

Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

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The Role of Women in the Local Church

by Gwen Cooper

This article was written as a final research project for the Bible Study Resources class taught last semester by J. H. Blackman. The article is submitted by brother Blackman and used with the permission of the author.

Were there women ministers in the New Testament church? Did women of the first century church have an official position similar to the deacons and the elders about which we read? Did women take a leadership position in the work and worship of the early church? Were the limitations Paul gives regarding the role of women in 1 Cor. and 1 Tim. 2 where he does not allow women to speak in the assembly a reflection of the cultural element in which Paul lived? Are these restrictions limited to the first century church, or are they part of God's pattern for the organization of the church to be recognized for each subsequent generation? Is the

New Testament picture of the minister unclear? Who has authority over whom? Were there women apostles? By reading the current literature not only from the denominational world but from our own brotherhood, one can see that on and on the questions continue to come regarding the proper role of women in the church today.¹

Not only is the pressure coming from the denominational world to "give ground" on what the Bible explicitly states regarding the role of women in the church today, but pressure comes from within the church as well. Robert Rowland in his book, "**I Permit Not A Woman...To Remain Shackled**" says that we do not practice what we claim the Bible teaches with any consistency in this matter of the proper role of women. He says, "The Bible does not really teach what we claim it does." Roland asserts, "It is only through selective reading of the Bible that we are able to keep women out of the public life and ministries of the church." With statements such as this, one can see that just as Israel of old was not

only in the land of Canaan but was influenced by Canaan's life style, so the church of the Lord is in the world today, and some of it is being influenced by the world and its teaching.²

Questions: Do women have a place in the work of the church today? Answer: YES. Everything that God created was good. Yet, God saw there was a need for something else and that something else was woman. Woman was the crowning glory of God's work. Man was created to be the head of creation and woman was given the opportunity to be the crown for that head.

Gal. 3:26-28 "*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you 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 or female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*" This reference shows that woman, like man attains a place as member in that body through baptism, by which act God himself puts her in the Church (Acts 2:47). Women, as a member of the body, enjoy the same spiritual blessing and

promises as do men.¹

The command to worship is to women as well as to men. By way of worship, she is to sing, to pray, commune and to contribute: Eph. 5:18 19; Col 5:2; 1 Cor. 11: 23-36; 16:2. Since by the scriptures she is forbidden to exercise dominion over man, 1 Tim. 2:12, *"But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man but to be in silence"*, her participation does not include presiding in the various acts of worship. A specific instruction is given to women to teach; I Titus 2:3 *"The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teacher of good things"*.

I Cor. 12: 12-30: The Lord impresses upon each Christian to find his or her own place and work. Whether women are the "eye" or the "hand" or even the "toe", we should function in that particular spot diligently. A woman's work in the Church is an individual responsibility. By these scriptures, we see every person has some ability to serve and unless that ability is used and allowed to grow and mature, it will be taken away. The parable of the talents is a good example of this. Not only must each woman fill her own place with what God has blessed her with, but she has to make certain her work is done under the oversight of the men in the congregation. We must stay within the framework of God's authority. We cannot usurp authority over the men. God is the head of all; Christ is the head of the church and man is the head of woman. This is the order which has been

divinely ordained for our own good and any work we do must fit within this arrangement.⁴

Woman's first work is found in making a christian home. Woman's best place of service is in her home. This is the sphere for which she was created and for which she is suited for. Proverbs 31 gives the characteristics which Christian women should possess.

Teaching is an important work women may do. Women do their most effective teaching in the home. Women are more ably suited to teach children, teenage girls and other women. She can do this publicly or privately as long as she does not step outside the pattern of authority. There is no limit to the teaching women may do by way of example. However, scriptures as 1 Cor. 14:34, 1 Tim. 2: 12 limit her word of mouth teaching. These scriptures forbid her to speak by way of teaching or preaching in the assembly of the church nor is she allowed to teach otherwise in such a way and on such an occasion as to exercise dominion over man. *"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law."* *"But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence"*.

Personal work is an important task which women can perform. We should learn enough to be able to tell another what they must do to be saved.

Women play an important part in the benevolent work of the church. This work is especially suited to women. Women have qualities which make us fitted to serve others. We should however

let the elders, minister or whoever has charge of this work know that we want to serve in this capacity. We can be assured there will be something for us to do.

Women should be hospitable. 1 Pet. 4:9 *"Use hospitality one to another without grudging"*. This too is an area for which we are well suited. God has commanded us to be hospitable.

Visitation is an important work for women. A personal visit is one of the most beneficial ways of reaching people for Christ. Old people, shut-ins, visitors, strangers in town: all of these provide excellent opportunities for personal visits.

Women are able to counsel others as well. Our tender compassionate natures makes us excellent counselors. It is the duty of all Christians to help restore someone who has fallen. Gal 6:1 *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering theyself, lest thou be tempted."* We can counsel young girls with their problems. But we should seek God's wisdom and guidance in this area. There are a

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number of things that can be done by women in the local congregation. For example, the weekly bulletin can use the help of women. Women can gather material for the bulletin and type it up. The church office has chores that need to be taken care of such as typing for the minister, making visitation schedules, stuffing envelopes, mailing them, mending song books. The women should take care of the baptismal clothing by making sure they are clean and readily available at all times.

The work is there and you will not only be serving God but also receiving a blessing for yourself in accepting responsibility for anything that needs to be done. Whatever task we accept, we should do it with all our might. Zeal should be the common characteristic of every woman serving the Lord. Our work should not be done grudgingly but it should be a way of life. The need is ever present; each day will present new opportunities. Let us each find our place and after finding it, fill it with all the ability which God has given us.⁵

Before I became a member of the church of Christ, I was a member of the Disciples of Christ Church. There were women preachers, ushers and other duties that were performed by men as well as women. I was very active. But when I first became a member of the Lord's church, I thought there was nothing for me to do. But I've learned, that you don't have to preach or be in charge of a congregation or any of those things in order to be a christian. There is plenty of work to be done and by doing this research paper, I see there is plenty that I have not been doing. So I need to get busy. **WOMEN DO HAVE A ROLE IN THE LOCAL CONGREGATION.**

END NOTES

¹ **Women To The Glory of God**, 19th Spiritual Sword Lectureship, Memphis,

TN, Jim Laws, Director, 1994, Sain Publications, p. 9.

² Ibid., pg. 11.

³ **The Woman of God**, Hallie Adams Kellogg, Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1962, pg. 141.

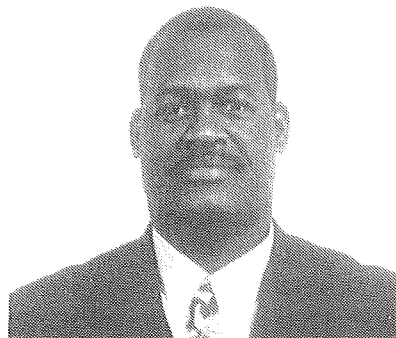
⁴ **Martha, Martha**, by Marge Green, Quality Printing Co., Inc., 1964, pg. 53

⁵ Ibid., pg. 59

Scripture quotations: **King James Version of the Holy Bible**

May Graduates

The graduating class for this semester contains seven men. We believe these men love the Lord and have determined to serve Him to the best of their ability. Some already have commitments. If you would like to reach them, write them at the school and we will forward your correspondence to them.



Keith M. DeLaney

Keith is from St. Petersburg, Florida. He is married and has three children. His family are members of the Twentieth Street Church of Christ in St. Petersburg.

Keith says that "after leaving a career in Law Enforcement several years ago, I was determined to learn more about the bible in an attempt to discover God's purpose for me in this life. Since becoming a student at FSOP, I have realized my purpose and am looking forward to graduation and full time service to the Lord."



Kevin J. Farmer

Kevin and his wife, Anne, have been married since 1981 and have two children. They moved from Massachusetts in 1988, and have lived in Deltona, Florida these past eight years.

Kevin and his wife were members of the Worldwide Church of God (Armstrongism) for eleven years. Kevin studied his way out of the WCG. Brother Bert Brown, preacher of the Deltona Church of Christ, helped Kevin and his family and they were baptized in 1993. Kevin has been preaching part time for the Geneva Church of Christ for the past few months and is seeking a full time position as a gospel preacher.



Owen Faulk

Owen is a native of Wachula, Florida. He is married and has four children. He graduated from Hardee High School in Wachula in 1969. Owen is serving as the minister of the Canal Street Church of Christ in Mulberry, Florida. Owen has worked with these brethren for the past year and plans to continue this position following his graduation.



Greg Harmon

Greg grew up in Meadville, Pennsylvania. He is married and lives in Center Hill, Florida. He had little religious background before becoming a Christian in 1992. Greg plans to work with his home congregation in Bushnell, Florida following his graduation.

Greg will be working with his Father-in law, Bobby Simmons, who is also a graduate of the Florida School of Preaching. Greg states, "I am eager to put into action what I have learned these past two years."



Howard Johnson

Howard was born in Springfield, Ohio. He is a graduate of Dunedin High School in Dunedin, Florida.

Howard is married to the former Robin Givens of Tavares, Florida and they have one daughter. He served ten years in the United States Air Force. He has spent tours in North Dakota and was in the Republic of Turkey for Desert Storm.

Following graduation, Howard will begin work with the Mt. Olive Church of Christ in Live Oak, Florida. He has been helping the Springhead Church of Christ near Plant City, Florida since May 1995.

Howard has published a monthly journal entitled, "The Evangelist" for the past eight years.



Carl Lebrun

Carl is a native of Haiti and has been living in Miami/Fort-Lauderdale, Florida area for the past ten years.

Carl was reared in a strong Catholic family and studied his way

out of it. Carl says, "I obeyed the Gospel in 1994 after a year long correspondence course with a church of Christ in Miami. He is married and hopes to return to Haiti and preach the true Gospel of Christ if it be God's will. If any congregation or individual is willing to support such an effort, please contact Carl at P.O. Box 8303, Fort-Lauderdale, Florida 33310.



Albert McMillian

Albert is from McRae, Georgia. While in school, he has been a member of the Sixth Street Church of Christ in Lakeland. In McRae, Georgia, he will be a member of the Willow Creek Lane Church of Christ.

Albert states that it has been a great blessing to him to have been a part of the school and he plans to help support it following his graduation. Albert also plans to farther his education in the public school system in McRae.



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