

# Relationships and our Unity in Christ

## Part C

We are looking at what unity means. Christ's work of reconciliation on the cross not only brought peace between us and God; it also brings the unity of the Spirit between all who believe on Christ, despite diversity. This includes experiencing the power of the cross to bring us back to God's original purposes as we relate together. The way we are together in the church as male and female is to bring glory to the Lord. See Galatians 3:28.

### Key verses

**John 17: 20-23**

**Galatians 3: 26-29:**

*'You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'*

### Themes

- A. Jew and Gentile**
- B. Slave and Free**
- C. Male and Female**

## C. Male and Female.....Difference in Gender

	<b>Many great differences in position under the Law of Moses</b>		<b>No difference in Christ</b>
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	
<b>Circumcision</b>	Circumcised as token of the Covenant. (Gen. 17:9-13)	Not circumcised	Circumcision is of the heart by faith (Ro. 2:29 & 10:9-12, Deut. 10:16)
<b>Numbering</b>	All first-born males of Israel belonged to the Lord. Their lives were redeemed by the male Levites (counted in Num. 3:15, 40 & 45)	Not counted <i>(the disciples also carried on this pattern, only counting the men in the crowds in Matt. 14:21 and Acts 4:4.)</i>	Counting of disciples discontinued (Acts 5:14). Now uncountable numbers (Rev. 7.9) according to God's promise (Gen. 13:16).
<b>Priesthood</b>	Male descendants of Aaron (Ex. 28:1)	No priestly duty	A holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5 & 9)
<b>Service</b>	Levites between 30-50 years (Num. 4:3) served the tabernacle.	No involvement in temple service.	Confidence to enter the Most Holy Place (Heb. 10:19)
<b>Worship</b>	Men to appear before God at all 3 festivals (Ex. 23:17) at the temple (Acts 2:5).	Woman and children celebrated too (Ex. 12, Deut. 16). Also came to Jerusalem (Lk. 2:41)	We may all appear before God clothed with Christ (Gal. 3:27 & 4:5-6)
<b>Anointing by the Holy Spirit</b>	The Holy Spirit came upon certain male leaders (e.g. Numbers 11:16-17, Judges), including godly kings and prophets.	We also read of prophetesses who faithfully gave God's Word (Ex. 15:20-21, Jud. 4:4, 2 Chr. 34:22-28, Lk. 2:36)	Christ has fulfilled Moses' desire that all may prophecy (Num. 11:29 compare Joel 2:23-29), and see Acts 1:14, 2:1
<b>Inheritance</b>	Inheritance through male, preserving Father's name and a stable tribal inheritance (Num. 27:4, 36:6-7)	Exception made if no son alive to inherit. (Numbers 27:6-8)	All in Christ (both male and female, Gal. 3:29) are Abraham's seed and are co-inheritors of the blessings given. (Heb 6:12, 1 Pet. 3:9, Rev. 21:7).
<b>Kingship</b>	Royal rulership given to male kings (see 1 Sam. 9: 16-16 & 16:1)	No royal power.	Seated with Christ (Eph. 2:5-6, Rev. 1:5-6)

## Principles for our Relationships

How to love your fellow believers in Christ. These **actions** of love are drawn from the lesson on page 1.



### 1. Lift up your sisters in Christ as equal partners in faith.

The believing sisters are also circumcised in heart and are therefore sons of Abraham through faith in Christ. A believing woman has the equal standing before God that a man has. Let this truth radically change your attitude towards your sisters in Christ and towards women in general,

instead of letting your cultural and social background continue to mould your thinking.  
1 Timothy 5:1b-2, Exodus 20:12, Eph. 6:1, Gal. 4:26.

### 2. Count your sisters in Christ as being of equal worth to the men,

instead of only valuing the presence of men or only accepting the testimony of a man.

Matt. 28:10, Mark 16:9-14, Luke 24:11,12,22-25.

### 3. Remind every believer that we are a holy priesthood,

Release both men and women into their calling, allowing others around you to grow to full maturity, instead of letting the God given Old Testament pattern of priesthood become an excuse for a male-dominated church with excessive control by church leaders. Wrong practice should not, however, be replaced by humanistic logic or feminism, but instead by a return to the principles of leadership laid down in the New Testament pattern. Christ is the High Priest of our faith and his pattern of leadership should be ours.

1 Peter 2:5 & 9, Romans 12:1, Heb. 13:15-16,  
Rom. 16:1-2, 1 Tim 2:12-13, 1 Tim 3:2-5, Heb. 8:1.

### 4. Sit together in heavenly places with Christ,

Let us acknowledge that we, both men and women, have all been made alive together by the same grace and raised together by the same power. Let us live now in humility towards each other, with royal nobility and largeness of heart,

instead of living according to the influences and patterns of the world.

Eph. 2:5-6, Rev. 1:5-6, Mark 12:27, James 2:8, Prov 16:12-13.

### 5. Encourage men to spend time in the Most Holy Place,

instead of letting persistent prayer and spirit-filled worship be the activity of the women only. Through the hardships of being rejected and misunderstood, women have often learnt to pour out their hearts to the Lord more than the men.

1 Tim. 2:6, 1 Sam. 1:10-16, Matt. 27:55-56,  
1 Cor. 7:32-35, Mark 14:3.

### 6. Believe the Scriptures that God has poured his Spirit out on all flesh, both "sons and daughters",

and be ready to judge and refute false prophecy coming from the flesh and soul, from men as well as women,

instead of being too proud or afraid to hear God speaking to you through the women as well as men. As we continue in God's order, let us remember that neither truth nor falsehood is confined to one gender (male nor female).

Acts 2:17, 21:8-9, Judges 4:4-10, Gen. 21:12  
(compare listening to wrong advice, Gen 16:2) 2 Pet 2:1, Matt. 24:11, Rev. 2:15 & 20.

### 7. Share all good things together, united as co-heirs in Christ.

Men, especially church leaders, should give opportunity to women to share whatever good things they receive from the Lord, whether practical abilities or oral gifts,

instead of preventing the women from actively partaking in the church. Men should not hinder the women from developing the gifts God has given them. In being afraid to let the women develop in spiritual usefulness, men actually rob themselves of half of the blessings God has ready for them.

Gal 3:28-29, 1 Peter 3:7, Rom. 8:14, Gal. 3:26, Heb. 3:1, Col 1:12, Eph. 1:5, Rev. 21:7, Rom. 8:17.

## ***‘God saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good’***

Genesis. 1:31 (NASB)



### **Just the males...?**

God designed us to perfection for our time here on earth. Both the man and the woman were created perfectly:

*‘God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.’* Genesis 1:27 (NASB)

*‘Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.’* Genesis 2:7 (NASB literal translation)

God is Spirit (John 4:24). The Hebrew word for man in the sentences above is **adam**. As well as meaning man and Adam it also represents mankind – *all that comes from Adam* (Gen. 7:23, Gen. 4:11). All of us, both male and female, have been made in the image of God, for we all have a spirit. At the beginning, God breathed his life into mankind. From that life-breath that God breathed into Adam, has come every man, woman, boy or girl that has ever lived.

However, because Adam sinned, the natural tendency of the body, no longer kept pure and holy by the presence of God’s Spirit, became corrupted from that moment on (Gen. 2:17). Each one of us, both male and female, are born into this inheritance of a sinful nature. This tendency to sin (called the flesh) has been passed from generation to generation and leads to death (Eph. 2:1, Psalm 51:5, Rom. 7:24). All of us need to come to Jesus Christ for the free gift of eternal life (Romans 5:14-15 & 18).



### **...no, the females too !**

God created by his spoken word (e.g. Gen 1:24). But we clearly read that both the man and the woman were formed, that is with the Lord’s own hands (Gen.2:7, 2:22). We must remember that the woman He created had the same life in her that God had breathed into Adam. She was not fashioned from a dry, dead bone. The rib taken out of Adam’s side (Gen. 2:21) was living. It was part of Adam’s body that came to life when God breathed into Adam’s nostrils.

This is also a picture of Christ and the church. Christ is the second Adam (1 Cor. 15:45-47) and the true Church is the Bride of Christ (Rev. 21:9), who has come from Christ’s side through the life that is given us in His blood (John 19:34).

### **Roles – differences in the way a man and a woman are to function.**

Adam and Eve both had a spirit made in God’s image, but their function as male and female, and therefore their looks, were different. Paul explains the mystery of what God did, in the middle of writing about prayer and prophesy (speaking out messages from God) in church meetings:

*‘For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake.’* 1 Cor. 11:7-9 (NASB literal translation)

In our attempts to have equal rights for men and women, we can easily find ourselves working on the wrong basis, the basis of the world’s thinking. The world does not understand how God created man and woman in perfection, each able to function most comfortably and perfectly in the role for which they were designed. These differences of function are “very good” in God’s eyes.

It is sin that has distorted these roles and destroyed our appreciation of them. Our selfish sinful nature is unable to cope with difference. We misunderstand, malign and misuse that which is different to us. Particularly men are to blame, in that we men have been harsh with women, particularly with our wives (Eph. 3:19)

The angels have observed, over generations, the sad results of disobedience to the principles of God’s created order. Let us give them reason to rejoice, by demonstrating our understanding that **true freedom is God’s order.**<sup>1</sup>

When we come to Christ, we can be restored to live the way God designed us to. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus (2 Cor.5:17). Our spirit is made new! (John 3:6 cf. Ezek. 36:26) Our minds are renewed by the Word of God (Rom. 12:2) and our bodies belong to the Lord (Rom. 12:1). Together with David, whether we are male or female, we can say: *“I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well.”* (Psalm 139:14 NASB)

<sup>1</sup> Note: 1 Cor. 11:11 is an example of this principle.

## **Responsibilities – differences in what a man and a woman are held accountable for.**

In the New Covenant the man continues to have leadership responsibility just as in the time before the work of Christ on the cross. The areas of responsibility (that men are to be leaders in) are clearly outlined in the New Testament as follows:

Family leadership		1 Cor. 11:3
Church leadership	<i>in these areas:</i>	
	Spiritual (elder)	1 Tim. 3:1; Tit. 1:9
	Social (deacon)	1 Tim 3:8; Acts 6:3 & 6

The woman's role is support of the man. That is, she also supports him in his leadership role in these areas. He is not to dominate her, or she him, for they are partners. In this partnership, only one can take the lead. A body has only one head. It needs to be the one that God designed for leadership. When women submit to their husbands – and the women in the church submit to church leadership under men – they help the men take their proper place. The men grow into confident leadership and into deep appreciation of the women's attitude. When a woman prays for her husband's decisions regarding the direction that they should take, she is like Sarah. Sarah chose to have faith in God's sovereignty over the life of her husband and herself, instead of letting her fears rule her actions

(1 Peter 3:4-6 and compare Genesis 18:15 to Genesis 21:1-2).

The real need of many families and churches have, is for men to change in the way they regard women. The tendency for men is to feel threatened by women and to press them down into forced submission (Gen.3:16b). Instead men should respect and honour women (see 1 Peter 3:7). Due to the position of responsibility God has given the men, they have it in their power to bring joy and fulfilment to their wives and the women in the church...or misery and bondage.

## **A Woman's role in the church**

The accompanying article on "Women speaking in the church" looks at the difficult verses on the subject of women speaking in 1 Cor. 14:35-40, where it says: *'The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.'* (NASB) The article examines these sentences and compares them with what Paul has previously said in the same letter about women praying and prophesying in the church.

God has given the responsibility for direction for the church to the men. This comes through decision-making and authoritative teaching. The desire of the elders and leaders, as shepherds, should be to provide clear direction and safe 'pasture land'. They are not to serve themselves, but to help and encourage the others in the church, both men and women, into the full development and use of all God has given them. In this way, each part of the body matures to be able to serve more as the body builds itself up in love (Eph.4:16).

I believe that when men provide a clear spiritual lead, the women in the church should be given freedom and confidence to give what they have received from the Lord. In doing so, they remain submitted to the doctrine already established through the church's official teaching. In this way, they are not in danger of taking the church in a direction that has not been received and taught by the leading men. The following verses require honest study. *'A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.'* 1 Tim. 2:11-14 (NASB)

It is the men, not the women, who God holds accountable to him for maintaining his order, both within the home and within the church. It was Adam, however, who was guilty of remaining quiet in the Garden of Eden (Gen.3:6). He did not speak up to rescue his wife from deception. As a result of this compromise, he himself sinned.

A father bears the responsibility before God in child-rearing (Eph.6:4), to humbly lead the way. His wife, who is doing so much, is his partner in this great work (1 Tim. 2:15), He, as her husband, needs to keep his ears open to her and to watch for her needs. It is just the same in the church. Male leadership bears the load of the final responsibility. They must take hold of this, speaking and not being silent, to protect the church from the onslaughts of Satan. The women will feel safe and confident, free to give under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

There are other practical questions that this raises. It is imperative that you and I do not only seek to interpret verses in a way that simply agrees with what we are already doing. May we together seek to obey the instructions the Lord has given us in the Holy Scriptures with faith, hope and love. I hope to continue with the study of 1 Tim. 2:11-14, God willing, in a further teaching letter.