

A Survey of the First Century Churches  
The purpose, structure and activities  
A Biblical and a historical perspective  
The role of Women in the Church

One of the thoughts behind this series of lessons was to consider some things a visitor might find unique about our worship service or conduct and then be prepared to provide an explanation for why we do what we do. We have looked at examples of the way Christians in the first century conducted themselves as well as the direct instructions God provides us through his word. One of the things someone might note when first stepping into one of our services is the conspicuous absence of women in the public service part of the proceedings. Where there are many religious groups still holding the line on the appointment of women ministers, there are many that have in recent years not only allowed women into roles of leadership but have encouraged it. I have heard that one of the most current issues facing a number of the Lord's churches include whether or not women should serve in roles that have always been viewed as leadership positions. For the next two weeks we will look at the scriptures to define the role.

Read: Gen 3:16-19; 1 Co 14:34-37; 1 Ti 2:11-12; Rom 16:1-12; 2 Ti 1:5; 3:14-15; Ti 2:3-5; Ac 18:1-4 Ac 18:24-26; 1 Pet 3:1-2; Ac 9:36-39

1. Reading in Gen 3:16-19, do the consequences referenced in these verses apply to Eve and all women after her or only to Eve?

2. Name at least 3 women that played prominent roles in the Old Testament and what did they do?

3. Rabbi Eliezer (1st century) wrote:

*"Rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman." He also wrote, "Whoever teaches his daughter the Torah is like one who teaches her obscenity."*

There was a law in Rabbinic Judaism which forbade men from talking with women in the street.

*"He who speaks much with a woman draws down misfortune on himself, neglects the words of the Law, and finally earns Gehenna." (Mishnah Aboth 1,5).*

Finally, in the Talmud, we have a further commentary:

*"One is not so much as to greet a woman." (Talmud bBerakoth 43b).*

Did Jesus share these sentiments when it came to women? Examples

4. From the New Testament give at least three examples of women that are actively involved in the work of the church?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Explain 1 Cor 14: 34-37. Does it apply today?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Explain 1 Ti 2:11-12 and its applications today.

Historical references to women and the church:

“It is not permitted to a woman to speak in the church, nor to teach, baptize or to claim to herself a lot in any manly function, not to mention the priestly office.” Tertullian (. 207)

“We do not permit our women to teach in the church. Rather, they are only permitted to pray and hear those who teach. For Jesus himself, our Master and Lord, when He sent out the twelve to make disciples of the people and of the nations, nowhere sent out women to preach-even though there was no lack of women available.” Apostolic Constitutions (c390)

“as to women baptizing, we let you know that there is no small peril to those who undertake it. Therefore, we do not advise you do it. For it is dangerous, or rather wicked and impious.....for making women priests is not one of the institutions of Christ, but is one of the ignorant practices of the Gentile atheism. For they ordain women priests for the female deities.” Apostolic Constitutions (c390)

“Since woman’s soul is the same as man’s, she will attain to the same virtue. However, as there is difference as respects the distinctive construction of the body, she is destined for childbearing and housekeeping.” Clement of Alexandria (c. 195)