

the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing - if they continue in faith and holiness with propriety.' (1 Tim 2:11-15; NIV)

Here Paul says women should not be teachers of God's Word and exercise authority over men in the church (2:11). Christian women were to join in the prayer of the church (2:1-10) and be students of God's Word (2:11). But they could not be teachers in the church, even if they taught elsewhere, at home or with their friends (2:12).

When Paul says he does not permit this, he makes it quite clear he is speaking as an apostle of Jesus Christ (2:7). Together with his whole charge in 2:1-3:13, he regards this as a rule for the whole church (3:14-15). So both Jesus and Paul teach that women should not be pastors in the church.

What Does This Mean for Us?

The church quite clearly has no command from Christ and his apostles to appoint women as ministers of the gospel. This lack of a mandate would not matter if pastors did human work, or if they served the Lord in the same way as every other baptised person. But they do something different. Christ calls them to work together with him in the church by preaching the Word, baptising people, and hosting his holy meal.

Just as a person can only function as the Prime Minister of Australia or a judge in a court of law if they are duly authorised, so no one can serve as a minister of the Word without the Lord's specific authorisation and empowerment. Christ does this through his Word. His Word authorises pastors to work with him in the ministry of the gospel. Just as his particular words institute baptism and the Lord's Supper and give them their power, so his particular words establish the ministry of Word and Sacrament and empower pastors to speak his Word, baptise people, and distribute his body and blood. Christ's word enables pastors to operate by the power of the Holy Spirit, for he gives his Spirit through his Word. Their power to do the work of Christ comes from that Word and their obedience to it. Apart from that Word they lack divine authority and power.

Pastors can only function properly under the *authority of Christ* and according to his terms of reference for them.

And his terms of reference given in his Word include the command that women should *not* be preachers.

No Authority from Christ

The church has no authority to appoint a woman as a minister of the gospel. If the church were to ordain women, it would be disobedient to Christ's command. It could not invest them with the authority of Christ to perform their ministry. It would require them to do the work of Christ with human authority and power. The church would have to justify why it changed its doctrine and practice without Christ's authorisation.

Like the king in Anderson's story, ordained women would be left spiritually naked, vulnerable to challenge from people in the church and open to attack from Satan. They would be required to prove to themselves and others that they had proper authority and power to be ministers of the Word. Both they and their members could never be certain of this - they would always live with uncertainty about Christ's authority, his approval and blessing.

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Brochures in this 'Ordained by God' series:

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By Christ's Command



By Christs Command

For those concerned that the church acts with proper authority from Christ when ordaining people into the Office of the Ministry.

'No clothes! The emperor has no clothes!' Remember the story told by Hans Christian Anderson? A slick tailor had persuaded the king he could make him the finest robes that had ever been made. They would be so fine, so beautiful, that vulgar people could not appreciate their splendour.

The tailor described these imaginary robes so vividly that the king and his courtiers were, in their snobbery, quite taken in by him. So when the day came for the king to parade before his people in his new clothes, neither he nor anyone else was game to admit that he was, in fact, stark naked! It took a child to see that. Everyone else was too afraid of appearing uncultured.

In the church, everything we do needs the clothing of the Scriptures. This goes for the Office of the Ministry as well. The church, however, has no clear scriptural authority to ordain women as pastors. If it does ordain them (as has happened in many denominations over the last 50 years) it does so merely by human authority and power.

The arguments for ordaining women may sound persuasive to our modern way of thinking, but these arguments are purely human. They have no firm foundation in God's Word. Christ has not authorised women to be apostles and pastors. He *did* call them to be disciples - students of his Word - but *not* ministers of the gospel. He has, in fact, forbidden this.

Christ's Command in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-38

In 1 Cor 14:33b-38, St Paul teaches that women are not to be speakers in the church, the assembly of God's people for the divine service. The context shows he is speaking

about the proclamation of God's Word, the message of the apostles (14:36).

'As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. 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. Did the Word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.' (1 Cor 14:33b-38; NIV)

Women may speak when it comes to the prayers of the church (1 Cor 11:5); they may 'speak' in tongues provided their speaking is interpreted (14:27-28); they may even 'speak' a word of prophecy (11:5; 14:29-33a). But they must 'be silent' when God's Word is spoken and enacted by those who are its ministers (14:34). Like all God's people, they are to be subordinate to that Word.

Paul's prohibition of women as pastors was most likely as controversial in Corinth as in Australia today. Women played a significant role in many areas of public life. They served as priests in various pagan religions. They were prominent in the life of the congregation. Paul therefore explains his stance.

Reasons for the Prohibition



Paul gives three main reasons for this prohibition, beginning with the least weighty and ending with the most authoritative.

1. He claims that *this rule applies to all churches everywhere* (14:33). It was not just a local matter that Paul and his co-workers had decreed for the church in Corinth (on the basis that, for example, women were involved in pagan cults, or because Jews and Jewish Christians might find it offensive). It was an ecumenical rule that stood for all times and all places.
2. Paul also grounds the prohibition on *God's law in the Pentateuch*. God had subordinated Eve to Adam as her

head and had excluded women from the Levitical priesthood. Paul implies that just as men led their families and the whole congregation of Israel in worship, so men were responsible for the proclamation of God's Word in the church. Any attempt by a woman to promote herself as a teacher in the divine service was shameful because it flouted that divine arrangement.

3. Most significantly, Paul states quite bluntly his teaching was based on '*the Lord's command*' (14:37). It was taught by Christ himself. This is by far the weightiest reason and is meant to clinch the argument. He refers to the chain of teaching that had come from Christ and his apostles, a tradition that had reached the various churches through the apostles and the ministers of the Word (14:36).

Since this command was part of that tradition, those who held they had special authority because they were prophets, or spoke in tongues, had to submit to Christ's Word and its authority in this matter (14:37). Christ himself had commanded that women should be silent in the church when God's Word was proclaimed. They could not be ministers of the Word or act as if they were not subject to it.

Yet Paul does not let the matter rest with that powerful assertion. He goes on to warn his hearers that those who refuse to accept his teaching as a command of the Lord would not be recognised by Christ or the church (14:38). If they quite knowingly reject this teaching, they would no longer have his blessing on their teaching. Once again, this is not Paul's idea; it is Christ's command. What Christ says goes, no matter how unfashionable or disagreeable it may be.

1 Timothy 2:11-15

The teaching of Paul in 1 Cor 14:33-38 is confirmed and elaborated by the parallel passage in 1 Tim 2:11-15:

'A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not

What I am writing to you is the Lord's command. 1 Corinthians 14:37