apostle Peter, women are weaker - is this true?

 **Babies and empathy, Professor Steven Rhoads PhD, 2006 lecture at University of Virginia**

- *So, I'm going to focus on most women, as I've mentioned, there are different kinds of women. I explored this at length in my book, on ones who are more career-oriented, who are more assertive and aggressive, less interested in babies and dolls when they are young. On average, they've been exposed to more testosterone. They're different from most women. I'm going to focus on most women and what I think they care most about, and I think it's emotionally close relationships. In his book, "The Essential Difference," Simon Baron-Cohen notes that one-day old baby girls look at a picture of a human face longer than one-day old baby boys do. Similarly one-day old - if you play a recording of another baby crying, both baby boys and baby girls will cry but baby girls cry longer. Now, Cohen uses this and a lot of other evidence to argue that women have a more empathizing brain than men do.*

1 Peter 3:5-6: If you hope in God, your adornment is that of submission. Doing this freely is to be blessed!

1 Peter 3:7: (KJV) Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the **weaker <772>** vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Honour: a value; by analogy, esteem (especially of the highest degree), or the dignity itself.

Weaker: Strong's #772 strengthless (in various applications, literal, figurative and moral)

Give great esteem to your wives, as you would to something that is of great value, yet fragile, beautiful and honorable. This is not to demean women but rather to instruct men.

1 Peter 3:8-9: We are all subject to one another. The man should go out of his way to make sure the wife is protected and well cared for.

This principle of "honor toward weakness" is exhibited in the following text - it does NOT mention men and women, but does use the same two words to explain relationships within the body of Christ: 1 Corinthians 12:21-23: (ASV) ²¹And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. ²²Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be **more feeble <772>** are necessary: ²³and those parts of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant **honor <5092>**; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness;

Just as in the body of Christ where there are parts not outwardly noticeable, the Apostle Paul says they are even more important. The above comparisons speak volumes - eyes to hands - both have OBVIOUS value, yet the eye directs the hand. Head to feet - both have obvious value, yet the head directs the feet. Once again, honor to God by honoring the differences between men and women!

WDJD - JESUS APPEARED FIRST TO A WOMAN AFTER HIS RESURRECTION: John 20:14-16



The "Following Jesus" Lesson: Faithful women are inherently trustworthy and therefore privileged.

Jesus honored women but within the context of the curse of Genesis that men would rule over them. The adjustment he makes is that he lifted their status to as equal a basis as possible, supplying them dignity and still honoring the *thus saith the LORD*.

Does the Apostle Paul teach that women should "zip their lip" in Christian congregations?

1 Corinthians 14:31-35: We believe the Bible is our instruction book and we want to follow it as closely as we can. Specific points from this verse:

- *Your women* - the focus was on the church at Corinth
- *Silence*
- *Shame for women to speak*

All other admonitions towards the behavior of women are general: 1 Peter 3:1: (KJV) *likewise, ye wives, be in **subjection <5293>** to your own husbands.* 1 Timothy 2:11: (KJV) *Let the woman learn in **silence <2271>** with all **subjection <5292>**.*

There were specific cultural reasons at that specific time for this pointed instruction:

Silence: Strong's #4601 sigao (see-gah'-o); to keep silent (transitively or intransitively):

The Corinthian church was a total mess - they were so pagan in their upbringing that the Apostle had to "reboot" their Christianity. He had to help them restart nearly everything in order to get them to a level of spiritual behavior where they could grow as a body and have a positive effect on one another, rather than a negative effect. This was to put order back in the church.

We can see that women were not the only ones being disruptive: 1 Corinthians 14:27-33: (ASV) ²⁷*If any man speaketh in a tongue, let it be by two, or at the most three, and that in turn; and let one interpret:* ²⁸*but if there be no interpreter, let him keep **silence <2271>** in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.* ²⁹*And let the prophets speak by two or three, and let the others discern.* ³⁰*But if a revelation be made to another sitting by, let the first keep **silence <2271>**.* ³¹*For ye all can prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be exhorted;* ³²*and the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets;* ³³*for God is not a God of confusion, but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints.*

Men also were told to keep silent when they were using and abusing the gifts of the Spirit. Order is very important to God. We should look for ways to be a blessing and not self-absorbed in our participation.

(Source: The writings of Professor Becker, Germany) The maidens, especially, lived in the greatest seclusion until their marriage, and, so to speak, regularly under lock and key...At Athens it was a thing unheard of for any free woman to make purchases in the market.

(Source: Dr. Smith, in his Greek and Roman Antiquities) The position of a Roman woman after marriage was very different from that of a Greek woman. The Roman wife presided over the whole household, and shared the honor and respect shown to her husband.

So, just who among Christians has to submit to whom and why?

Colossians 3:15-25: The whole idea of being *called in one body* is that there are different roles to be played. So, whatever part you are called to play, play it with the core motive of contributing to the overall health and wellbeing of the body - that's your job! We are all called to play different parts. Co-host Kathy suggested that God is judging how faithful she would be for a potential bride of Jesus by how faithful she is to her own spouse. It is like "intern training." There is more to it than what we want but instead it is what *Jesus* wants for our training.

¹⁸*Wives, **be subject <5293>** to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*

Submit: Strong's #5293 hupotasso; to subordinate; reflexively, to obey

Why fitting? The picture of Christ and the church!

¹⁹*Husbands, love (agape) your wives and do not be embittered against them.*

Again, the reminder to lay one's life down for his beloved.



²⁰*Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.*

The necessary respect for a godly family unit is put in place for all family members!

²¹*Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.*

Seems the men need the extra reminding on all counts!

²²*Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.* ²³*Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,* ²⁴*knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.* ²⁵*For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.*

The Apostle Paul was not looking to change the world at that point because the world wasn't ready to be changed. He was looking to feed the changing of individual Christian lives so they could be faithful unto death. That means learning to live within the confines of where they are.

Here the Apostle is obviously teaching the basic and transformative principle of acceptance for the role we find ourselves in through life. Whatever it is, do it with humility and energy as directly unto God! The MAJOR lesson here is that we ALL must be submissive. *Godliness with contentment is great gain.*

Bottom Line - what is the right approach to women and Christianity?



Observations:

- Jesus maintained the integrity of the curse for sin upon Adam and Eve;
- Jesus did not demean women in any way;
- Jesus did not call any woman to be an apostle;
- Jesus treated women with great respect;
- Jesus seems to have favored women in certain circumstances.

Proverbs 31:10-13

- The Apostles supported Jesus' stance on women;
- They maintained the guidelines of different roles set by God and upheld by Jesus;
- Women are not to teach in the church, but they do not have to “zip it” either;
- Women are highly respected, given responsibility and are true examples to all of Christian virtue;
- Men are continually reminded to (agape) love their wives, honor and protect them.

Proverbs 31:25-27: We are different but can still be equal. Can there be equality of opportunity and difference in responsibility at the same time?

- Are apples and oranges equal? They are both fruit but are different.
- Are all men equal?
- How do you determine equality between a 5 foot tall man and a 6 foot 6 inch man on a basketball court? They are built differently.
- Are all women equal?
- How is equality determined between a mom of four and a woman who is unable to have children?

We should embrace the differences because it makes all of us stronger.

Proverbs 31:28-29 Proverbs 31:30-31: We are all equals in Christ, called to the same calling and the same reward. We are supposed to take different paths to our destiny. Embrace it and use it so that all of us can grow spiritually in Christ.

*So, should we be gender neutral?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Kathy!) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*