

## Women in the Church

On an online email forum with many so-called “conservative” LCA pastors and members, of which I am a member, one pastor recently made the claim that women reading lessons in church is an adiaphoron. That means it is neither commanded nor forbidden by God. There was no debate – everyone appeared to agree – almost everyone. I didn’t, and here is why....

God forbids women to speak the lessons in church (1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-38). Those who say that God doesn’t forbid women to speak the lessons in the church argue against the clear Scriptures, saying that it is not clear whether God forbids women to speak the lessons in the church. Here are a few of the arguments they put forth. 1. That God’s prohibition for women to teach and His command that they remain silent and learn in quietness and all submission refers only to preaching or only to the pastoral office itself. To this, they add that the church has had laymen speak the lessons to prove that it is not essential to the pastoral office. 2. That women singing in church or girls reciting Scripture at a Children’s Christmas Service means they are also allowed to speak the lessons in church. 3. That letting women speak the lessons in church helps them get involved and gives them an opportunity to serve their Lord. 4. Our condemning of women readers is divisive and asserting personal opinions as the Word of God.

Let’s look at each of these.

1. That God’s prohibition for women to teach and His command that they remain silent and learn in quietness and all submission refers only to preaching or only to the pastoral office itself. To this, they add that the church has had laymen speak the lessons to prove that it is not essential to the pastoral office.

This denies the authority and clarity of the Word of God. The lessons that are spoken to the whole congregation are what is taught. It is not just a part of the teaching. It is the foundation of all the teaching the pastor does.

God’s Word is clear that women are to be silent in the churches. No such prohibition is given to men. Having laymen speak the lessons is not sinful and not forbidden, and in fact reinforces the teaching of Scripture that men are the head of their homes and as fathers are specifically told to teach their children. The early Lutherans were free to train young men to lead devotions in their homes, as seminaries are free to have students read the lessons before they are ordained (Ephesians 6:4).

2. Women singing in church or girls reciting Scripture at a Children’s Christmas Service means they are also allowed to speak the lessons in church.

This argument does violence to the Scriptures. Paul would not tell Mary not to sing her Magnificat, forbid Hannah and Deborah their songs of praise, or exhort Miriam to stop singing with Moses. Paul would not tell parents to stop teaching their children Scripture, as Moses commanded parents to do in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. Paul’s words that women are to be silent and not teach, but learn in quietness and all submission, do not do away with Scripture. God’s Word is clear, and it is only ignorance of the Scriptures that would confuse this issue.

3. That letting women speak the lessons in church helps them get involved and gives them an opportunity to serve their Lord.

This illustrates the exact problem very well. Women should be involved in their homes teaching God’s Word, with the husband leading the devotions, as we see in Ephesians 6:4. Having the women read the lessons publicly contradicts this very order of creation that God has established.

We should not listen to those who tell us that this is a good way to make a woman feel welcome or to get her involved. It is not a good way because God tells women to learn quietly and in all submission. A woman speaking the lessons is not learning quietly and in all submission. We have to repeat this Word of God to them. We have to speak God’s Word in 1 Tim. 2 and 1 Cor. 14 out loud and not be ashamed of it. We need to say not ashamedly, but clearly, with gravity and with fear of God. We dare not explain God’s Word away. You cannot hurt Christ’s lamb by speaking Jesus’ Word. Christ’s sheep hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:27-28).

4. Our condemning women lectors is divisive and asserting personal opinions as the Word of God.

Pastors are not allowed to allow women to speak the lessons in church. It is not loving to allow them to speak the lessons. It can be cowardice, pride, apathy, or wrong affections, but it is not love. Hurting their feelings will not hurt their faith because the Word of God cannot destroy the faith of God’s children. That is impossible. God telling wives to submit to their husbands doesn’t destroy their faith any more than God telling Eve that her husband should rule over destroyed her faith (Gen. 3:16), or any more than God telling husbands to love their wives destroys theirs. God telling women to be silent in the church and not to usurp authority over men does not hurt their faith. Neither does it destroy the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). The unity of the Spirit is created by the Word of God. Destroying the unity of the Spirit happens when we disregard the Word of God, as when pastors do not obey their Lord when He tells them through His apostle that women are to be silent in the churches.

Those who have women teach and speak the lessons cause division by setting up a practice contrary to the doctrine we learn in the Bible. False doctrine and practice divide the church. And that raises the question, from where do these arguments come today?

They come from feminism, which denies the command which God gave to man when He spoke to woman, “Your husband shall rule over you.” Some feminist theologians even argue that because the Son is subject to the Father when He submits all things to Him on the Last Day (1 Cor. 15:28), the word “submission” no longer means the willing service and obedience Sarah gave to

Abraham when she called him her lord – (1 Peter 3:5-6) because this would apparently deny the equality of the Father and the Son. But Christ Himself came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). In making this argument, feminism assaults the final obedience of Christ when He hands all things over to His Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28). It assaults the lordship of Christ and the example He leaves for husbands and wives in how they ought to live with one another (Eph. 5:22-33).

These are the lengths some go to in order to deny the order of creation. Feminists assault the Unity of the Godhead and the Lordship of Christ all in order to avoid teaching the order of creation. And we see all over Christendom the results overturning this order has caused.