

Women Teaching and Having Leadership in the New Testament

Cultish behavior gives me the heebie-jeebies. A cult is defined as a group of people who follow a particular system of religious behavior established by an authoritative or revered person. Lest someone argue that Christianity is a cult, remember that Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." Jesus frees people; cult leaders bind people. Jesus speaks truth to people; cult leaders lie to people. Jesus empowers people; cult leaders oppress people. Christianity is not a cult nor is Jesus, a cult leader. He saves His people from systems that bind.

Some Christian men, however, have set themselves up as authorities in the institutional church and implemented systems of control that turn pockets of evangelicalism into cultism. This is what gives me the heebie-jeebies. The most prominent example of cultism within evangelical Christianity is the system of behavior imposed on women within *the ekklesia* (assembly) of Christ. Christian women are told by some authoritative church leaders that "women must never teach men; women must be silent in the assembly; women must not have any authority over men, and women should seek to be passive servants to, and receivers of, male leadership, but should never exhibit characteristics of vibrant leadership when males are present." This system of behavior for women is cultic; for it is definitely not Christian nor is it consistent with the teachings of Scripture

The Scriptures and the Freedom of Women

The New Testament gives many examples of women teaching men (cf. Luke 2:25-38; Acts 21:9; John 4:28-29). Women served as *deaconia* in the early church (cf. Romans 16:1-2).

Women were co-laborers with men in Christ's kingdom (cf. Romans 16:3) and at least one of Christ's apostles was a woman (cf. Romans 16:7). Males and females accompanied Jesus throughout His earthly ministry (cf. Luke 8:1-3).

Gifted men and women spread the good news of the kingdom.

God first used women to preach (proclaim) the resurrection of His Son (cf. John 20:1-2). Male disciples later proclaimed the resurrected Christ in the same manner female disciples first preached Him (cf. Luke 24:1-11). Women in the upper room at Pentecost received the same Spirit and the same gifts as men (cf. Acts 1:14-15). God is emphatic that in the days of the New Covenant both males and females will prophesy of Him (cf. Acts 2:17-18).

Paul encouraged men and women to teach, to pray and to fully participate in the assembly.

God clearly reveals to us that Christian men and women should serve as they are gifted by the Spirit. Any imposed restrictions on women speaking, teaching, or leading in the assembly of Christ is contrary to the inspired revelation of God's word. So if the New Testament teaches that men and women are gifted by the Spirit to do the work of the kingdom, why do some put a system of restrictions on women, a system totally contrary to the overall tenor and explicit teachings of Holy Scripture? See I Corinthians 11:4-5 and 14:23-24 for further study on full participation of men and women.