



out, without feeling the necessity to hand out visitor's cards, pass the communion plate, etc. Paul mentions some of these in the qualifications for widows supported by the church. A widow may be supported only if she is **“well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work”** (1 Tim. 5:10). These things don't necessarily involve any public activities of worship within the church assembly, but they are indispensable to the spiritual health of a congregation.

Have we allowed our world's estimation of the worth of these things to make us think they are less valuable? Are we tempted to aspire to things in the “public eye” to the neglect of these essential quiet acts of service? We might do well to remember that although it was men who stood up to teach on the Day

of Pentecost (Acts 2:14), it was a group of faithful women that provided for Jesus **“from their own substance”** (Luke 8:3), who were said to have **“followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him”** (Matt. 27:55). When the apostles ran away, women came to the tomb to anoint His dead body (Mark 16:1), and Jesus first appeared to women (Mark 16:9)—but there is no record of a woman speaking or leading activities of public worship.

**What Is the Standard?** The woman I mentioned in the previous article who once worshipped with a sound congregation and now advocates the “gender-inclusive” view, told listeners at the Houston conference of the CBE International (“Christians for Biblical Equality”) that she would have changed her view earlier if she had not ignored the “the urgings of the Spirit.”<sup>2</sup> This same mindset is reflected in the website Clarkson hosts listing churches considered “Gender-Inclusive.” It is not called *What Does the Bible Say?*—but *Where the Spirit Leads*. This betrays a broader problem that complicates this whole issue. It is a problem that rests at the heart of the difficulty we face with the denominational world as a whole when it comes to calling people to unity in Christ. If we will accept the Bible as the inspired revelation of the Holy Spirit and agree to follow where it leads and restrain ourselves where it has not spoken (or where it restricts our behavior) we can achieve unity. If each of us claims that the Holy Spirit leads us in directions different from one another, and contrary to the revelation He has previously set forth, unity is impossible. We would do well to remember what the Holy Spirit has previously told us—**“God is not the author of confusion but of peace”** (1 Cor. 14:33).

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wherethespiritleads.org/spiritleads/Women%20Be%20Silent.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cbepouston.org/Pages/Marilyn.aspx>



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Faithful Sayings Issue 14.34 August 19, 2012

ISSUE

14.34

BULLETIN OF  
THE OLSEN  
PARK CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

# Faithful Sayings

August 19  
2012



## Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM  
10:20 AM  
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

## Elders:

Pat Ledbetter  
Jeff Nunn  
Kyle Pope

## Deacons:

Dean Bowers  
Eddie Cook  
Bill Davis  
Steve Dixon  
Pat Goguen  
Jack Langley  
Neil Ledbetter  
Brady McAlister  
Walker McAnear  
Lance Purcell  
Rusty Scott

## Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

## The “Gender-Inclusive” Movement Among Churches of Christ

Part Six: Final Considerations **By Kyle Pope**

**W**e end our study of the “Gender-Inclusive” movement among churches of Christ with a few important final questions and considerations.

**Can a Woman Speak in Bible Class?** We have seen in our study that the restrictions regarding women speaking and teaching identify very specific contexts in which particular prohibitions apply. The Bible authorizes women to speak in discussions of the Bible in situations outside of the church assembly (Acts 18:24-26). We have also seen that the Bible teaches that in such situations a woman is not to exercise authority over a man and is to maintain a quiet disposition (1 Tim. 2:11-12). This makes it clear that in Bible classes of God's people that are not understood to involve a congregation assembled as a church, whether at a congregation's meeting house or somewhere else, a woman is authorized to speak. It is when the church is assembled **“in the church”** that a woman is forbidden to speak at all (1 Cor. 14:34-35). We should note, that some differentiation must be made. It is not about *worship* vs. *Bible class*—it is about whether we are “in the church” vs. a gathering for a different purpose. We would do well in our announcements or other communication to make it clear when “we are now assembled as a church.”

## What about Singing?

A fundamental principle of biblical interpretation is that any command of Scripture carries with it all that is necessary to obey that command. No command of Scripture countermands another command. In this issue it is clear that a woman is commanded to absolute silence when the local church is assembled (1 Cor. 14:34-35), however, the silence that is commanded “in the church” does not countermand the charge all Christians are given to worship by “**singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord**” (Eph. 5:19b). In this text in Ephesians Paul describes this

activity as something that involves “**speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs**” (Eph. 5:19a). Paul’s word translated “speaking” is actually a form of the same Greek word *laleo*, he used in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. Is this a contradiction? No. Obviously, to sing to each other is “speaking” or “teaching” (Col. 3:16) in a sense, but it involves a collective action that is different from one person in a normal voice “speaking” or “teaching.” In 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 Paul is not talking about the collective musical *speaking*. In 1 Timothy 2:11-12 Paul is not talking about collective musical *teaching* that can occur when we sing to one another. The Holy Spirit leads Paul to prohibit individual speaking or teaching in a normal voice.

The same is true of confession. If a woman accepts the gospel invitation and comes forward when the church is assembled to obey the gospel, must she “be silent” regarding her confession of faith in Christ? All human beings are commanded to confess faith in Jesus “**before men**” (Matt. 10:32-33). For this limited activity and specific purpose Scripture clearly authorizes a woman to speak in or out of the assembly of the church in her confession of Christ. This does not, however, change that fact that the general regulation taught in Scripture restricts a woman from speaking in other cases when the church is assembled.

**When Does a Boy Become a Man?** As long as I have been preaching a quiet question rumbles in the background from time to time. A godly woman who devotes herself to teaching young children teaches them diligently about matters from Bible history to the plan of salvation. Then one day, the fruit of her labors is realized and a young boy in her class obeys the gospel. *Can a woman teach a class over a baptized young boy?* This is much like the question “when is the age of accountability?” The Bible has not given a specific answer to either of these questions, but caution, discretion, and humility must be demonstrated by all involved in such matters if we are to follow the standard of God’s word. Most elderships conclude “since we are not told when a boy comes to be considered a man, in order to avoid the violation of 1 Timothy 2:11, women are not be allowed to teach baptized boys.”



Olsen Park church of Christ

If we are not careful emotion can easily cloud this issue. The godly woman who taught this young boy might be tempted to feel hurt, thinking “I taught him—I know more than he does—Now you are saying I can no longer teach him?” This issue is obedience to biblical teaching. It is never about *who knows more*. Thanks be to God for the scores of knowledgeable Christian women who have motivated our young people to faith. On the other hand, the young boy might be tempted to think, “I’m a man now—you can’t teach me anything!” That is arrogance and a misguided understanding of the issue! Certainly the manner of the teaching may change but it is fool-hardy to think that there is nothing that one can learn from older sisters in the faith. Roles may change, but maturity and spiritual knowledge must always be respected.

In this and other difficult questions, I fear that the mocking attitude of the “gender-inclusive” movement misses the serious issues that underlie this matter. *How may we follow God’s word in all things?* When difficult questions arise, will we reject the biblical teachings that lead to such difficult questions or will we do our very best to humbly obey them? That is the issue.

## What about Non-speaking Acts of Public Worship?

After offering his understanding on 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, Edward Fudge concludes that even “its most literalistic interpretation would still not prevent women as well as men from acting as ushers, serving the Lord’s Supper or taking up the offering, to name just a few silent areas where women often are not permitted to serve” (“Women ‘Be Silent’ in Church (1)”).<sup>1</sup> This raises some points worthy of consideration. We would agree that neither 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 or 1 Timothy 2:11-12 necessarily prohibit women from serving in some of these activities which are essentially authorized expedients by which commanded activities are carried out. However, we must also recognize that some of these tasks constitute the initial activities that usher young men into more public acts

of leadership in worship within the church. A young Christian boy first learns how to pass the plate so no one is missed, and then he is given the responsibility to thank the Lord for the elements of the Lord’s Supper. How easy, in a world already pushing young women to reject male authority, will it be to let them take the *first steps*, but then deny them the *next steps*? This may lay an unnecessary stumbling-block before our sisters in Christ.

A more serious consideration needs to be addressed. In the years that I have been preaching, an interesting tendency is seen from time to time. Occasionally, both men and women who are inactive in areas of work within the church, sometimes want to assert themselves into very public functions when they have not previously demonstrated diligence in other tasks. When my wife and I were recently talking about whether it would be appropriate for women to perform some roles of public worship that do not involve speaking or leading over a man, she raised a very good point. She noted that there are more than enough things that fall within the authority of Scripture that women who wish to can choose to carry