

St. Paul Lutheran Church – Sunday Bible Class

The Role of Women in the Worship Service

1) Is there any difference between what men and women can/should do during the public worship service?

1 Corinthians 14:33-35 As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ 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.

1 Timothy 2:11-12 Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.

2) Can/should women sing and pray with the rest of the congregation?

Ezra 2:64-65 The whole assembly together was 42,360, ⁶⁵ besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337, and they had 200 male and female singers.

Ephesians 5:18-21 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ ¶ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

3) What is the difference between reading the Scripture lessons and singing in the choir or playing the organ?

A) A choir member, soloist, or organist is part of the praise/worship function of the service (man to God) and is therefore not a leadership or teaching role.

B) The reading of the Scripture lessons is part of the teaching function of the service (God to man) and therefore represents a leadership and teaching role or function.

4) How can or should the orientation (the direction one faces) reflect this distinction?

A) In some church arrangements, the worship leader turns to face the altar when speaking to God (sacrificial) and faces the congregation when speaking for God (sacramental).

B) As much as is possible, all praise and worship functions in the service ought to be directed (oriented) to the proper recipient of our praise and worship.

5) Why is it acceptable for a woman to read in Bible Class and not in the worship service?

Reading in Bible Class is a helpful service that all members (including women) can provide at the request of the pastor/study leader - who is clearly doing the teaching. Scripture calls on women to learn in silence in the public worship service. There is no evidence that that command remains in effect also in the informal setting of the Bible Class. Yet even there a woman will want to honor the headship that is required of both her husband and pastor.

6) Is it ever acceptable for a woman to explain Scripture to a man?

Scripture was referring to teaching in the worship service when it called on women to refrain from teaching or speaking aloud in an authoritative manner. While the headship role has been delegated to men in both the church and in the home, in the private setting Scripture gives at least one example of a woman who, together with her husband, explained the Scriptures to a man. Speaking about Christ and the Christian faith can be carried out by women to men in a private setting in a manner that need not violate the headship principle. The Great Commission was given to all Christians.

Acts 18:26 "So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately."