

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN WORSHIP

Jay Yeager

The Bible has a great deal to say about the subject of worship both negative and positive. Needless to say God is very interested in worship, because He fully expects to be the object of that worship. He who created us wants our devotion, not in a worship that we invent, but a submission to the worship that He governs. Not you, not I, but God will tell us how He desires for us to worship Him! To demonstrate how serious this matter is, God shows us how He views worship offered without His approval or authority.

Meaningless Worship

There is no doubt that Israel called what they were engaging in worship, but calling something worship does not make it so. Notice God's assessment of their so-called worship, "**Take away from me the noise of thy songs..**" (Amos 5:23). What they called worship God called noise!

Heartless Worship

There are those who offer lip service to God. In other words, they say the right things, but folk's worship that proceeds no further than the mouth is not worship at all. Jesus cuts away the worship of the pretentious by citing the words of the prophet Isaiah; "**Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men**" (Matthew 15:7-9).

Godless Worship

Those who opt to place their trust in an object are many. I could say, "that's silly", but "silly" might be viewed as comical, and there is nothing amusing about idolatry. "**The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not, eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths**" (Psalms 135:15-17).

To worship an idol is both pointless and tragic. An idol is just what it appears to be, a lifeless object that cannot bless those who serve it, nor condemn those which do not!

Mindless Worship

The apostle Paul in the city of Athens said; "**For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you**" (Acts 17:23). To attempt to worship God without knowing who God is or how to offer that worship according to His will, is ignorant worship.

True Worship

There is one worship that is stated by the Son of God as being true worship: ***“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth”*** (John 4:23-24). The object of worship must be the Father, the manner of worship is in spirit (from the heart), the way of worship is according to truth. That is the worship we want. It is regulated, and every faithful Christian participates in worship.

I wish I could say every Christian and not need to add the word “faithful” to it. But that would be both naïve and inaccurate. There are Christians (sadly) that attend the worship services and do not worship!

1. When the prayer is offered our minds are to be with the one leading the prayer (1 Corinthians 14:15-16), but when asked, some members of the church cannot tell you who lead the prayer or what was said.
2. Each of us is to sing and make the melody in the heart (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), but there are some who refuse to sing. Folks, to refuse to sing is to refuse to worship God.
3. The Lord’s supper is to be taken in a worthy manner, in other words, our minds are to be focused upon Christ and His sacrifice for us (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). Yet I wonder how many go through the motions with the scene at Calvary far from their minds?
4. When the worship of God is giving as we have prospered (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), cheerfully and as we have purposed in our hearts (2 Corinthians 9:6-9), some rob God as though he does not know (Malachi 3:8). Beloved, God has not, does not, nor will He ever accept our leftovers (Malachi 1:7-8; 13; 10).
5. The preaching of God’s word (Acts 20:7), that which is able to save (James 1:21), strengthen (Ephesians 6:10-17), enlighten (Psalms 119:105), and rebuke when necessary (2 Timothy 4:2-4) has strange effects on certain members of the church. Some want to catch up on sleep, others see it as an opportunity to write notes, day dream or turn sideways in the pew to show the preacher their disapproval.

Beloved, some members attend but they do not worship!!! However, for faithful Christians who are true worshippers, all (both male and female) engage in every act of worship. What is the role of women in worship? They are to participate in the worship of God!

Now having said that, the purpose of this lesson is not to address who participates in worship, but leadership. The worship offered unto God is to be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40), and God has determined that those who are to lead in worship are male not female.

Just for a moment there is this: To the shame of many men who have been in the church long enough to take a leading role (passing communion, offering a prayer, extending an invitation, teaching a class et al.), and with one lame excuse after another refuse to assume the role God has given them. That is no less true in the home, as men shirk there responsibility to lead the home.

Thankfully, there are men who, without an arrogant attitude, recognize that God has a role for them as well. They are not afraid or ashamed to take that responsibility given them by God to lead the church and the home as God would have it to be.

Now, why does God have men lead both in the church and the home? You understand that God does not have to explain anything to you and I, but He does so for our understanding. Let's examine the passages that offer the why's. There are two specific reasons stated in the scripture:

1. The order of creation; ***“For Adam was first formed, then Eve”*** (1 Timothy 2:13). ***“For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man”*** (1 Corinthians 11:8-9). Going back to the beginning of the creation (Mark 10:6), after Adam named all the animals and no suitable help meet was found, God created one more time from the rib of Adam woman was made, and us men are so thankful! There is a passage you wives might want to underline in your husband's Bible, ***“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing”*** (Proverbs 18:22).

What is God's divine order? ***“But I would have you to know, that the head of every man is Christ; the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God”*** (1 Corinthians 11:3). That does not mean that Christ is inferior to the Father, nor does it mean that the woman is inferior to the man, but it does establish order. We should never feel the need to apologize for the divine order. God does not.

2. The transgression in the garden; ***“And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression”*** (1 Timothy 2:14). Eve was beguiled by the serpent (2 Corinthians 11:3; Genesis 3:13), Adam was influenced by his wife (Genesis 3:6; 12; 17). Due to those two things men are to assume the leadership role in the church and home.

The woman's role in worship is one of support, not leadership; ***“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence”*** (1 Timothy 2:11-12). A woman is forbidden to assume a leadership role, she is to be in submission (1 Corinthians 14:34).

I know there are women who resent not being a man, but the more a woman tries to act like a man, the less she becomes anything worthwhile. God has made woman wonderfully unique, because of her love, compassion and patience she is perfectly suited to guide the home (1 Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:2:5). Certainly none could replace the love and beauty that a godly wife and mother brings to a family.

A lesson such as this would not be complete without noticing a few of the arguments offered in an effort to justify women taking a leadership role in worship. Beloved, the arguments are varied, but they each arise from the same poisonous pool; namely, an attack on the integrity and allsufficiency of the scriptures.

1) Paul was a male chauvinist. When a person rebels against heaven's message, rarely do they express their displeasure toward God, rather they attack the messenger (Jeremiah 18:18; I Kings 22:8). One woman, when asked how she could be an elder when the scriptures makes it clear that

an elder is to be the husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2) replied; “those are Paul’s qualifications”. In other words, the qualifications of an elder are meaningless to her.

Another woman, attempting to defend women preachers responded to I Timothy 2:12; **“I suffer not a woman to teach, nor usurp authority over a man, but to be in silence”**, by saying, “I’d like to see Paul tell me to shut my mouth”!

- Are all scriptures inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17)?
- Was Paul an apostle in every sense of the word (2 Corinthians 11:5; 12:11; Galatians 1:11-12)?
- Did Paul write by the commandments of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37)? To deny that is to let your ignorance show (1 Corinthians 14:38).

2) “Paul was only addressing the custom of his day. The customs have changed; therefore, the rule no longer applies”. Certainly there were customs of that day that we need to distinguish, for instance: Foot washing (John 13:4-17) and women wearing veils (1 Corinthians 11:5; 6; 13). However, Paul makes it clear that the subjection of the woman is not a matter of custom, but rather a principle going back to the creation (1 Timothy 2:13; I Corinthians 11:8-9; 14:34).

3) “Galatians 3:27-28 teaches that men and women are the same”. **“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”**.

Galatians 3:27-28 addresses the subject of salvation, not the role of service! Every person regardless of race, gender or social standing can know the same blessings of salvation. Now having said that, obeying the gospel does not remove one’s race (Romans 15:25-27; 31; Acts 21:17), change social order (Ephesians 6:5-8) or cause gender to disappear (Acts 8:12).

The Bible never contradicts itself. Paul writing by inspiration does not restrict the role of women in the epistles of Timothy and I Corinthians, only to write that those restrictions are non-existent in the book of Galatians.

What is the role of women in the worship? She participates in every act of worship, she supports the leadership in a congregation. Thank God for our women and the role they have, and thank God for our men and the role they have. Let’s worship God as He directs and be thankful for the privilege!!!