

# Kaleo Church: The Role of Women in the Church Gathering

## **Key Texts:**

I Corinthians 11:5 “But every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head...”

I Corinthians 14:33-35 “As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.”

## **Tension:**

How can Paul allow women to pray and prophesy in chapter 11 and then command women to be silent in the gathering in chapter 14?

## **View 1:** Women are to be silent in the gathering.

**Argument:** Chapter 14 commands women to be silent in the weekly gathering, so chapter 11 must be about some other smaller venue during the week where women were allowed to pray and prophesy in mixed company.

## **Strongest points:**

1. This was the primary view throughout church history until the late 1900's.
2. The natural reading of I Corinthians 14:33-35 seems to forbid women speaking in the gathering, and the fact that Paul repeats the command three times only makes it more emphatic.
3. In Chapter 11:17-20, Paul says the line “When you come together” three times, which leads some to believe that he is changing the venue from smaller home groups in 11:2-16 to the weekly gathering where they will take communion.
4. They reject the idea that chapter 14 is talking about the weighing of prophecy because they find it hard to believe that Paul would allow women to prophesy but then not allow them to participate in the weighing of prophecies. They also believe that if Paul was talking about the weighing of prophecy, he could have made that clearer by using the word “To weigh prophecy” instead of “to speak.”

**View 2:** Women must only be silent during the weighing of prophecy.

**Argument:** Chapter 11 clearly allows women to pray and prophesy in the gathering, so chapter 14 must be about a particular portion of the gathering and not the entire gathering. Specifically, Paul is telling women that they must be silent during the portion of the gathering where prophecies are being weighed.

**Strongest points:**

1. Most modern scholars, as well as most of the pastors that we look to for guidance, believe that chapter 11 is about the gathering and that Paul allows women to pray and prophesy in it. (D.A. Carson’s has 4 arguments in support of this view.)
2. When Paul uses the word “Keep Silent” he typically limits the command to a specific context. (examples in I Cor. 14:28 and 30)
3. This interpretation best explains why Paul inserts this section about women speaking into a chapter that is dedicated to talking about prophecy and tongues.
4. If Paul is addressing women speaking during the weighing of prophecies, it would help us understand why he thought it might come across shameful and unsubmitive. (i.e., if a woman was interrogating her husband after he prophesied). It also helps us understand why Paul would ask women to save their questions for a later time.
5. Evaluating prophecy involved the exercise of authority over the prophet which meant that it was a role reserved for men according to I Timothy 2:12.

**Paul’s 2-point outline found in I Corinthians 14:29-35**

Point A: <b><i>Let two or three prophets speak (v29a)</i></b>	Point B: <b><i>And let the others pass judgement. (v29b)</i></b>
<p>a. Regarding the prophets speaking:  <i>“But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent.” (v30)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>For you can all prophesy one by one (v31)</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <i>So that all may learn (v31)</i></li> <li>ii. <i>And all may be exhorted (v31)</i></li> </ol> </li> <li>2. <i>And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets (v32)</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <i>For God is not a God of confusion (v33)</i></li> <li>ii. <i>But of peace (v33)</i></li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>b. Regarding passing judgement on prophecies:  <i>“As in all the churches of the saints, let the women keep silent in the churches (i.e., during the judgment of prophecies).” (v33b-34a)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>For they are not permitted to speak (v34)</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <i>But let them subject themselves (v34)</i></li> <li>ii. <i>Just as the Law also says (v34)</i></li> </ol> </li> <li>2. <i>And if they desire to learn anything (v35)</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <i>Let them ask their own husbands at home (v35)</i></li> <li>ii. <i>For it is improper for a woman to speak in church. (v35)</i></li> </ol> </li> </ol>