

## Twisted Scripture 3: 1 Corinthians 14:34 – Women Keep Silent in the Church

### TWISTED TITLE

Chris – Introduces the sermon. Gives talk on the differences between cultural and forever truth and then introduces Sarah.

Hi, as Chris has said, my name is Sarah, and I'm honored today to be able to help bring you the word of God involving the topic of women remaining silent in the church.

This is a touchy subject in many denominations within the Christian church. In fact, I was raised believing that it was not allowable for a woman to be in any leadership role in the church; it was permitted for a woman to teach only in the presence of other women, such as at a woman's conference, or as a childrens' teacher.

In the past couple months that I've been preparing to speak to you on this topic I've read and heard such wildly different opinions and it usually leads to a heated discussion. Let's read the scriptures that are causing all the turmoil.

**1 Corinthians 14:34 women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says.(NIV)**

**1 Corinthians 14:35 If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.(NIV)**

That scripture, in tandem with the following are the basis for the argument that women should remain silent and submissive in church.

1 Timothy 2:11 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.(NIV)

1 Timothy 2:12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.(NIV)

1 Timothy 2:13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve.(NIV)

1 Timothy 2:14 And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.(NIV)

## Paul against Women?

That seems fairly clear... right? Obviously Paul is against women speaking or holding any kind of leadership role in church, and since what is written is the inspired word of God, then God himself must be against it too. Or, is it possible this is twisted scripture that has been taken out of context and misrepresented? That is the question we're going to try to answer today.

First, let's go over some of the things we know for sure.

Paul, the author of both of the letters to the church in Corinth and the Church in Ephesus that we just read, ministered along-side women.

Romans 16:1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea.(NIV)

Romans 16:2 I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.(NIV)

In Romans 16:1-2 Paul commends Phoebe in being a “servant of the church in Cenchrea” and a “helper of many” and also to himself. The word servant here is the word **diakonos** where we get our English word for deacon. Strong’s Concordance states that the general understanding of the meaning of this word was a Christian pastor or teacher. In fact, Paul used the word diakonos or a derivative of the word thirty-four times. Six times it is translated to deacon, twenty seven times it is translated minister, and ONE time it is translated servant – in describing Phoebe.

### **Paul against Women?**

In Romans 16:3 Paul refers to Priscilla as his fellow worker in Christ and gives thanks for her. This is the same woman who, in Acts 18:26, along with her husband Aquila, took aside Apollos to teach him a “more excellent way.” Apollos was not just some man, according to Acts 18:26 he was a Jewish man that was mighty in Scriptures and taught accurately the things of the Lord. So, not only is Priscilla (a woman) teaching Apollos (a man); she is teaching a Jewish man who was raised being taught scripture and the things of the Lord.

Lydia is yet another woman Paul worked with who is connected with the Philippian church. She was not only the first convert to Christianity in Philippi, she was actually the first convert in Europe. According to Acts 16:40 the new Philippian church Paul planted started in her home. When Paul and Silas were leaving Philippi they went to Lydia’s house (not the jailor’s house like many people think) and met with the believers there. We are not specifically told that Lydia is the church leader, but in the examples we have throughout the new testament the owner of the house in which the church met was also the church leader.

Paul does NOT have a problem with ALL women speaking or holding a leadership position in the church. I hope these previous examples from some of Paul's missions make that point clear.

We need to reconcile the record of these women speaking and ministering with the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians & 2 Timothy...

Next, I'd like to look at some other New Testament scriptures and see if they would stand up to the argument that women should remain silent in the church.

**Acts 2:17-18.** (This is Peter quoting the prophet Joel.)

**Acts 2:17 " In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.(NIV)**

**Acts 2:18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.(NIV)**

Many people believe the word prophesy is equivalent to fortune telling. It is not. When God says prophesy, He simply means to be the mouthpiece of God. In other words, He is saying **your sons and daughters will speak the word of God**. Uh-oh, I wonder if God knows that women aren't supposed to speak God's word in church? That could be problematic.

**1 Corinthians 14:3 But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.(NIV)**

**1 Corinthians 14:4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.(NIV)**

**Who did Peter say is going to prophesy in Acts 2:17?** All the men? No! Your sons AND daughters will prophesy. What does Paul say here in 1 Corinthians is the purpose of prophecy? To edify the church.

Jesus tells us the greatest command is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, all of your mind and all of your soul. God wants us to use our mind! He wants us to think! So, let's think about this. Your sons and daughters are supposed to prophesy, or speak God's word, to edify the church. How are women supposed to be the mouthpiece of God silently? How do women remaining silent edify anybody? This doesn't work.

Lastly, God is all powerful! God's word is the word of truth! Hebrews 4:12 says:

**Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.(NIV)**

The word of God sounds pretty powerful right? Is the Word of God any less powerful coming from a woman? If the person who won you to God was a woman, is your relationship with God less than it should be? No! We are all called to be filled with the Holy Spirit! We are all called to go and make disciples of all nations! We are all called to be the mouthpieces of God!

## **Galations 3:28 Paul states:**

**There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.(NIV)**

You would think after reading the verses from 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy that Paul was differentiating men from women. But, we see in Galations that same Paul saying "there is neither male nor female, we are all one in Christ Jesus."

Okay, so now that we've laid the groundwork that **Paul has not only worked with women in Christ and honored them calling them pastor and deacon, and the rest of the New Testament supports women working as leaders in the church**, let's look at why his opinion of women seems different in his letters to Corinth and Ephesus. Our key to understanding scriptures this week is **CONTEXT**. We've talked about not just reading one scripture, but also the scriptures around it, the entire chapter, the entire book, etc... What about knowing the context of what was going on at the time in the cities and culture in the churches Paul wrote these letters to?

**Context is the circumstances that form the setting.** We've read the text, now lets get into the context. Let's look at these special circumstances in these two churches that would cause Paul to sound like he is disagreeing with his previous stances on women.

## **CONTEXT**

1 Corinthians is a letter from Paul to the church in Corinth. I didn't know much about the church in Corinth during that time, but after researching it for about 22 seconds one thing became very clear...

## The church in Corinth was messed up!

1 Corinthians describes a confused church that is divided over who the leader is. In vs 12 we learn that some follow Paul, others say they follow Apollos, some Cephas, and some Christ. They are a group of new "Christians" where many of the women were won to Christ from the Pagan religion of female Bacchus worshippers. In this religion women played the part of "minister" and were famous for being wild, celebrating their pagan god by means of war-dances, cymbals, drums and loud chaotic shouts.

The Major theme of Paul's letter to the church in Corinth is about keeping peace & order in the church.

### **1 Corinthians 14:33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints,(NIV)**

Our God is a god of **peace and order**, not chaos and madness. In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul states that people who are speaking in tongues to the group must have an interpreter and speak one at a time; he also says people should prophesy but it should be in an orderly fashion not with everybody yelling over each other all at the same time. Don't think I'm saying Paul is against speaking in tongues or prophesying, he is not, he is against doing so in a disorderly way. It sounds like a lot of chaotic madness was happening there that needed to be addressed. Is it possible that much of this madness going on was being brought by the women from their past Pagan ministries, and Paul was telling this church, with this group of women that they need to keep silent in order to learn and keep order in the church?

This is the Context of 1 Corinthians 14:34 - Peace & Order

Now, on to the letter from Paul to Timothy about the church in Ephesus.

**1 Timothy 2:11 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.(NIV) 1 Timothy 2:12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.(NIV)**

**1 Timothy 2:13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve.(NIV)**

**1 Timothy 2:14 And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.(NIV)**

The major theme of 1 Timothy is **False Teachers**

Timothy, as we've already stated, was in Ephesus, which was the world center of paganism governed spiritually by the female deity Artemis, whom the Romans called Diana. The cult of Artemis taught the superiority of the female and advocated female domination over the male. It embraced a doctrine of feminine procreation teaching that this goddess was able to bring forth offspring without male involvement. The cult was characterized by sexual perversion, fertility rites and endless myths.

This is the pool from which the new women Christian converts were from. It would make sense that Paul would tell these women to keep silent right? I mean, they don't have enough truth to teach accurately, but I don't believe Paul's intent was for them to remain silent. I believe his original meaning was lost in translation.

This is a difficult passage to interpret any way other than straight forward, women must be silent. We clearly see here that Paul says woman cannot teach or assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. But, we have to remember that Paul wasn't writing this letter in English. This was written in Greek and was translated to English more than 1500 years later.



I'm trying to be very careful here. In no way am I about to say that the word of God is incorrect. We are, however, going to be looking at some examples where the men translating God's word may have made some mistakes.

The original Greek word that has been translated as "silence" or "quiet" as in "she must be quiet" was the word **Hesuchia**. In most places this word is translated as "peacefulness" or "peaceable." Only in the scripture pertaining to women is this translated as "silence." When Paul means quiet, as in no speaking, he uses the word "**sigao**."

Remember, we're supposed to look at scripture in context of the chapter, book, and even as the whole Bible. So, just a few verses before this, in verse 8, Paul was rebuking the men in the congregation for praying while angry and quarreling. This would be a terrible environment for anyone to learn in. It seems fitting that Paul would be telling Timothy to make sure the woman can learn in peacefulness (Hesuchia) and not amid the chaos that was taking over the church meetings.

Another word that seems to be the biggest mistranslated and also a large part of the controversy...

**Authenteo**... this has been translated as "having authority over" as in women cannot have authority over a man, but this is not the normal word for authority. In fact, this is the ONLY time this word is used in the entire New Testament. The word ordinarily used for authority is "Exousia;" that word is used over 100 times. What is so significant about this word Authenteo? Why does Paul choose this word? Since it is not used in the Bible any other times, the meaning of this word has to be pulled from other sources from the same time period as Paul wrote this letter. It turns out, the meaning of Authenteo is not simply authority; not at all. This word carries violent, sexual and dominating meanings.

Remember who we're dealing with here. We just found the circumstance for the context of this scripture. Women who are converting to Christianity from the Artemis cult filled with sexual perversion, where the women are the high priestesses who dominate over men. Paul obviously has to address this even though this is not an issue every church faced. It was something the church in Ephesus was dealing with and Paul felt it needed to be addressed.

This also leads to the next part of the scripture: 1 Timothy 2:13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve.(NIV)

1 Timothy 2:14 And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.(NIV)

Many people twist this to mean that since Adam was formed first he should have more authority, but in light of all of the rest of this context I don't think this is the case at all. **If creation order is our source of authority... then all the animal kingdom & and plants have authority over us. They were created before us..** I believe Paul is pointing out the severity of **false teaching** here. Eve was deceived by Satan and not only took of the fruit, but also gave some to Adam taking him into the curse with her. In the same way, these women who don't yet know the full truth of Jesus, and who are still heavily entrenched in the false teachings of the Goddess Diana have the ability to pull others in the church away from Jesus if they are allowed to take over before they are taught the truth. So, Paul is wanting them to learn how to "correctly handle the word of truth."

So what does all of this mean? Two scriptures have been twisted and wrongly taught, ignoring context over the years, to the point where women who are feeling God's calling on their lives are being made to feel like they're wrong and inferior.

The Context of 1 Corinthians is **PEACE AND ORDER** not women having no right to speak the Truth of God.

The Context of 1 Timothy is **FALSE TEACHERS** not that women are lesser than men.

### **Twisted Title**

How confusing would it be for you to feel God's unmistakable calling on your life only to seek help from a trusted pastor and be told that you are mistaken. This would be very frustrating. Some even would go so far as to say "that is not the Lord's calling; that is Satan trying to confuse you." What happened to "I can do all things through Christ? And all things are possible through Him?" God has given all of us a mission to go and make disciples of all nations. Don't believe for a second that you are inferior for any reason. You have been called by God for a specific purpose; go and do it!

Do we really believe God can work in every circumstance? What if you are a drug abuser? God can work in your circumstance. What if you killed someone? God can work in your circumstance. What if you're a woman? No, sorry, God has limitations... NO! Being a woman is not a circumstance, but if it was God could work through that too!

If you are hearing my voice right now, God wants to work in your circumstance. If you are male or female, young or old, God wants to work in your life. Every one of us is called to fulfill the great commission. You cannot fulfill the great commission if you do not open your mouth to speak. "Faith comes by hearing. Hearing by the word of God. How can they hear without a preacher?"

We need to rethink our definition of preacher too. A preacher is not just somebody who gets up on Sunday to bring you the word of God. A preacher is one who openly proclaims God's truth. That is a calling for all of our lives because that is something everybody needs to hear.