

BIBLEVISION MINISTRIES BIBLE STUDY:

WOMEN IN MINISTRY 02/15/2025

Genesis 5:2 (KJV) reads: "Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, on the day when they were created."

This verse,¹ while seemingly simple, carries profound implications about the equality and shared identity of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Let's break it down:

1. "Male and female created he them"

- This reaffirms the creation account in Genesis 1:27, emphasizing that both male and female were created by God in His image. This establishes their inherent equality, as both share the divine likeness. There is no suggestion of one being superior or inferior in their fundamental nature.

2. "And blessed them"

- This blessing, likely referring back to the blessing in Genesis 1:28 to be fruitful and multiply, was bestowed upon both Adam and Eve equally. It signifies their shared responsibility and privilege in procreation and filling the earth. This further underscores their partnership and equal standing before God.

3. "And called their name Adam"

- This is perhaps the most significant point for understanding their shared identity. God names them both "Adam." The Hebrew word "Adam" can refer to both the individual man and to humankind in general. By giving them both the same name, God signifies their unity and interconnectedness. They are not two separate entities but rather two parts of a single whole, sharing the same essence and identity as humankind.

Dominion in the Garden

- Genesis 1:28 states that God gave them both dominion over the creatures: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth² upon the earth." This joint dominion further emphasizes their equality and shared responsibility in caring for God's creation. They were co-rulers, so to speak, entrusted with the stewardship of the Garden.

Important Considerations:

- **Complementarianism vs. Egalitarianism:** It's important to acknowledge that there are different interpretations of these passages. Some hold a complementarian view, believing that while men and women are equal in worth, they have different roles and responsibilities. Others hold an egalitarian view, believing that men and women are equal in both worth and

function, with no inherent distinctions in their roles. Genesis 5:2 and related passages are often cited in these discussions.

The Fall:

It's also crucial to remember that the harmony and equality depicted in these early chapters of Genesis were disrupted by the Fall. Sin brought about changes in the relationship between man and woman, as well as in their relationship with God and the created order. Understanding the impact of the Fall is essential for interpreting these passages accurately.

Genesis 5:2, in its simplicity, lays a crucial foundation for understanding the equality and shared identity of Adam and Eve. They were created as male and female in God's image, blessed together, and given a shared name and dominion. This verse, along with other passages in Genesis, provides a basis for understanding the original intent of God for humanity, even as we acknowledge the complexities introduced by the Fall.

Genesis 3: The Fall introduces sin, death, and separation from God into the human experience. Adam and Eve's disobedience brings about physical death, spiritual death (separation from God), and a corrupted nature that is passed down to all their descendants.

- **Romans 5:12:** "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:" This verse clearly links Adam's sin to the presence of sin and death in the entire human race.
- **Eve (Genesis 1:27-28):** "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." This passage establishes the equal creation and shared dominion of man and woman, laying the foundation for their partnership.

While not a leader in the traditional sense, Eve's creation alongside Adam establishes the foundation for women's inherent equality and partnership in God's design. They were both given dominion over creation, signifying shared responsibility and leadership. Her role as "the mother of all living" points to her leadership in populating the earth. The initial partnership and shared responsibility in caring for the Garden also highlight their joint leadership.

- **Sarah (Genesis 16:1-2):** "Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai." This passage describes Sarah's initial attempt to fulfill God's promise through her servant Hagar, highlighting her proactive nature and desire for a child.
- **Genesis 18:10-14:** "And he said, I will certainly return unto thee about this season, and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed will I return unto thee, about this season, and Sarah shall have a son." This passage recounts the angelic promise of Isaac's birth, emphasizing Sarah's role in fulfilling God's covenant and highlighting her initial doubt and eventual faith.
- **Rebecca Genesis 24:** This entire chapter details the story of how Abraham's servant finds a wife for Isaac, Rebekah. It showcases Rebekah's character, her willingness to leave her family, and her role in continuing the lineage of Abraham.

Exodus:

- **Miriam (Exodus 15:20-21):** "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." This passage celebrates Miriam's leadership in worship and song after the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt.
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Judges:

- **Deborah (Judges 4-5):** These chapters narrate the story of Deborah, the

prophetess and judge who led Israel to victory over the Canaanites. Chapter 4 describes her call to Barak and her role in the battle, while Chapter 5 contains the Song of Deborah, a poetic celebration of the victory.

Ruth:

- **Book of Ruth:** This entire book tells the story of Ruth's loyalty to Naomi, her journey to Bethlehem, her marriage to Boaz, and her place in the lineage of David.

Esther:

- **Book of Esther:** This entire book recounts Esther's rise to queen, her courage in confronting Haman, and her role in saving the Jewish people from genocide.

Luke:

- **Mary (Luke 1:26-38):** This passage describes the Annunciation, where the angel Gabriel appears to Mary and tells her she will conceive and bear the Son of God.
- **Luke 8:1-3:** "And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance." This passage mentions the women who supported Jesus' ministry financially.
- **Martha & Mary Luke 10:38-42:** "Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." This passage contrasts Martha's focus on service with Mary's focus on learning from Jesus.

John:

- **Mary Magdalene John 20:1-18:** This passage describes Mary Magdalene's discovery of the empty tomb and her encounter with the risen Jesus.

Acts:

- **Acts 2:1-4:** "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This passage describes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, including on the women present.

Lydia Acts 16:11-15, 40: This passage recounts Lydia's conversion and the establishment of the church in Philippi.

Aquila & Priscilla

Acts 18:1-3: After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

This passage introduces Aquila and Priscilla as tentmakers who welcomed Paul into their home and shared their trade with him. This establishes their hospitality and willingness to open their home to others, a crucial aspect of early church leadership.

Acts 18:24-26: "And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."

- This passage highlights Aquila and Priscilla's role in instructing Apollos, a learned preacher. Their willingness to mentor and guide Apollos demonstrates their deep understanding of the scriptures and their ability to teach and disciple others. This is a key function of pastoral leadership. The scriptures do in fact mention Priscilla most of the time

ahead of Aquilla who was her husband, Priscilla taught the church at Ephesus while Aquilla her husband took care of business matters of the church.

Acts 18:18-19: And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. ... And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

This shows Aquila and Priscilla accompanying Paul on his missionary journeys, demonstrating their commitment to spreading the gospel. Their willingness to relocate and support Paul's ministry suggests a leadership role in the early Christian community.

1 Corinthians 16:19: The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

This verse explicitly mentions the "church that is in their house," indicating that their home served as a meeting place for the Christian community. This suggests that they were leaders in the local church, providing a space for worship, fellowship, and teaching.

Romans 16:3-5: Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles: Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

Paul again refers to the church in their house and acknowledges their role as his "helpers in Christ Jesus." This further emphasizes their leadership and service in the early church.

While the term "pastor" isn't explicitly used for Aquila and Priscilla, the passages above suggest they functioned as leaders in the early church, particularly in their home. They provided hospitality, mentored others, taught the scriptures, and hosted a church community in their house. These actions align with the responsibilities of pastoral leadership, making it reasonable to consider them as key figures in the development of the early Christian church.

Phebe (Romans 16:1-2): "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as it becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also." This passage introduces Phoebe and describes her role as a **deaconess and patroness**.

- **Junia (Romans 16:7):** "Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me." This passage mentions **Junia as an apostle**.

Junia: Apostle and Leader in the Early Church

Junia is a fascinating figure in the New Testament, and her story highlights the important role women played in the early Christian church. She is mentioned in Romans 16:7, where Paul greets "Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was."

Key Points about Junia:

- **Apostle:** The most significant aspect of Junia's identity is that she is explicitly called an "apostle" by Paul. This title carried considerable weight in the early church, signifying someone who was commissioned by Christ to preach the gospel.
- **Prominent Leader:** Paul notes that Junia and Andronicus are "outstanding among the apostles," indicating that they were highly regarded and respected within the Christian community.
- **Early Convert:** Paul mentions that Junia and Andronicus were "in Christ before I was," suggesting that they were among the earliest followers of Jesus, possibly even before Paul's own conversion.
- **Shared Ministry:** Junia is mentioned alongside Andronicus, who is likely her husband or another close associate. This suggests that they worked together in ministry, possibly as a missionary couple.
- **Imprisonment:** Paul mentions that Junia and Andronicus had been in prison with him, indicating that they faced persecution and hardship for their faith.

Junia's Role and Significance:

- **Evangelism and Church Planting:** As an apostle, Junia would have been involved in spreading the gospel and establishing new churches.
- **Teaching and Discipleship:** Junia likely played a role in teaching and mentoring other believers, helping them to grow in their faith.
- **Leadership:** Junia's designation as "outstanding among the apostles" suggests that she held a position of leadership and influence within the early church.
- **Example for Women:** Junia's story provides a powerful example of female leadership in the early church, challenging traditional gender roles and demonstrating that women were empowered to serve in significant ways.

Note: There has been some debate about whether Junia was a man or a woman, but the majority of scholars now agree that she was female. The evidence for this conclusion comes from the grammatical form of her name in the original Greek text and from the writings of early church fathers who referred to her as a woman.

Junia's story is a reminder that women have played a vital role in the Christian church from its very beginning. Her example encourages us to recognize and celebrate the gifts and contributions of women in ministry today.

Revelation:

- **Revelation 19:6-9:** This passage describes the marriage supper of the Lamb, symbolizing the union of Christ and the Church (his bride).
- **Revelation 21:9-14:** This passage describes the New Jerusalem, where the Church is depicted as the bride of Christ.

Joel 2:28 and its reiteration in Acts 2:17-18 are pivotal scriptures for understanding the role of women in ministry. They speak of a time when God's Spirit would be poured out on all people, regardless of gender, empowering them for ministry and prophetic utterance. Let's examine these passages in detail:

Joel 2:28 (KJV) And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

Acts 2:17-18 (KJV) But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

Key Observations:

- **"All flesh":** This phrase emphasizes the universality of the outpouring of the Spirit. It transcends social, ethnic, and gender boundaries, indicating that God's Spirit is available to everyone.
- **"Sons and daughters shall prophesy":** This is the most crucial part for our discussion. The prophecy explicitly includes both sons *and* daughters, signifying that women would be empowered to prophesy, to speak forth God's message. This was a significant departure from the Old Testament pattern, where prophecy was primarily associated with men.

- **"Servants and handmaidens":** Acts 2:18 further reinforces this point by specifically mentioning "handmaidens" (female servants) alongside "servants" (male servants). This repetition emphasizes that the outpouring of the Spirit and the gift of prophecy are not limited by gender or social status.

How it Fits into Women in Ministry:

These passages have profound implications for understanding women's roles in ministry:

1. **Empowerment for Ministry:** Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17-18 demonstrate that God empowers women with His Spirit for ministry. The gift of prophecy, mentioned explicitly, is a form of ministry that involves communicating God's will and message.
2. **Challenging Traditional Roles:** In the cultural context of both the Old Testament and the early church, women's roles were often restricted. These scriptures challenge those traditional roles by showing that God's Spirit equips women for active participation in ministry, including prophetic ministry.
3. **Biblical Basis for Women in Leadership:** While some may argue about the specific roles women should hold in ministry, these passages provide a clear biblical basis for women to exercise spiritual gifts and leadership within the church.
4. **Inclusivity and Equality:** The emphasis on "all flesh" and the specific mention of "daughters" and "handmaidens" highlight the inclusivity of God's plan. These scriptures emphasize that women are not excluded from the blessings and responsibilities of ministry.

The Significance of Pentecost:

Acts 2 describes the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit descended upon the believers, including women, and they began to speak in other tongues and prophecy. This event marked the beginning of the church age, where the gifts of the Spirit were made available to all believers, regardless of gender.

Interpretations and Applications:

- **Prophecy Today:** While the gift of prophecy may manifest differently today than it did in the Old Testament or the early church, these passages still affirm that women are empowered by the Spirit to speak forth God's truth. This can include teaching, preaching, leading worship, and sharing their testimonies.
- **Diverse Ministries:** The principle of empowerment by the Spirit extends to all forms of ministry. Women are gifted and called to serve in various roles within the church, including pastoral ministry, missions, evangelism, counseling, and more.
- **Importance of Discernment:** While these passages affirm women's roles in ministry, it's also important to emphasize the need for discernment and accountability. All spiritual gifts should be exercised in a way that builds up the body of Christ and aligns with the teachings of Scripture.

PAULS NEED FOR ORDER IN THE CHURCH

Let's delve into these two passages from Paul's letters, addressing the complexities and different interpretations surrounding them.

1. "Let your women keep silence in the churches..." (1 Corinthians 14:34-35, KJV)

This passage is one of the most debated and controversial in the Pauline corpus. It reads:

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

Understanding the Context and Interpretations:

- **The Corinthian Church:** The church in Corinth was known for its disunity and various issues, including disorderly worship practices. Paul addresses these problems throughout 1 Corinthians.
- **Speaking in Tongues and Prophecy:** In chapters 12-14, Paul discusses spiritual gifts, particularly speaking in tongues and prophecy. He emphasizes the importance of order and edification in the church, arguing that all things should be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40).
- **"Silence" - What Kind?** The key question revolves around the meaning of "silence." Several interpretations exist:
 - **Absolute Silence:** This view suggests that Paul is commanding women to be completely silent in church gatherings, forbidding them from speaking at all. This interpretation is often used to restrict women's participation in church leadership and teaching roles.
 - **Silence During Specific Times:** Some scholars argue that the "silence" Paul refers to is limited to specific times during the church service, such as when the church is making decisions or when men are teaching. This interpretation allows for women to participate in other ways, such as praying or singing.
 - **Silence Regarding Disruptive Speech:** This interpretation suggests that Paul is addressing specific problems of disruptive or inappropriate speech by some women in the Corinthian church. It's possible that some women were interrupting services, asking questions loudly, or engaging in other behaviors that were causing disorder.
- **"As also saith the law":** This phrase is also debated. Some scholars argue that Paul is referencing Jewish law, while others suggest that he is referring to general principles of decorum and order.
- **"If they will learn any thing...at home":** This statement has led to different

interpretations regarding women's access to education. Some argue that it reflects the social realities of the time, where women had limited access to education outside the home. Others argue that it is a general principle, suggesting that women should primarily learn from their husbands.

Paul's Recognition of Women In Ministry

Given the context of 1 Corinthians, it's most likely that Paul is addressing specific issues of disorder in the Corinthian church. He is concerned about maintaining decorum and ensuring that worship is edifying for everyone. His instruction about women keeping silence should be understood within this context. It's possible he was addressing specific instances of disruptive or inappropriate speech.

2. "Help those women which laboured with me in the gospel..." (Philippians 4:3, KJV)

This passage, in contrast to the previous one, highlights women's active participation in ministry. It reads:

And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow labourers, whose names are in the book of life.

Understanding the Context and Interpretations:

- **Philippian Church:** Paul had a close relationship with the church in Philippi, and he commends them for their support of his ministry.
- **"Laboured with me":** This phrase indicates that these women were actively involved in ministry alongside Paul. The Greek word used here, *sunergos*, implies a collaborative effort and partnership in the work of the gospel.
- **"In the gospel":** This phrase clarifies the nature of their labor – it was directly related to the spread and furtherance of the gospel.
- **Names in the book of life:** This phrase emphasizes the spiritual significance of their work and their place in God's plan.

Paul's Perspective

This passage clearly demonstrates that Paul recognized and valued the contributions of women in ministry. He acknowledges their hard work, their partnership in the gospel, and their importance in the early church. The phrase "laboured with me" suggests that these women were not simply passive recipients of ministry but active participants and co-workers in spreading the gospel.

Reconciling the Passages:

The apparent contradiction between 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and Philippians 4:3 has led to much scholarly debate. Several approaches have been suggested to reconcile these passages:

- **Different Situations:** The most common explanation is that Paul is addressing different situations in different churches. The problems in Corinth were unique, requiring specific instructions regarding order and decorum. Philippi, on the other hand, was a more supportive and unified church, where women's contributions were valued and encouraged.
- **Different Meanings of "Silence":** As discussed earlier, the word "silence" in 1 Corinthians could have a more limited meaning, referring to specific types of speech or times during the service.
- **Interpolation:** Some scholars have even suggested that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 might be a later interpolation, not written by Paul himself. However, this view is not widely accepted.

Therefore We Conclude:

While the passage about women's silence in 1 Corinthians remains challenging, it's crucial to interpret it within its historical and cultural context. It's unlikely that Paul would contradict himself, especially given his clear affirmation of women's ministry in Philippians 4:3 and other passages (e.g., Romans 16). The most likely explanation is that Paul was addressing specific issues in the Corinthian church, not establishing a universal rule for all churches at all times. The example of the women who labored with Paul in the gospel should encourage us to recognize and celebrate the diverse gifts and contributions of women in ministry today.