



No 30 16th August 2013

TRAINING FOR GUYS

Should she be a leader? **NO!** Find out why by reading on...

This question has come up on the *Training for Guys* Facebook page, so it is time we had a long look at it. You can't cover this subject in a few short paragraphs. There is so much baggage packed around it in terms of *Biblical interpretation, political leanings, personal experience* and much more that we need to look at it slowly and graciously.

My aim in what follows is to look at what the Bible says. From the outset I have tried to teach that all our doctrine and lifestyle must flow from scripture. We must be careful to make sure we are not pulled one way or the other by 21st Century dogmas or our reaction against them. But equally we must be careful not to be swayed either by dubious biblical interpretations from the Victorian or other eras.

There are, of course, the standard passages that one side or the other of this argument uses. But here is a principle: *the Bible never contradicts itself*. It is all in harmony. So passages which might seem to be in conflict between themselves have to be resolved. I



was taught it is like bicycle pedals. They are in tension, and they oppose each other. But only when used together are they of any use. Push down on one and the other comes up. So then concentrate on that one and push on it. That way the

bike moves. Ignore one, and you are just stuck. We need to push on what seems to be uppermost to us, and see then what we make

of other points that get raised by doing so, and so forth.

Before we look at any standard passages, let's get the overview of scripture as it relates to this subject. As so often, then, let us turn to the beginning and the book of Genesis. Start by reading chapter 2.

Done that? Ok, what does verse 18 say? (I'm not going to tell you, if you can't be bothered to read the chapter don't bother with reading the rest of this).

The word translated *helper* in the NIV is a word which means *ally* and *mission partner*. Other translations use words such as *counterpart* and *complementary*. God's plan at the beginning was that Man and Woman should share the job of having dominion over the earth (you know, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea and all that). Share, be partners, in the project.

Jesus said, speaking of whether or not it was right to divorce - to break the partnership - that *at the beginning of creation God "made them male and female"....and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh.* (Mark 10:6,8). From the beginning then God made them (human beings) male and female. To be joined in mission. To be in dominion, to be leaders.



BUT.

And it is a *but* we need to cling on to, it is the other pedal that is now coming up as we press down on the first. He *did not make them to be the same as each other*. He made them to be different.

That very verse we just spoke of says '*male and female*'. What are those differences? Are they just physical or are they different spiritually, are they different in terms of role?

In practice and experience, throughout recorded history up to the end of last century and even in some ways now, it has been unquestioned that male and female are different in terms of role as well as physicality. In many societies this has undoubtedly been to the benefit of men and has been re-inforced by men to keep the status quo. Men have grossly abused the differences and women have suffered. Many believe that today the situation has changed so much that women have assumed positions they should not have - that the pendulum has swung too far the other way.

A verse some use to show that women should not be in leadership is Genesis 3:16 where God says to Eve: *Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you*. Because of this verse, they say, women cannot have a position of authority over men. But that takes the verse completely out of context, and ignores the main narrative of scripture.

The context of this verse is that it is God's pronouncement on the woman because of her doubt and consequent disobedience. It is the fruit, if you like, of sin.

The narrative of scripture has Genesis 3 showing the *Fall* of humanity from close friendship with God. Scripture goes on to show what God does about this; ultimately the revelation of the Saviour Jesus whose death conquered sin and *cancelled* all its effects. The Amplified Bible says the following in Colossians 2:14: *Having cancelled and blotted*

out and wiped away the handwriting of the note (bond) with its legal decrees and demands which was in force and stood against us (hostile to us). This [note with its regulations, decrees, and demands] He set aside and cleared completely out of our way by nailing it to [His] cross. The narrative of scripture shows that *all* the effects of sin were dealt with at the cross, and that includes God's judgement on Eve (whether or not that was ever carried forward to all women). Before the episode at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Man and Woman were in dominion together and in partnership - each with the responsibility of wisely ruling the earth. That is the position that is restored in the Kingdom of God by the work of Christ.

Man ruling over woman is a consequence of sin and that should in any case be obvious when you look at the fruit of societies where women have become oppressed.



The partnership between men and women, properly exercised, should reflect the relationship between Christ and the Church (Believers). There is not space here to do justice to that, but we can see that Jesus gave Himself completely to make the Church beautiful and victorious - and the Church brings glory to Jesus and spends itself doing so. That suggests that the male role is to give himself to the woman to enable her to become all she possibly could be, and the female role is to work to make the man look as great as she can. Is there a difference there? Yes, but both are humbling themselves in order to make the other perform, appear and be better.

The evolutionary theory (that both are equal, that there is no difference at all between the sexes) naturally leads to the idea that anything a man can do, so can a woman (and vice versa). If the two are the same why should marriage be MF and not MM or FF? Why should there be men or women only clubs? Why can't a woman lead a church?



The Biblical worldview is that man and woman are complementary, equal in the sight of God but with different roles. That does not mean in itself that a woman should not be in leadership - but it most definitely does mean that she should not want that position to show that she is as good as a man. Sadly, much of the push for women in church leadership positions in the 60s and 70s was based on the evolutionary position, and that has poisoned the debate. Many cannot accept the idea of women leaders because they know that the *reason* many argued for it initially came of the back of the Womens' Liberation movement and was largely evolutionary, not Biblical, in its standpoint.

Instead they argue:

♂ Jesus only chose men to be his disciples (trainee leaders)

♂ OT Priests were all men, women cannot be priests/ cannot represent the Man, Jesus

♂ Several NT passages say women cannot teach in church

Are *these* arguments ones which hold water?

♂ **Jesus only chose men**

Yes, and no.

If you read through the Gospels you will see that there were not a few women in the group that followed him around. It is also true that the 12 chosen to be the leaders of that group were men. But the context of that choice was surely the mission field that they had to work in.

If, today, you wanted to send missionaries to a strictly Muslim country to reach the Imams you probably would not send women.

When the Church of England was debating whether or not women should be priests 20 years ago, I had a conversation with a colleague at work. She is the daughter of one of the most famous Christian preachers of last century in this country, and held his view that it was totally wrong for a woman to be in leadership.

When I explained to her that the debate was not over leading churches - there were already female reverends who were deacons who did that - but whether or not they should be *priested* and able to distribute communion she immediately changed sides in the argument. "Of course they can distribute communion - we are all priests in the kingdom anyway, we should all share communion. But they should not be leaders"

I agree with her first point (but, for good order, obey the principles of the C of E and don't do it as I both attend a C of E church and am lay chaplain in a C of E school).

However, this points out the two main objections to women in prime roles. The Catholic one about priesthood, the evangelical one about leadership. They do not really intersect, they start and end in different places.

Which end of the spectrum does your theology come from? Most of us have our reading of the Bible coloured one way or another!

Culturally, they would not have the opportunities to speak as freely with the people they wanted to reach.

1st century Judaea was much like that. The Pharisees, Sadducees and other priests were men. They would not speak to non-Jews, they would not speak to women in public.

Yet Jesus did not confine Himself to the training of men. His followers included - very unconventionally - women. Mary Magdalene, Martha & Mary, Salome, and others are mentioned.

He spent time talking with women - the conversation with the Samaritan woman broke many conventions. He didn't just talk with them, He taught them and debated theology with them. This was unheard of behaviour at the time.

The Early Church, its leaders having listened to Jesus and established the Church along the principles He laid out, had women in positions of authority within it.

In Romans 16:7 we read of Andronicus (bloke) and Junias (non-bloke) who were '*outstanding among the apostles*' [all early church writers, including Chrysostom, spoke of Junia as a woman. It is believed that the name was changed by a copyist in 13th century to masculine Junias which has stuck in later translations-but there is still debate as to whether Junias was male or female.]

In Acts 2 Peter quotes Joel in saying that God will pour out

His Spirit and your *sons and daughters* will prophesy. Several females are reported as having the gifts of prophecy in the New Testament, eg see Acts 21:9.

Euodia and *Syntyche* are co-workers in evangelism with Paul in Philippians 4:2,3.

In Romans 16:1,2 Paul commends Phoebe. He describes her as a “*deaconess of the church*” (Amplified Bible) or “*ministrant of the Assembly*” (Youngs Literal Translation). The word, used elsewhere, always refers to the church leader.

Priscilla, wife of Aquilla and often mentioned before him, taught the man *Apollos* about the Christian faith (Acts 18:24-26). *Lydia* is another church leader/teacher mentioned in Acts (ch 16), *Nympha* in Colossians 4:15 and *Chloe* in 1 Corinthians 1:11. There are many more.

Ephesians 4:11,12 says *It was he [Jesus] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up. (NIV). We have just seen each of these roles (with a ? on the apostle Junias) being filled by various women in the New Testament!**

Some who oppose women in leadership positions accept all of the above but hold that the women were always working *with men* - often their husbands. They argue that the woman was performing the complementary role given to her in creation and not a leadership role in her own right. That is true in many cases, but Phoebe for one seems to have been a leader in her own right.

♂ O.T. Priesthood was Male

Yes, but we no longer live under the Law (thank Jesus!)

The people who argue this are really

talking about the concept of priesthood as carried on today in sacramentally centred churches (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox, etc).

The Old Testament priesthood has been revived and carried on with a Christian focus. At the Catholic end of the spectrum the Priest even carries on the duties of sacrifice, for in their teaching the Mass is a re-enactment of the Crucifixion and Jesus' body is literally being broken again.

They ask *How can a woman represent either an Old Testament Priest or Jesus Himself, who is both High Priest and Sacrifice in the great Substitutionary Feast?* But, it is clear from a reading of the New Testament that there was no priestly role in the Early Church.



Church History shows us that things changed once Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. The Official Christianity became a mix of the old Roman Religion (Emperor Worship and the Greek Gods renamed) and the teachings of Jesus. Dead Christian leaders were worshipped ('Saints') instead of dead emperors, and the Priest was in place to enforce discipline. The Priests developed their rule along the lines of the Old Testament. And females had no place in the leadership of the church.

The Reformation brought about changes, the Bible became central again in the Protestant churches - but the style of worship remained largely unaltered.

What we have today in such protestant churches, at least the evangelical ones, several periods of revival and renewal later owes its structure to the Roman Church but is refreshed by being focussed on the scripture again.

The churches that have broken



*The section in blue is based on the website <http://tinyurl.com/TFG30Aug2013>

away from those streams over the years show differing degrees of change.

The Church of England broke the central power of the Pope, the Methodists removed the more local power of Bishops, Baptists turned from liturgical formularity and the centrality of sacraments and more recent churches have other differences.

The New Testament clearly says (eg 1 Peter 2:9) that all believers are Priests, not to exercise some sort of sacrificial rites, but because the duty of the Priest was to stand before God on behalf of the people and we all have that role.

Please don't read those last paragraphs as a criticism of any type of church today. The Holy Spirit has continually revived His Church, which will always fall short of what it could be because of fallible human beings. 6 paragraphs on church history cannot do it justice - the point was though that OT priesthood is not relevant to the debate about women in leadership

♂♀ Several NT Passages say women cannot teach in Church

So now we move to the other argument. Before we look at some of the passages often used to support that argument, let's look at Galatians 3:23 - 4:7.

Read it?

Read it now??

Several points to bring out of that.

♂♀ we are no longer under the supervision of the law (25)

♂♀ we are all sons of God (26) whether we are ... male or female (28)

♂♀ The 'he' Paul refers to in chapter 4 refers back to the 'all of you' in ch. 3. ie the Jew, the Gentile, the slave, the free, the male, the female.

♂♀ A woman was involved in bringing salvation to the world (4)

♂♀ We all (male and female) have the full rights of sons. (5)

The work of the Cross was to bring all back into the fulness of the relationship with God always intended from the beginning. The partnership and shared mission. Now we are called heirs - heirs of the Kingdom of God. On earth we will still see differences. The slave will not be free, the freeman not a slave. The male and the female will still be different. But in *the Kingdom* we are fellow heirs and sons of God. And we are called to bring the Kingdom to this earth. Jesus taught us to pray 'Your Kingdom come ... on earth as it is in heaven'. Where we are, the Kingdom of God should be close.



BUT.

There are several passages that seem to say that women should not be in leadership. The first one we will look at is 1 Corinthians 15:34,35. In the NIV it says

“In the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches, Junia has always been a woman. Chrysostom represents the ancient majority. In fact, I've never seen an ancient eastern writer even suggest that the female Junia, accented as feminine in all such Greek texts, was a male Junias, a name which doesn't exist at all in ancient prosopography. The difference lies in the understanding of the word apostle, which the Orthodox understand more along the lines of "missionary." There were 70 (or 72) apostles sent out, male and female, after all, of whom Andronicus and Junia are traditionally just two of. "Apostles" is not taken as equivalent to "The Twelve Apostles." It's much more a modern and seemingly, frankly, Protestant issue than an ancient one.”

Kevin P Edgecome on euangelizomai.blogspot.co.uk

³⁴ *Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says.*

³⁵ *If they want to enquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.*

and in Youngs Literal Translation we read

³⁴ *Your women in the assemblies let them be silent, for it hath not been permitted to them to speak, but to be subject, as also the law saith;*

³⁵ *and if they wish to learn anything, at home their own husbands let them question, for it is a shame to women to speak in an assembly.*

Can you see why these verses are not really relevant to our subject? It's to do with *context* again. The context is clear within the passage.

This was a question about women *learning*, not women *teaching*.

The tradition in the synagogue was for men and women to be separated and to sit in different places, often if not normally divided by a curtain or wall. The men would sit in silence, listening to the Rabbi. The women would not be expected to listen, for they had never had scriptural teaching as children. They would talk to each other (often, it is said, bemoaning their own husbands irreverently).

These verses teach that it should not be like that in the church. The women should be silent, like the men. Indeed, he points out that even the OT law would want this in worship, but current traditions had ignored this.

If the woman has a question about what has been taught, or anything else to do with faith, she should wait till she is home and then speak with her husband about it. A Jewish husband would understand the scriptures and



be able to teach her. So the uneducated woman could learn the truths of the Christian faith by being included at the church service and carrying on learning at home.

Now let's look at 1 Timothy 2:9 - 3:13

In many ways the crunch comes here. Before we read this passage let's review what we have seen so far:

1/ Man and woman are created equal, with a joint mission to have dominion on earth

2/ Equality does not mean we are the same. There is a difference. Man is not female, and woman is not male. Each has a role.

3/ When God said to Eve in Genesis 3 that her husband would rule over her, this was a curse in consequence of her disobedience. Jesus died to break all curses, women are not subservient to their husbands; in general, women are not to be ruled by men.

4/ Jesus broke conventions of His day by spending time teaching women and even speaking to them. It is clear that, at the very least, Mary, Martha and Mary Magdalene were included in the band of followers who were part of His entourage.

5/ Women performed all leadership roles in churches in the New Testament and were often commended for it by Paul. At the very least they did this along with men, but in some cases it seems they led alone.

6/ The opposition to women being *priests* is based on false understanding of what church leadership today is. We are all, *men and women*, priests in the New Covenant.

7/ Passages such as 1Corinthians 14:34 do not refer to women *leading or teaching* but to them joining in and listening along with the men in church services; which is the opposite of their experience in synagogue meetings.

So now we come to what Paul wrote to Timothy. The context of the letter is giving Timothy general instructions about how he should train church leaders and develop church plants. It counsels him about the dangers of false preachers. In Ephesus, where Timothy was, there were 'certain men' teaching false doctrines (1:3). These teachers did not know what they were talking about. They were uneducated. Worship had therefore become a travesty, Paul reminds Timothy what Christian worship should be like.

Chapter 2:9-13 says: ⁹ *I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or*

gold or pearls or expensive clothes, ¹⁰ but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

¹¹ *A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. ¹⁵ But women will be saved through childbearing – if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. (NIV)*

Verses 9 and 10 are simply saying that women should not use their freedom in Christ to end up dressing like the immoral women of the era. There are similar passages elsewhere about men not using freedom to be sinful. I include them because they talk about *women*. The next verse talks about *a woman*. It gets more specific apparently.

V11 is still in the context of learning, and we have covered this above. But v12 -15 speaks of teaching.



It seems we have hit a rock. The flow of scripture seems to have been that women are able to be in places of authority and leadership, but now we have a passage that, on the face of it, expressly forbids it. Not only that, but it appeals to creation as the reason. It can't simply be argued away as a local issue to do with the culture of the time.

When you get to something like this in scripture you can do

one of three things:

♂ Accept that the Bible has contradictions, and is therefore fallible



♂ Emphasise this verse as of strategic importance because it stands out so much

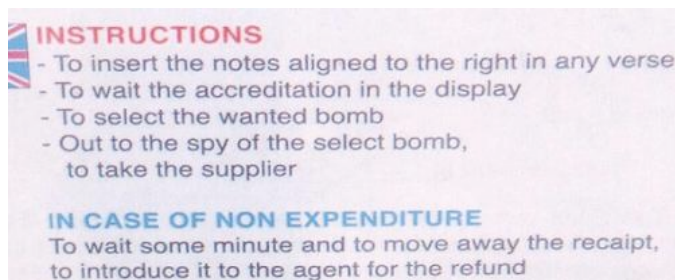
♂ Recognise that your own understanding is limited, and there is more research, reading and prayer to be done

The first of these is unacceptable. *There are no contradictions in the Bible.* If there were, then the Bible is a fallible book and is not worthy of being believed. We give up now.

Many people do the second, and yet this is not really acceptable either. Cults get formed this way (eg: Jehovah's Witnesses overemphasising *not eating blood* and ignoring the New Testament on this issue). You cannot have a theology that takes one verse and builds everything on it. You have to work with the broad scope of scripture.

So we must humbly come to the place of believing that God is saying something here we do not fully understand. To say something like: "*Here is a rock that needs to be mined, there is gold in it. I fully believe these verses and the rest of scripture are in harmony. But my current understanding can't see that harmony. It may take till heaven to see it, or revelation may come unexpectedly in Starbucks one day; but I am going to keep working at it.*"

One of the most common reasons problems like this come up is bad translation. So a good starting point is to look at other translations.



The Authorised (King James) Version does not derive itself from previous translations, but straight from the Greek. It says

But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

That's different, here we have *usurping* authority rather than just having it.

Young's Literal Translation says

and a woman I do not suffer to teach, nor to rule a husband, but to be in quietness,

Wow, the meaning of that is completely different to what we read in the NIV. It changes things completely. But which is right? To be confident we probably need to read and understand the original Greek. I can't, but I do have an inter-linear Greek/English version of the New Testament. The word translated in NIV as 'have authority' in Greek is *authentain*. I looked that up in Greek/English Bible dictionary. It comes from the verb *authenteo* - *autos*-SELF and *hentes*. We do not know exactly what *hentes* meant, but possibly 'working'. So *authenteo* would mean to work (exercise) on one's own account. Hence "I do not permit a woman to work for on her own benefit over a man". At the time of Paul *authenteo* was used in secular circles to represent a murderer, or one who got his own way illicitly.

So 1 Timothy 2:12 probably should read "*I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man for her own benefit, but to be peaceful*". This now seems similar to the verses in Colossians which talk about how husbands and wives should relate to each other (Colossians 3:18,19 - listen to the podcast on this on www.tfgministries.org.uk/podcasts).

The created order is called up as a reminder of just that - God created man and woman to work in *harmony*. Neither one is supposed to lord (or lady) it over the other.

Paul is addressing situations Timothy is dealing with in Ephesus as he writes. He has already said *men* should lift up holy hands when they pray. That was possibly a wrong

idea the men in the group were developing. Here he is addressing another problem, there were women there - maybe just the one woman - who were out to get their own way.

By the way, the *only* time *authenteo* is used in the Bible is this verse. Other verbs for authority which Paul could have used here are

✚✚ *exousiazō*, to exercise power - my dictionary gives it 7 uses in the NT

✚✚ *katexousiazō*, to exercise authority over - 3 times

✚✚ *kurieuo*, to have dominion over - 6 times

✚✚ *katakurieuo*, to gain dominion over - 4 times

I imagine there are others (cheap dictionary!), but the fact that Paul did not choose those words but one not used elsewhere adds weight to the fact that he was not saying just that a woman cannot exercise authority or power.

There's more work to do here. I don't feel the rock is sufficiently mined. More prayer. Some googling (but always check out both the credentials and the biases of the sites you read). I'll leave it to you. If you get to a point where you really feel satisfied with what you have discovered, take me to Starbucks and give me unexpected revelation!



But 1 Timothy 2 leads nicely into 1 Timothy 3, which says

Here is a trustworthy saying: whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. ² Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. ⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ⁶ He

must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. ⁷ He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

⁸ In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁹ They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

¹¹ In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

¹² A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. ¹³ Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus. (NIV - you would have thought I would have learnt by now but I'll stick with the NIV..!)

For me, whether it is a man or a woman, here is one of the scriptures that need to be used to measure them up and decide whether they can be leaders.

Which brings us nicely back to the Rev Geraldine Granger.



From my memory she is a glutton (*not temperate or self-controlled*), lustful, a gossip, (*malicious talker*), not particularly convinced about the truth of scripture, and so on.

For all of these reasons I would reject her as a leader. But not because she is a woman.

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