

PARAMETERS IN WOMEN'S STUDIES

Virgil Warren, PhD

I. Biblical Passages Relevant to Women's Studies

Exodus 15:20-21: Miriam and the women of Israel
 Judges 4:4-5:31: judgeship of Deborah
 2 Kings 22:14-20: Huldah the prophetess
 Proverbs 31:10-31: description of a worthy woman
 Luke 2:9: Anna prophesied
 Acts 2:18 < Joel 2:28-29: "*Your sons and daughters will prophesy*"
 Acts 21:9: Philip's four daughters tht prophesied
 Romans 16:1-3: Phoebe, a servant in the church at Cenchrea that Paul sent to Rome

1 Corinthians 11:3-16; 14:26-40; Ephesians 5:22-23; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:1-3:15; Titus 2:1-6; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

II. Parameters Itemized

A. The order of the home and the church should be compatible.

The husband is responsible for the family. The wife's private or public behavior toward him should reflect appropriately on that responsibility. If the husband has final responsibility for the home, it seems unnatural for the wife to have final responsibility in the church. The church should not involve a reversal of responsibility structure from what it is in the home. As the home is a social unit that involves all aspects of life, so also is the church.

1. Therefore, we would not expect the ultimate leadership in the church to be the wives of the men who have final responsibility at home, because the men's final responsibility in the home involves many of the same religious matters of living covered by the church.

2. However, would it seem inappropriate to have the wife above her husband anywhere up and down the authority levels of the church on individual matters? That would have to do with secondary levels of leadership.

3. It would also seem that the wife of one man should not have responsibility/authority over some other husband in the levels of leadership. If such an arrangement were to happen, the woman would certainly have to conduct herself in ways that would be "deferential" toward men.

4. That might imply that unmarried women might have a different posture among church members than married ones have. In a campus ministry situation, for example, there might need to be little difference between a group of unmarried young people.

B. whether married

- C. cannot take it (“usurp”), but may receive it
- D. The male sense of shame in fighting with a woman (compare argumentation) and her sense of fear in confronting a man
- E. Biological and psychological differences between the sexes

In confirmation of the divine intention for man *vs.* woman, God endowed the man somewhat differently so that his capacities more closely correlate with his distinctive role even as the woman’s abilities more closely correlate with her supporting, responsive role.

1. The male is physically taller, bigger, stronger. “*She is the weaker vessel*” (1 Peter 3:7).
2. The more confining characteristics are with the woman.
 - a. limitations during pregnancy
 - b. nursing and caring for a young infant
 - c. menstrual cycles, menopause, and hormone balance, which affect mood swings especially in some women
 - d. weakness, which affects the degree to which women can naturally project strength

3. The male tendency toward more cognitive and goal orientation *vs.* the female tendency toward affective and relational orientation as well as the tendency toward being more narrowly referenced

4. Male tendency toward behaviors and propensities that testosterone could be the root cause of: broader referencing (“territorial range?”), greater initiative tendency, stronger goal orientation

F. The idea of an implicit cultural framework as limitations for the ideas expressed in the New Testament

G. The difference between personal influence and legal authority

applicable to Priscilla and Aquila

Subjecting yourselves to one another in Ephesians 5:21 is followed by 5:22 with wives deferring to husbands, by 6:1 with children obeying parents, and by 6:5 with servants submitting to owners.

Points to remember

1. The nature of the case means that not all these subjects are exactly alike.
2. The reciprocal pronoun is not necessarily two-directional; one-directional is sufficient for its meaning here. Indeed, it is necessary here because of the kinds of things that parent-child and servant-master relationships are.
3. The directions of deference in a two-directional submission do not have to be the same kind of “submission” in both directions. Deferring to one another may be interpersonal, legal, or expedient.

We would not argue that parents are to submit to their children in the same way that children are to submit to their parents even though we might be able to speak of mutual submission even here. Parents, nevertheless, have authority over their children even though the parent-child relationship is the second of three domestic relationships that illustrate “deferring to one another” in 5:21.

Husbands might submit to wives as in 1 Corinthians 7, where Paul says the husband does not have rights over his own body, but the wife and *vice versa*.

- H. Age of persons women might exercise authority over
- I. Difference between value and worth vs. authority
- J. Difference between secular and sacred (subject matter in teaching)
- K. The public-private distinction
- L. Teaching as affected by cultural considerations—whether considered authoritative or not
- M. Paul’s intent in 1 Timothy 2 has to do with a general rule.

The idea is that—all things being equal—it is not usual for women to carry authority as easily men do, especially as far as other men are concerned.

- N. The audience—whether teaching men, other women, or children
- O. The possible difference between prophesying and teaching

Does “teacher” connote authority in Paul in the public setting? Prophesying, however, is a function, not an office.

- P. The reason for deference and authority

The parity of reasoning on women and slaves: Miles. *Husband-Wife Equality*, pp. 176-77.

But Paul does not root the slavery issue in the kinds of reasons he gives for husband-wife relationship. The master-slave relationship is never grounded theologically, that is, in the nature of things or as per divine intent. Slavery is not tied to the God-Christ-believer continuum as it is in 1 Corinthians 11:3: God-Christ-man-woman. The husband “is” the head of the wife (cp. “is” in Hebrews’ appeal to Psalm 110:4: “*You are [appointment] priest . . .*”). The God-Christ-believer pattern sits inside the husband-wife section of Ephesians 5:22-23, so it should not be applied to master-slave relations in 6:5-9. The relationship of husband and wife is grounded in God’s nature, but master-slave relationship is not said to be grounded that way.

The master-slave issue is never grounded historically. Paul does not give historical reasons associated with creation or past divine acts as he does for the man-woman relationship, where he cites the sequence of creation and the fall. The husband-wife relationship is a matter of nature as reflected historically in the order of creation, whereas the slave-master relationship is a matter of function not based in creation.

Paul never encourages a woman to seek “freedom” from her husband as he acknowledges that slaves may do to obtain their freedom if they can (1 Corinthians 7:21).

A slave is to submit to the master for expediency's sake; the wife is to submit to the husband for nature's sake. The first affects that submission psychologically by comparing it to the Lord. The second affects that naturally by teaching that both men and women reflect the divine nature.

Q. The topic of deference-authority

R. The difference between whether this teaching is in church or not, regardless of whether men or women are involved or what subject matter is involved (cp. observation #7 as similar)—John Robbins, *Scripture Twisting*.

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