

Response to Objections to Limitations on Female Ministry

Dear brothers and sisters in Messiah. I've written about this subject various times before, and have posted various of my letters to churches here at Kodesh Kallah, but I want to compile in one place an answer to the objections people have to congregational gender roles. That is specifically the objections which you hear toward the Bible teaching that women are not to have authority or teach in the church. So while most of this information you can pick up throughout my letters on my webpage, I think it's still good to have an answer to objections all in one place. Not everyone wants to read letters, after all.

Before I get to the objections though, I want to briefly cover why we respect men as the heads and the teachers in the Body of Messiah. The most explicit scriptures about gender roles are in 1 Timothy 2:11-14, which teaches us that women may neither teach nor have authority over a man in the Church. It goes on to reinforce that teaching with the order of creation in Genesis, as well as reminding us that it was woman who was deceived. Therefore, she will not have a role above men. Her role in childbearing, in contrast, is emphasized here, and it is pointed out that this is part of her salvation. Another scripture clearly pointing to the limitations on women's role is 1 Corinthians 14:33-35, which warns the women to be silent in congregational meetings, and proceeds to remind us of the submission that she is to have in general. The woman's submissive role is also backed by broad scriptural support throughout the Bible; the priests of Temple Judaism are all men, virtually all of the civil leaders are men, Yeshua chose men as apostles and every example of congregational preaching in the New Testament is done by a man.

Moreover, the limitations on women's ministry fit perfectly with and make sense beside her submissive role in marriage as well as her role in the home and with children, both of which have clear biblical support. I've probably left a few things out, but it is primarily the explicit scriptures I have mentioned, along with the broad and less-explicit support, that gives us our path when it comes to biblical gender roles. These are the ones we need to follow. Let me now deal with some of the major objections to the above teachings that you will hear:

1---Word meaning: This objection raises the claim that the passage in 1 Timothy 2 needs to be read differently. It should not be read that the woman cannot – teach or have authority over –

men but rather that the woman cannot – teach or domineer – men. People who make this claim point to the Greek word “authenteo” as having an ambiguous meaning, and possibly being read as “domineer.”

I hate to tell you, but what sounds like an educated objection here is really very poor. There’s nothing like throwing Greek around to make one sound educated you know, but an argument actually has to hold some weight. Otherwise it is a poor one. You see, number one, just go to your concordance open it up. Typically you will see that “authenteo” is translated “have authority over.” What’s wrong with that? It’s what the concordance says. Moreover, this is backed by Bibles such as the **NKJV, ASV, ESV, NASB, RSV** and **NIV** which all use as similar phrase indicating authority.

It is true that some concordances will list “domineer” as a secondary meaning, but this matters little. This meaning couldn’t possibly be the correct one. That’s because you don’t have to read a single word of Greek to know that “domineer” sounds absurd in context. It makes no sense to say women may not “teach or domineer” men. Not domineering is a moral norm. Men should not domineer either. So why place a moral norm in the text there? Try and place other moral norms in the text in the same place and see if they don’t sound oddball: “I forbid a woman to teach or commit armed robbery”, “I forbid a woman to teach or blaspheme.” You see these make no sense for the same reason that “teach or domineer” makes no sense – they are moral norms, so the context excludes them.

The context excludes “domineer” for another big, obvious reason. That is because it makes no sense to forbid women to teach men, but allow them to be leaders, assuming they don’t domineer too much. You would be suggesting that the intention of the apostle was to permit women heads, but that the very same heads would NOT teach the men under them. That is patently absurd. You would be hard pressed to find a period in Christian history like that, much less even to envision one. Therefore, the text of 1 Timothy 2 clearly forbids women both to teach and have authority over men. It is man who was formed first in creation. It was woman who was deceived.

2---Deacons: Many will object that a woman (Phoebe) is called a deacon in the New Testament, therefore a woman can teach or have authority over men. This objection too sounds promising

at first, but falls apart upon examination. First let me point out, it couldn't possibly be true to begin with, because the clear instructions teach those limitations, and the Word of God does not contradict itself. Moreover, the qualifications of elders and deacons are clearly given in 1 Timothy 3, and they include being the husband of one wife. So this rules out the female deacon hypothesis as well.

More specifically though, this objection plays fast and loose with the word "deacon." You see, this word does not necessarily signify an ordained minister who would be doing preaching. It can simply mean to serve or to be a servant, and the word is used multiple times in the New Testament in similar senses. You can see this in Col 1:23, Rom 15:25, John 2:5, Luke 17:8 and Acts 6:2 among others. For example, John 2:5 in describing the marriage in Cana reads, "*His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*" The word "servants" in this passage is the very same Greek word. But do you think they were ordained ministers in the Church? Of course not. The word just means to serve or be a servant in a variety of senses.

3---It's only culture: This claim gets raised an abundance of times with gender roles as well as other areas. It claims that the limitations on women's ministry are nothing but ancient culture, and since the culture has changed, they do not apply to us anymore. Yep. That's it. That is how fast and easy some people would like to make gender roles disappear. Unfortunately for them, the logic behind this argument fails badly.

Firstly, does it say anywhere in the biblical text that it is only culture? I see this nowhere. The text gives us instructions but nowhere claims they are just culture and can or should change. Also, if gender roles are mere culture, then do you think that marriage is mere culture? A lot of people would like to have it so. Perhaps today with new social institutions and different attitudes, we can drop marriage and the family entirely. And do you think morality is mere culture? Perhaps with social change lessening the harm caused by some behaviors, we can similarly ignore the moral law. I hope you can see my point here. If gender roles can be brushed aside without any direct textual evidence, then maybe other things can as well. In some circles, liberal apostates have already gone through with those two examples I just mentioned. That should be a warning to us.

You see, as I discuss in [two](#) other [articles](#), the culture objection rests almost completely on presumptions, and poor ones at that. It starts by presuming that gender roles are mere culture, without feeling the need to prove it. It also presumes that culture is generally value neutral and either can or should change. Yet this is not true, since many things in culture have a positive or negative value. It is not superficial décor we can change around seasonally. The culture argument also presumes that what is from the past is negative and what is from the present is positive, and goes on to conclude that things from the past should be swept away. However, we can see in examining any number of societies, there are things from the past which are excellent, and things from the present which are despicable. Therefore, we should not be biased against that past.

However, to answer this objection straight from scripture, we need look no further than the perfect Word of God to know that gender roles are most definitely NOT mere culture. For example, 1 Timothy 2, in supporting its teaching on female submission, backs the teaching up by going to Genesis, and reminding us of the creation order and that the woman fell into deception. That doesn't sound like culture to me. It is a basis in eternal truth. 1 Corinthians 14, in giving another teaching on women's submission, finishes by saying that these are the "commandments of the Lord." Mere culture? Other teachings about gender roles are similarly supported. In teaching female submission in marriage, the apostle Peter goes back nearly two thousand years in biblical history, and reminds us that the matriarch Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him "Lord." (1 Peter 3:6) That word is "kyrios" by the way, the same word the Bible uses for God. So apparently the most honored apostle didn't mind respecting ancient truths, nor did he brush them aside for modern ones. Similarly, headship and submission in marriage is paralleled to Messiah and the *Kahol* (Church) in Ephesians 5 and elsewhere. That is incredible support for biblical gender roles, coming not from culture, but from core theological truths and core spiritual realities. Therefore, the claim that the Bible teaches female submission because that was the culture of the time is truly unsupportable, and it is contradicted by biblical truth.

4---Alleged exceptions: There are a couple of main, alleged exceptions that feminists use to try and force open the door. But before I examine each one, let me point out that this objection is bound to fail from the start. That is because nowhere in life do we use exceptions to make rules disappear. We just don't do it. We can find exceptions to nearly anything, so even if these alleged biblical exceptions are authentic (I don't think so) they would change nothing as far as typical Church practice.

To remind you of how absurd it is to claim that exceptions can allow us to ignore a rule, let's look at a couple of interesting exceptions from scripture and follow the logic that feminists use. First, we can look at Ja'el in the book of Judges. She clearly practices deception in luring Sisera into sleeping in her tent so she can kill him. Then she's praised by God for it. Does this exception mean that you and I can practice lying and bearing false witness? Can we ignore that teaching that we should be honest in all our dealings? That would be the feminist logic if we did. Then we have the exception of Phinehas, in the book of Numbers, who executes two law-breakers with his spear, without so much as giving them a trial. The Lord then calls Phinehas a peace maker. Can you and I practice vigilantism then? Can we kill sinners on sight? Or should we just view that as a rare specialized exception? Lastly, there is the case of Tamar and Judah from Genesis, in which Tamar lures her father-in-law into sexual relations because he hasn't provided her a husband to give her children. I suppose that means we can all practice incest, doesn't it? Or that we can all fornicate? Don't forget she also used deception to get Judah in bed. I guess we can all lie too.

Finally, let me look at a pair of alleged exceptions that feminists use. The first is Deborah, the judge of Israel from the book of Judges. The argument (with some variants) goes that since Deborah is a judge over all Israel, women should be permitted to teach or have authority over men in the Church, among other things. Well, not only does this claim seek to use an exception to disregard a rule, it doesn't even pick a true exception to do so. Deborah is not in the New Covenant nor is she in the *Kahal* (Church). She is simply a rare example of a female civil leader. She lives during the covenant of Moses. There is no prohibition whatsoever on a woman being a judge to begin with, although if men and women are doing their jobs, it will be a rare occurrence. She breaks no rules at all. She is simply one ruler in four centuries of judges and many more centuries of kings who happened to be a woman. That's notable historically, but it's irrelevant to us here. Poor Deborah. I think we will owe her an apology when we finally meet her one day.

The other common alleged exception is that of Priscilla from Acts 18, who along with her husband "expounds" the way of God to a new preacher. This alleged exception is significantly better than the above, but it is far from clear. Number one, it is not uncommon for people to talk about the Lord together in a room. I do it all the time. Sometimes women are present. So the fact that they talk about the way of the Lord to this man does not connote formal teaching or headship. For all we can see it is simply a conversation, something we have all the time. Now, is it possible at all that it's an exception? Sure it's humanly possible, but as I discussed in some detail above, even if it were an exception, we still cannot ignore God's teaching. An exception

often exists because of specialized situations which arise, and are allowed for specialized purposes. It is those exceptions, not the rule, which are temporal.

5---Bad Female Cults: This objection to biblical gender roles says that the 1 Timothy 2 passages were simply written to counter bad female religious cults. Since those bad female religious cults no longer exist, the instructions are irrelevant to us today. Brothers you know, when someone makes an argument like this, the best thing to do is just open up the Holy Scripture's and see if it is true. I think you will find in looking at the verses which surround the passage, as well as looking at the chapters which surround it, that these bad female cults are nowhere to be found. The text does not discuss them. That fact makes this argument against gender roles completely irrelevant.

It is true that 1 Timothy DOES contain multiple warnings against false teachers from early in the book to late. Yet these false teachers are clearly not female cults, and in fact going through the passing references to heretics, I see only one mention of anything feminine at all. Where are all these nasty cults? Moreover, while warnings against false teachers do make up some of the content of this book, they are far from the only things appearing in it. 1 Timothy clearly contains congregational norms multiple times. That means we should not feel limited to reading everything as a response to false teachers, female or otherwise. Moreover, to show how ridiculous the feminist logic is here, let's look at the passages immediately preceding the offending gender roles passage (vss. 1-3); they talk about prayers, supplications, intercessions and giving thanks. Can we ignore these passages also because of warnings against false teachers? If we read these verses as norms of the congregation, so too should we read the following ones, which teach female submission.

Lastly, I have to point out that the very same atrocious biblical interpretation used here and elsewhere is ALSO used by complete apostates who deny the moral law. The similarity in tactics ought to be a warning to us. For example, just as feminists grasp at any verse in 1 Timothy relating to false teachers, and seek to erase gender roles based on it, homosexual ministers grasp at any verse in Romans 1 that will allow them to paint a new picture, and ignore the condemnation of sodomy. They will claim that when Romans 1 says they "burned in their lust" for other men it really means to say that only lustful people are sinning, not all homosexuals. They will also grasp at the word "shameful" and claim this word only describes what is culturally shameful and does not describe what is intrinsically sinful. Likewise, they will point

out that the Levitical prohibition against man-sex is sitting right next to temple purity laws, so it must have nothing to do with morality but rather temple purity. You see, the feminists are coming straight from this imaginative, picture-painting method of dealing with the Word of God. Similar to homosexual ministers, they jump on any word, or nearness between words, to tell a grand new story, and tell it their way. While the homosexual arguments are easy to take apart once you examine them, so too are the feminist ones. I hope you have seen that. They rely on human imagination, not on the Word of God. Yet they have each done their harm. They have each deceived literally millions of believers. We need to end it with this appalling misuse of scripture. It has to stop.

That's all I am covering in this piece. I think the above explanations deal with the most popular feminist attacks, although obviously not all of them. I know that many out there remember a woman in their life who shared wisdom and knowledge with them. And that's fine. But in God's order that sharing by a woman is called conversation with a friend. I have those conversations too. It's also called teaching by a mother. And that's one place we need many more women, as mothers, teaching their children, and raising up the next generation of pastors and ministers; that generation which will surely remember their mothers, who helped lead them where they are. For all those who really think men and woman are "equal", in the modern and hammered flat version of equality, just have a look at the churches out there which openly deny biblical authority and which teach that immorality is acceptable. Go to their websites. Look at their staff or leaders page. In nearly all cases you will find them feminized. They will have female preachers and pastors, or at the minimum allow for it. Women are not the right vessels for divine truth. They have not been since the creation and since the fall. It is man who rightfully teaches truth.

I wish I didn't have to spend so much time writing essays on this subject. I love nearly anything to do with the Bible, but the same subject can get tiring. However, as long as the Body of Messiah is as shamelessly gender-bent as it is, I will continue to write on gender roles and continue to call the *Kahol* to repentance. There are many valuable activities for women to be doing in the Church, besides imitating men. And men (I'm speaking to you now) I wouldn't have to put myself out there in protest so often if you were doing your jobs. That includes leading in the Church and leading your women in their rightful roles. You need to keep your women on their godly path. Do your jobs. We don't need more imitation men. We need more real ones. That means you.