

THE ASSEMBLY MESSENGER

Proclaiming the Timeless Truth of the Church to a New Generation of Believers

Volume 01-51

Dear Younger Reader

We continue with the question on *leadership* in the assembly. Please read the last paragraphs of the preceding issue for context. We are emphasizing this point because it is so abused in most Christian circles where *one* or *a few* are wrongly placed in authority over the congregation — the laity. It may be a pastor, a reverend, a priest, a board ... or elders.

Finally turn to Hebrews 13:7,17,24. “Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the Word of God; and considering the issue of their conversation [manner of life], *imitate their faith*” (v.7, JND). The “Remember those who rule over you” of the KJV/NKJV is again translated wrong. Leaders *lead*, not rule. A *leader* goes before to show the right way; *rulers* sit back and tell you what to do. Many look at this verse as referring to those leaders who have gone to be with the Lord, who are remembered for their godly manner of life, and are examples for us to imitate. But there is nothing wrong in making application to the present, to each leader who is a continuing example to young and older alike. Verse 24, JND, says, “Salute all your leaders ...” Again the KJV/NKJV “Greet all those *who rule over you*” is wrong; it would imply a clergy system.

Then verse 17 (JND) says, “Obey your leaders, and be submissive, for they watch over your souls as those who shall give account.” Once again, the KJV/NKJV “those who rule over you” is wrong. The NIV wrongly adds “and submit to their *authority*.” Elders/leaders don’t have *authority* to rule. But, you say, the verse says to *obey* your leaders. Isn’t that the same as saying they *do* have authority over others? The answer comes in the Greek word used for “obey” — *peitho*, which means “to persuade, to win over. The obedience suggested is not by submission to authority, but results from *persuasion*” (Vine). So when the elders/leaders (note the plural) *convince* the brethren that what they are saying is scriptural, the brethren submit/obey them *because they are convinced they are obeying God’s Word*. They don’t obey the elders because the elders say so: we obey *God* by obeying His Word!

All believers can “continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name” (Heb.13:15). In other words we all can offer up worship and praise to God directly, both

We have made the point several times that the correct translation is not “rule over you,” but “take the lead.” The Greek word is *proistemi* and means “to stand before, hence, to lead, attend to, indicating care and diligence” (Vine), and is found in Romans 12:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 3:4,5,12; 5:17. In Hebrews 13:7,17,24 the Greek word is *hegeomai* and means “to lead, guide” (Vine). Why this unfortunate translation bias in many versions of the Bible towards the word “rule”? Perhaps because “ruling” is the wrong but almost universally-taken and accepted position of appointed elders and church-pastors and other clergymen (who wrongly justify their “clergy” or pastor’s position from the above verses on elders). Our protection is what *God* actually wrote. So we again cannot too strongly emphasize the importance of accurate translations and good reference material for serious Bible study. All should have a J.N.Darby translation, Vine’s Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, Strong’s Concordance, and a Greek-English Interlinear New Testament. Other good reference works are Unger’s Bible Dictionary, Morrish’s New and Concise Bible Dictionary, and Smith’s Greek-English Concordance.

QUESTIONS 16 (in part), 26: ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN

We will briefly explain 1 Corinthians 14 later, but will in this section extract the portion on woman’s silence in the local assembly, combine it with question 26, and expand it to look at God’s roles for men and women in religious settings. The explanations will take a little time, but it will be time well spent, for these roles are critical to the proper functioning of the local assembly. Believers have many roles. Some are for all; others apply only to men and others apply only to women. We first will look at a few of the roles that apply to all. There are many more, but these will be enough to get you started.

We All Are Expected to Worship and Serve Him (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Hebrews 13:15-16)

privately and collectively. We are “a kingly priesthood ... that you might *set forth* the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His wonderful light” (1 Pet.2:9, JND). “But in doing good and

communicating of your substance, be not forgetful, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb.13:16, JND). We *all* have the privilege of telling people of the excellencies of the person and work of Christ, serving Him in telling others about Him and His Word. Some may do so from some platform, but most is done one-to-one at home, in school, and wherever people talk to each other, by men and women alike (all in proper order). That service also involves good works, and sharing financially and in other ways, of what God has given us.

We All Are to be Praying People (1 Tim.2:1-3)

“I exhort ... that supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men [people] ... for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior” (1 Tim.2:1-3). *Supplication* is earnest prayer for a specific need one has. *Prayer* is the general term for communicating with God. *Intercession* is earnest, continuing prayer for another. *Giving thanks* is thanking God for all He has given us and for our daily blessings, in fact, for “all thing” (Eph.5:20) since even that which is temporarily unpleasant will be worked out for our ultimate spiritual good (Rom.8:28) by the hands of our all-powerful, loving Father who seeks our eternal best. We are to pray for all those in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. The Lord is in control and turns the king’s heart wherever He wishes (Prov.21:1).

Our Bodies Presented as Living Sacrifices (Rom.12:1-2)

Here we don’t have the sacrifice of our lips, but our *bodies* presented to the Lord as living sacrifices. Much sin is done — drunkenness, illegal drugs, illicit sex — because it temporarily feels good to the body, and it would never happen with a Christian if our bodies were truly presented to Him. Instead of “If it feels good, do it,” we would say, “If it pleases the Lord, do it.” A *holy* body is a separated body, for the word *holy* means “set apart to God.” In fact, for a Christian, it’s the only *reasonable* or *intelligent* thing to do because it results in so much blessing and saves us from so much misery! To put it bluntly, anything otherwise would be stupid, *not* intelligent! Bob Costen points out that our bodies are the members of Christ (1 Cor.6:15); our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (6:19); and our body belongs to God (6:20).

When one is *conformed* to something, he fits into its mold. We are not to be molded in our Christian life by the world whose friendship is enmity with God

(Jas.4:4). Rather we are to be *transformed* — completely changed (metamorphosis) — by the *renewing* of our minds that we may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom.12:2). The Greek word for renewing (*anakainosis*) has the thought of “to make different” and here means the adjustment of the moral and spiritual vision and thinking to the mind of God, which is designed to have a transforming effect on the life (Vine). As we fill our minds with the things of Christ we begin to think like Him and act like Him, and we are slowly “*conformed* to the image of His Son” (Rom.8:29), *molded by Him to be like Him, to know His will*. The Christian *has* the mind of Christ (1 Cor.2:16), but he or she must *use it* in a practical sense to have the mind transformed. What are we reading, watching, listening to (words and music), thinking about? “As he thinks in his heart, so is he” (Prov.23:7). These are powerful roles!

The Roles of the Sexes: Reasons for God’s Order

God has given differing roles to men and women in relation to the family and assembly. We will concentrate on assembly roles in this paper. For a more general study see my book, *Man+Woman: God’s Design*, Believers Bookshelf. These roles have nothing to do with salvation, superiority, intelligence, ability, spiritual gift or any other natural or spiritual quality. But they have to do with four things: God’s order in headship, creation, the fall, and God’s picture of Christ and His Church. *Headship* is seen in 1 Corinthians 11:2. God’s order for headship is God, Christ as Man, man, woman, children (Eph.6:1; Col.3:20). The next verses in chapter 11 gives two requirements for men and women — a headcovering for the woman *whenever* there is prayer or preaching (not just in the meetings of the assembly); none for the men; and long(er) hair for the woman; short(er) hair for the men. These requirements fit their roles, and God would not have us be rebellious or careless as to these roles. Chapter 11:9 brings in *creation* as one reason for His order — that the woman was created to be *man’s* helper (Gen.2:18-21), to be loved and cared for by the man. The *fall* is seen as a reason in 1 Timothy 2:13-14 and will be studied later. Finally, *God’s desired picture* is seen in Ephesians 5:22-33. The man-woman relationship is a picture of Christ and His Church. The *man* pictures Christ and thus takes the prominent public role, for *Christ* instructs and leads His Church. The *woman* pictures the Church. The Church *never* leads or seeks to instruct or teach its Head, Christ. And Colossians 1:18 clearly says that Christ is the head of His body, the Church.

The Roles of the Women

Now for specific roles. With the above as a background, we see from 1 Corinthians 14 that the women are to “keep *silent* in the churches (assemblies), for they are not permitted to speak, but they are to be submissive” (vv.34-35). Do women have the *natural ability* to take an active part? Certainly! They may also have a spiritual gift (or be a gift themselves) that *could* (humanly speaking) be used with *seeming* profit in the meetings of the assembly. And today, women preachers are increasingly the norm, *but it is unscriptural!* By an act of their wills, *godly* women gladly submit to God’s order and thus remain silent in the public meetings of the assembly. From Old Testament example it is proper and desirable for the women to say “Amen” to the brothers’ prayers (Neh.5:13) and to sing the hymns given out by the brothers (Num.21:17; Jud.5:1). The context of 1 Corinthians 14 is when the assembly *formally* meets “in assembly” (vv.23, 26, 34-35), not in every religious setting or whenever the Lord’s things may be discussed informally.

The more general requirement is found in 1 Timothy 2:11-12, a portion *not* written to an assembly, although truths *about* the assembly are given. The KJV and NKJV unfortunately use the word “silence” in verse 11, whereas the JND, NIV and NASB correctly use the word “quiet” or “quietness,” translating the Greek word *hesuchia* which has the thought of not causing a disturbance, an internal tranquility (2 Thes.3:12; Acts 22:2; 1 Pet.3:4). It *never* in Scripture means not speaking at all. The woman is to learn *in quietness*, not to argue, be loud, assertive. In non-assembly settings (Sunday school, home meetings, etc), asking a question or making a comment or reading a scripture is not out of place, but the woman is *never* in *any* religious setting to “teach or have authority over the man” (1 Tim.2:12). Verse 13 brings in God’s order in creation as the reason, which includes the thought of headship. Verse 14 also brings in the fall (see Genesis 3:16). These are the “divine restrictions” *God* puts on the use of the woman’s gifts which we mentioned in the previous Assembly Messenger.

For examples of women speaking informally, a gifted husband and wife team “explained [to Apollos] the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26). Four gifted young women “prophesied” in Acts 21:9 — evidently explaining the scriptures to the ladies saved by the preaching of their evangelist-father, Phillip. This would be entirely in place since *everyone* has a gift to be used for God (1 Cor.12:7,11; Eph.4:7,16) and

it was not in an assembly- or public-setting. “Teaching” is more than making comments as to Scripture, but the *systematic exposition* of Scripture.

Titus 2:3-5 speaks to *older women* — that they are to be reverent in their behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, *teachers of good things*. In this role they are to admonish the *younger women* to love their husbands and their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands. This is an *active teaching role* that God makes the older women responsible for, and may well gift some for carrying out that role. They can say many things to younger sisters that would not be proper for the man to say. *But how important that the things said are not personal opinion, but Scripture!* How serious to lead a young sister wrong!

As to being “homemakers,” God gives the woman her home as her major responsibility: consequently she is to “*manage the house*” (1 Tim.5:14), and a wise husband allows her to fulfill her role. This might seem in conflict with 1 Timothy 3:4 where an “elder” is to rule or conduct his own house well. But the Greek words are different. The thought in 1 Timothy 3 is the whole estate (Vine note), whereas the *household* is meant in 1 Timothy 5. The husband has overall responsibility (creation, headship), but he is to allow the wife to control her special domain. Note in this regard the varied, God-honoring work of the “woman of worth” in Proverbs 31:10-31. Her labors for her family are God’s example for every godly woman. Finally, a woman can be a *servant of the assembly* (a deaconess) to carry out a specified work, such as was Pheobe (Rom.16:1).

The Roles of the Men

We have already seen from 1 Corinthians 11:4 that the man is to have his head *uncovered* when there is praying or preaching. The brothers need to be as conscious of this as should the sisters to have *on* a headcovering. Whereas the sisters do not take audible part in the meetings of the assembly, the men *are* to act as the mouth of the assembly in preaching and praying. The Bridegroom, the Lord, says in Song 2:14, “Let Me hear your voice.” “Let two or three prophets *speak*” (1 Cor.14:29). While all believers — men and women — are priests (1 Pet.2:5,9), the man alone gives audible expression *in the assembly* to offering up “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God” and to “proclaiming the praises of Him who called you out of darkness.”

Timothy, a man, was told to “preach the Word” (2 Tim.4:2) and to do it diligently! 1 Peter 4:10-11 informs us that having a gift from God is our authorization to use it — that God *expects* us to use it — as guided by the Holy Spirit. Not every brother is gifted as a public speaker and thus some rightly will In 1 Timothy 2:8 “*the men*” (as opposed to *the women*, or to believers in general) are to “pray *everywhere*.” There are many places that women can pray audibly, but “*the men*” are expected to do so *everywhere* — including when the local assembly meets “in assembly.” Note that 1 Timothy 2:9-10 goes on to speak of “*the women*” who are to wear modest clothing and not have hairstyles and jewelry, etc., that draw undue attention to themselves. We have already looked at verses 11-14 as to “the women” being in quietness, etc.

Leadership in the local assembly is only given to the male who represents Christ who leads in His Assembly. This is simply part of God’s order. The elder or overseer is to be “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim.3:2), obviously a man, as verses 1,4-7 also indicate. There is not a hint of a woman elder or overseer in Scripture. This does not mean that women can’t give wise counsel to their husbands or others in informal or home settings. Every husband has profited from the wise counsel of his wife. Priscilla and Aquila were *both* Paul’s “fellow workers in Christ Jesus” (Rom.16:3).

In Titus 2:2 the *older men* are to set a good example by being *sober* (of sound mind, sensible), *reverent* (dignified, worthy of respect), *temperate* (self-controlled), sound in faith and love and patience (being able to endure in lovingly presenting the truth until good results are obtained). Then in verse 6, the *younger men* are to be sober-minded (thinking as God would think), always showing themselves as a pattern of good works, seeking to maintain right doctrine, showing reverence for God and particularly the older brethren, being careful of their language when so much of what is said today, even among Christians, is careless, crude, offensive — the language of the crude world where it is commonplace to take the Lord’s name in vain, and Christian social graces are seldom seen. *Dear younger believer, don’t sink to lower points of society!*

Paul’s words to much younger Timothy should speak to every younger brother. “Let no one despise your youth, but be an *example* to the believers in word [what is said], in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity [legally, sexually, etc.]” (1 Tim.4:12). He was to make

not take much part in the public ministry of the assembly, but *every brother* should be exercised as to speaking audibly in prayer, worship and praise (where priesthood-position, not gift, is in view).

it a point to read the Scriptures, to encouraging the saints, and to pay attention to the teachings of the Word. He was not to neglect his spiritual gift. He was to spend time thinking about God’s Word and make God’s things top priority. Finally Paul told him, “Take heed to *yourself* and to *the doctrine*. Continue in them” (vv.13-16).

As a general role, 1 Peter 5:5 says, “Likewise you younger people submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive one to another, and be clothed with humility.” “Children obey your parents in the Lord, *for this is right*” (Eph.6:1). This is simply God’s order! Isn’t that enough? We are a family! Even after leaving the home, young people are to “*honor* your father and mother” (Eph.6:2) — a life-long requirement long after *obedience* is no longer required.

QUESTION 16: EXPLANATION OF 1 CORINTHIANS 14: ORDER IN THE ASSEMBLY

1 Corinthians 12-14 flow together to give proper order for the meetings of the local assembly. That order is based on love (Chapter 13), both to God and to the brothers and sisters. Ministering in the local assembly is done to *edify*. That word means to *build up or strengthen spiritually*. It may take the form of *instruction, exhortation* (in many forms) and *comfort* when people are hurting (14:1-3).

The next section of chapter 14 takes up speaking in tongues — a spectacular gift some had of being able to preach or evangelize in foreign languages they had never learned. That was a gift for the road, not generally at home in the local assembly where the local language was understood by all. If I pray or preach in a foreign language, *I* will understand, but others won’t, and it will bring confusion (vv.10-12). I and others are to understand what I say. Paul had the gift of tongues because he traveled extensively where there were many strange languages and dialects, so he miraculously spoke in foreign languages more than the other Corinthian brethren (v.18), but *in the local assembly*, why would one *want* to speak in a foreign language, using the gift of tongues (v.19), unless for an ego-trip?

What then is the use of the gift of foreign languages? “Tongues are for a sign ... *to unbelievers*” (v.22) as

they hear the gospel preached by unlearned men in their own language. But if tongues are wrongly used in the local assembly by using the gift to pray or preach in a foreign language, those coming in will think the brethren are out of their minds, but if they hear the Word of God preached in power, they will “report that God is truly among you” (vv.23-25). But a brother might come from a foreign country and not speak the local language, yet be exercised to minister to the local brethren. First of all, no more than three such brothers can so speak in one meeting, and those in turn — not all at once like many do today in the so-called “Charismatic Movement” and its off-shoots — and someone *must* interpret (vv.27-28). Otherwise, such foreign visitors are not to take audible part.

This is a good place to stop because a new subject begins at verse 29. We will pick it up in the next issue, the Lord willing.

RPD