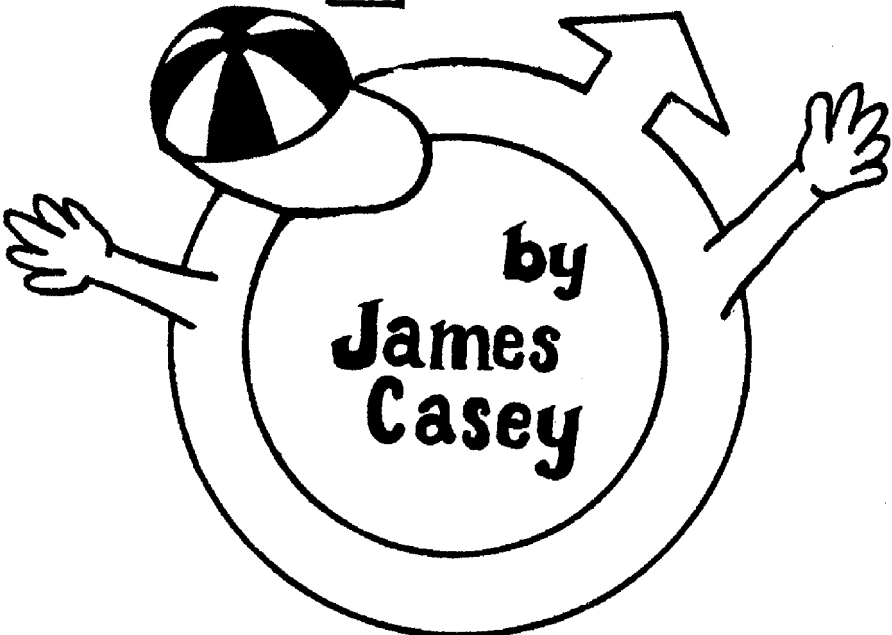
A stylized female symbol (a circle with a vertical line and a horizontal crossbar) is depicted. A large black bow is attached to the top left of the circle. A hand is raised from the right side of the symbol. The text "in defense of girls praying ..." is written inside the circle.

**in
defense of
girls
praying ...**

A stylized male symbol (a circle with a vertical line and a horizontal crossbar that curves upwards) is depicted. A beach ball is attached to the top left of the circle. Two hands are raised from the left and right sides of the symbol. The text "by James Casey" is written inside the circle.

**by
James
Casey**

**IN
DEFENSE
OF
GIRL'S PRAYING**

By
James Casey

With an Introduction
by
Jim Hackney

A treatise on the propriety of girls speaking their prayers audibly in the presence of boys at the youth devotionals, family devotionals, and other informal gatherings.

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by
James Casey
Baytown, Texas

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A special debt of gratitude is due my good friend, Winnie Nell Laird, for the many hours she spent editing and typing the manuscript for this book, and to her mother, Nettie Laird, for helping her proofread it.

I am also deeply indebted to my son-in-law, Mark McCoy, for his skillful design of the book cover.

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INTRODUCTION

It is a great pleasure and honor for me to introduce to you James Casey and his book, *In Defense of Girls Praying*. There are many reasons for the joy I feel in introducing this man and this subject. James is a student of the Bible like few I have ever known, having studied and written on many different issues and subjects. His desire for truth excels any other pressure often felt by scholars and writers. James Casey has been studying the Bible for over 30 years and has served as an elder in the Church of Christ for almost a decade. During these many years, he has constantly been a teacher of the word, both privately and publicly, usually writing his own materials.

It was my privilege to serve under his leadership for three years as I was in the youth ministry in Baytown, Texas, where James is an elder. During this time, I came to know our author as a dedicated and sensitive child of God. For his wise counsel on many occasions, I will be eternally grateful. A special encouragement to me was his concern for the spiritual development of the young. Even before youth work became commonplace among Churches of Christ, he realized the need and always strived to meet it. Anyone who has ever been there knows that it takes a special measure of patience, understanding, and love to work with teen-agers. James Casey possesses these qualities.

I am thrilled about this book because it is really one of the first extensive studies to be published on this particular issue. The importance of the issue is obvious. We are dealing with

the relationship between God and woman and the way in which Christians today may worship. I know of no one who is not affected by such things. Even if a person does not agree with the conclusions of an author on a certain subject, intellectual honesty demands an open look at what he has to say. Always bear in mind that there is the one great source of truth—The Bible. You will find the following study to be deeply grounded in this book and its teaching.

This issue is of major importance to those who work with youth. We owe James Casey a tremendous debt of gratitude for his many hours of research and work. I commend this book to your reading and pray that it would be of great help in answering questions you may have concerning whether females may pray audibly in the presence of a male. To God be the glory.

Jim Hackney
Youth Minister
Garland Road Church of Christ
Dallas, Texas

PREFACE

“ . . . of the making of many books there is no end . . . ”— so said Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12:12. When a person feels that he has something to offer the world, he will likely try to put it in print. It is no less true in this case. We may not be able, in this book, to exhaust the subject of girls praying audibly in the presence of boys; nevertheless, it is written to stimulate your thinking on a subject which has been much neglected in the brotherhood.

It is unfortunate that the church in many places is robbing itself of a great amount of power, and is, to some degree, hindering the sound process of mutual edification by its self-imposed restrictions in this matter. Perhaps we should make it clear in the beginning that we are not advocating women preachers, women elders, women teachers over men, women exercising dominion over men, or women conductors of public worship. The principle of woman's subjection, and the fact that she is to learn in quietness, will not permit her to occupy these positions. But we should also point out that the over-application of the subjection-quietness principle (in the negative direction) does as much to jeopardize the spiritual prosperity of God's children as does the extreme position in the other direction. However, between these two extremes lies

much fertile territory to be explored. It is in this area that we want to spend most of our time during this study.

Many in the church are satisfied to accept the opinions of their favorite preacher, elder, or reformer of the past century, rather than engage in much study for themselves. Some do not want to challenge the tradition of their particular group; therefore, they find it more convenient to follow the path of least resistance. Perhaps some feel that their job security in the brotherhood would be threatened if it became common knowledge that they were in sympathy with the practice of girls expressing their prayers in the youth devotionals. This is also unfortunate, because the Lord wants servants with convictions.

There is, however, a brighter side to this picture. Some of our younger preachers are devoting their lives to the training of our young people, and making them more fit for the Master's service. It is very encouraging to see them go quietly about their business in spite of the opposition. While serving as an elder in the Lord's church I have observed the kind of training that our young people are getting at the hands of such dedicated youth ministers. I have seen their lives take a new sense of direction, with unbelievable zeal and enthusiasm for personally taking the gospel to the lost. This renewed spirit of evangelism, as I have observed it, stands on solid ground. The young people are being thoroughly trained to present the simple story of Jesus in such a way as to cause the sinner to let the gospel change his life. Their zeal may put the rest of us to shame. They are being encouraged to spend more time together, doing such things as studying the Bible, singing praises to their Lord, praying together (and for one another),

walking the streets together looking for any who will listen to the simple story of Jesus, preparing themselves to carry the gospel to all people, visiting the shut-ins, mowing the lawns of the elderly, and going from house to house singing the gospel to the bedridden. Such dedication has inspired me to write this book. If it serves to encourage more of such activities, while at the same time it helps to gain for these young people more acceptance in the brotherhood, then praises be to God.

It would be difficult to list every person who has encouraged me to put these thoughts together for publication. However, high on that list of names would appear Jim and Sue Hackney, who have an uncanny knack for getting young people to live the principles taught in God's word. We have many teachers in the brotherhood, but not nearly as many who can instill the desire in the hearts of the young to live a truly dedicated life in Christ. Another great encouragement has been my faithful wife, June, whose untiring efforts in helping raise our two lovely daughters, Deborah and Brenda, to be faithful praying Christians, will not go unrewarded by the God of heaven. She has sacrificed many physical blessings that they might be able to enjoy the benefits of a Christian education, and be placed in many other spiritually uplifting situations. This has meant much to their spiritual growth and development. She knows the value of this kind of training, and has encouraged me to publish the many facets of this struggle to get men to understand the beauty and power of all of God's children engaging in prayer with each other—praying for one another, thereby edifying one another. The fact that our two daughters have never been ashamed to pour out their hearts to God in the presence of their parents has meant

much to us. If this book does no more than cause you to have a fuller and richer family prayer life, with each of you knowing what is in the heart of the other because you have heard it expressed to God, then it will have been worth the effort. Every daughter needs to know that she has a praying father, and no son should be deprived of hearing his mother pray for him—regardless of his age. If I had it all to do over I would be even more diligent in providing opportunities for my whole family to participate in prayer, both in family devotionals and in other informal worship situations. There is so much to be gained from the practice, and it should end only when it becomes obvious that it no longer serves to promote Christian behavior.

If this book assists you in determining any limits or restrictions which God may have placed upon woman in her prayer life, then glory be to Him. If it helps you to see some truth which you had previously overlooked, or if it serves to point out some inconsistency in your reasoning, then you will no doubt be glad you took the time to study the issue. Be diligent in your search, study prayerfully with an open mind, and let God give the increase in your life.

CHAPTER I

PURPOSE AND APPROACH

The need for such a study as we are now undertaking has become more apparent since many churches are stressing youth work more than ever before. An honest effort is now being made to attend to the spiritual needs peculiar to our young people. This effort is affording them more opportunities to participate in Bible studies, devotionals, and other related activities common to boys and girls. It is not uncommon for them to go on campaigns in distant cities to share the gospel of Christ with others by helping teach in a Vacation Bible School, by going from house to house talking with any who will listen, or by striking up conversation with those whom they meet while walking the streets of the city. These kinds of evangelistic efforts afford many additional opportunities for prayer. The question naturally arises concerning the extent to which the girls may participate with the boys in these prayers. Are the boys to do all the verbalizing of the prayers? How will they be conducted? Will one boy lead the group in prayer? Will each boy take turn speaking his prayer, with the girls only speaking silently or giving mental assent to what is said? Shall everyone pray silently? May the girls also take their turn in speaking aloud to God that which is on their

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hearts in what is commonly called a chain prayer? Can a girl participate in this type prayer without taking over the leadership of the group? Has she usurped the young man's authority if she participates? Has the Lord placed certain restrictions on her prayer life that he has not placed on that of the man? Has the Lord specified how all prayers in mixed groups must be conducted? May the Christian girl engage in audible prayer with her family in their home devotional? If so, how does this differ from the regular youth devotional? These are the kinds of questions we must answer if we meet the issues of today.

There have been times and places in our history when there was little or no opposition to all members of a family, including the mother and daughters, being active in the prayer part of their family devotional. However, with the renewed spirit of evangelism spreading in the church, and especially among our young people, the practice of both sexes participating in audible prayer in these rather informal gatherings is being questioned by some. The silence-quietness-subjection-obedience argument, which has been commonly made against allowing women to preach from the pulpits, is now being used to discourage them from speaking their prayers aloud in the presence of men under any circumstances—even in the family devotional. It seems that every time we break one of our traditions through some specific action, there will be an over-reaction to it by well-meaning brethren. Must we always be going over the cliff, either forward or backward?

We will approach this subject from two basic points of view. First, we will consider all of the Scriptures which, to our knowledge, appear to have anything to say on the subject. We

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will try to examine the content of each, in context, to see whether it *includes* or *excludes* the idea of women praying audibly in the presence of men. If we are to be completely objective about the matter, we must look at each Scripture to determine what it teaches rather than try to fit it to our pre-conceived ideas. D. R. Dungan, on page 39 of his book, *Hermeneutics*, has stated this principle very well. "The Bible is not a book with which to prove doctrines; it is the doctrine itself. Almost anything can be proven to the man who wants to find the proof. It leads to a wrong use of the Scriptures, so that, instead of searching them for whatever they may contain, the doctrines have been first assumed, and then the Bible is compelled into some sort of recognition of the position." Of course, this principle does not prevent us from searching the Scriptures to see if what we are hearing is true, as did the Bereans in Acts 17:11.

Our second approach to the subject will be to examine the arguments that are usually made by those who oppose the practice of girls praying audibly in the presence of boys. Under this heading we must consider the extent of woman's subjection and obedience to man, as well as the type of silence and quietness required of her. We must determine whether or not her action in this case means that she is domineering over man, or that she is placed in a position of authority over him.

It is not our purpose in this study to exhaust the subject of woman's participation in other aspects of church activity which may or may not be allowed by the Lord, although some of the Scriptures we will examine may very well deal with these other matters in principle—such things as deaconesses, women teachers, women preachers, and others. A thorough

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treatment of these may be found in C. R. Nichol's book, *God's Woman*.

Occasionally we shall refer to some examples of women praying in the presence of men while living under the law of Moses. It is appropriate to do this since we are told that the principle of woman's subjection to man is relevant to this issue, and that she violates this principle when she speaks an audible prayer in his presence. Since the principle that is said to be violated is one which has always been in force, even during the periods of the patriarchs and the law of Moses, then it behooves us to examine what the Lord allowed during these periods.

When Paul told the Corinthians to "let the women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but let them be in subjection, *as also saith the law*" (I Corinthians 14:34), he was not setting forth a new principle to be observed in the church, but rather he was stating one which has been in existence since the time of Adam and Eve. Some are reluctant to appeal to the law of Moses to see what it allowed on the subject of woman's subjection to man (since the law was done away in Christ). However, if we do so, and make the same application that Paul made, then we have done no violence to the scriptures. He used this type reasoning on at least two other occasions. In I Corinthians 9:8-10, when he was defending his right to receive pay for his services, he asked, "Do I speak these things after the manner of men? or saith not the law also the same? For it is written in the law of Moses, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.' Is it for the oxen that God careth, or saith he it assuredly for our sake? Yea, for our sake it was written . . ."

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He also quoted the law in I Timothy 5:17-18 to show that it was proper to pay some elders. "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching; for the scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain,' and 'the laborer deserves his wages.'" In view of this, we have every right to appeal to the law to show the kind of subjection God expects of Christian women. When the New Testament states a general principle to be true, but doesn't go into detail to illustrate all that it embraces, but says, "as also saith the law," then it becomes our duty to see what the law said.

The principle of woman's subjection to her husband is further illustrated in the New Testament by the example of Sarah's subjection to Abraham (I Peter 3:1-6). Peter uses her as an example for Christian wives to follow; but, what did Sarah's subjection include? It included a meek and quiet spirit, but this did not mean she couldn't speak in Abraham's presence. Her subjection included her obedience to him. She further showed her respect for him by calling him lord, yet, upon one occasion she told him to do something which he didn't want to do, but God said to him, ". . . whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your descendants be named." (Genesis 21:12). Sarah had just told him to ". . . cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac." (Genesis 21:10). This, of course, had reference to Hagar, Sarah's handmaid, and the son Ishmael which she bore him. Even though Sarah told him to do something, with God's approval, Peter still referred to her as a woman who was in subjection to her husband. And he said that the Christian women

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of his day were to be considered as daughters of Sarah if they followed her example.

We should not hesitate to apply all of God's universal principles which have been in force since man's earliest existence. When we do so we are not violating the prohibition against trying to justify ourselves by the law. In addition to the principle of woman's subjection to man, God has some other principles still in force today, even though they first existed under the law and the patriarchs. For example, God's moral code against murder has always existed. The act has always been wrong, and such knowledge did not come to light through the gospel. Jesus did, however, enlarge upon the principle somewhat to show that one may be guilty in his heart even though he does not commit the act.

Likewise, the principle of man's subduing the earth and having dominion over all the animals is as old as Genesis 1:28. Even though God has not told us through the New Testament to subdue the earth, we still understand that it is a valid principle today. But we know it because of what we read in Genesis. Man must still battle the thorns and thistles, and eat his bread in the sweat of his face, yet, we first learn about this principle from the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:17-19). Although we know the New Testament teaches against lusting after evil things, practicing idolatry, committing fornication, and tempting Christ, yet Paul said we were to learn and be admonished about these things by what was written in the Old Testament, according to I Corinthians 10:5-11. Verse 11 says, "These things happened unto them as examples and were written down as warnings for us . . ." At this point do I hear someone say, "Yes, we know these things have always been

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wrong, but they are wrong to us because they are in the New Testament, and not because they are condemned in the Old Testament"? But if we use such reasoning in these matters, then we are denying that we can use these Old Testament examples as our guide, yet Paul plainly said in verse 6, "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." Likewise, concerning the principle of woman's silence and submission, Paul said, ". . . as also saith the law" (I Corinthians 14:34).

The Lord has made His will so simple that ". . . wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isaiah 35:8). Jesus said, ". . . Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14). I am skeptical of any religious position which requires a degree in philosophy to understand. The gospel, along with its requirements and demands upon us, is simplicity personified. We are not saying they don't require a great amount of study, but God's grace, which came teaching us, is not based on volumes of legal technicalities which require a lawyer to comprehend. One's knowledge of the Greek language should certainly help him to better appreciate some verses and words. However, any person who can read the English language can get as much understanding as the Lord expects of him, especially if he will study from several different translations, including some reliable modern English versions.

We don't want to make light of higher education, or discourage those who have attained a great amount of formal education. We need them. We need our Greek scholars who are capable of translating the Bible into our language. But after the translators have done their job, it is still Mr. Average

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Man who must understand and apply it. If it requires a second Ph.D. to understand the work of the first Ph.D., then the first one must not have done a very good job. Yet, truth has nothing to fear by delving into the Greek. However, most of our word problems have a tendency to disappear when we examine how the words are used throughout the Bible. When the Lord illustrates one of His general principles with a number of examples, then we should not hinder it by enforcing certain restrictions of our own choosing.

CHAPTER II

CLARIFYING AND CLASSIFYING

THE ISSUE

There is a growing tendency in our youth devotionals to encourage the girls to participate with the boys in expressing their prayers to God. This is usually done in *chain prayer* style; that is, each speaking his own prayer in turn until all have had an opportunity to express themselves to God. Reaction to the practice has varied from avid approval to violent disapproval. If the Scriptures clearly teach only one of these positions to be right in the sight of God, then we should not have too much difficulty determining which is that right position. For example, if the Scriptures clearly teach that it is a sin for a girl to speak an audible prayer to God in the presence of boys, then you would think that those who believe this would agree on which Scriptures teach the practice to be sinful. Yet, one man will say that I Timothy 2:8-12 is the passage which condemns the practice, and another will declare that this passage does not teach such, but that I Corinthians 14:34,35 is the relevant passage. Some believe that the girls may participate audibly in chain prayer with the boys in a family devotional, but that they must remain silent in prayer in any other situation where boys and girls are in the same group. Still others will just as eagerly avow that she sins if she

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verbalizes a prayer anywhere in the presence of boys, even in the family devotional situation. Thus, we continue in our disagreement. If the Bible condemns it, then we need to take heed. If it endorses the practice, then we all need to be aware of that fact so that we need not go through life troubled about the matter. If it is a matter of human judgment, then we should not be guilty of trying to force our opinion on others.

Since the issue could cause some rather serious repercussions in the brotherhood, we need to give diligence that we properly classify the practice, so all may know beyond any doubt that it rests either in the realm of *faith* or in the realm of *opinion*. We should not acquiesce simply because public opinion mounts high against us. Let's decide what is right and then stick with it.

The Real Issue

If the real issue is whether or not we have a command or an example of woman praying audibly in the presence of man, then the issue is already settled. The examples will be given in subsequent chapters. Although there is no specific command for women to pray aloud in the presence of men, there are many general commands for Christians to pray, which would include the women. If audible prayer by them in man's presence is forbidden, then it should not be difficult to produce the passage which forbids it. However, in the absence of such a passage, we must consider prayer as it is pictured to us in the Scriptures. The only principle we need to worry about being violated is the principle of woman's subjection to man. If it can be shown that merely uttering a prayer in his presence

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constitutes a violation of this principle, then let all beware.

When we are seeking to find out whether a certain practice is *right* or *wrong*, we need to ask ourselves three questions. (1) Has God legislated on it? (2) Has He given us *specific* legislation on it? (3) Has He given us only general legislation on it? If He has not legislated on it in any manner, then we need not feel obligated to justify our position on the matter. In this case it could not be a part of the hope for which we are to be ready to explain to the world when it asks us (I Peter 3:15). When someone presses questions of this nature, we should consider them to be the "foolish and unlearned questions" which Paul told Timothy to avoid (2 Timothy 2:23). We could save many brotherhood arguments if we would heed this admonition.

If God has given us *specific* legislation on the matter, then it should not be difficult to find. If, however, He has only given general legislation on the subject, then we need only to be concerned with what is expedient in the matter. In this area, no man has the right to legislate for others. When we speak of a thing being expedient, we do not mean that it is expedient only as long as no one objects, or that it becomes inexpedient just because someone objects. If that be the standard of judgment, then we could hardly do anything, because there is always someone standing by, ready to object to almost anything that we do. However, we should use the accepted meaning of the word. Webster says it means: "Apt and suitable to the end in view; advantageous. Conducive to special advantage . . . Suitable means to accomplish an end" (page 352). The kind of mixed prayer we are discussing scores high in this area. We will have more to say about this in a later

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chapter when we discuss more fully the benefits of mixed prayer.

Some say we should discontinue the practice because it offends them. They would put it in the same category that Paul placed the eating of meats, as mentioned in Romans 14, I Corinthians 8:1-13, and I Corinthians 10:18-33. We need to remember that in Romans 14 it was the weak brother who was offended; and, he was offended by an arbitrary matter, for we read in Romans 14:14, "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean." There may be times when we should forego the practice until the offended party has had a chance to learn better. But let's not forget, this is a two-way proposition, because Romans 14:3 not only says, "Let not him who eats despise him who abstains," but it also says, "and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him." As far as I Corinthians chapters 8 and 10 are concerned, there was, involved in those circumstances, a real basis for offense. There was a real connection between the offense and something that was sinful. The weak brother was offended because in times past he was ". . . accustomed to idols," and he was eating this food as though it were ". . . really offered to an idol . . ." But such is hardly the case regarding our girls speaking their prayers in the presence of the boys.

In these arbitrary matters we are not left without divine guidance. We read in Acts 16:3 that Paul circumcised Timothy. He no doubt deemed it expedient to perform this voluntary act. And, as long as no one was trying to bind this optional act upon Timothy, he could accommodate them. But

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in another case, Paul refused to let Titus be circumcised because the Jews were trying to bind it on him as law. He didn't give in, even though his actions may have offended those Jews. The principle is clearly stated by Hackett and Alford, as quoted on page 261 of Haley's *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*: "The principle involved is that we may sometimes make concessions to expediency which would be wrong to make to arbitrary authority seeking to tyrannize over the conscience." Paul also made it very clear what God thinks of those who would make laws where He made none. (See I Timothy 4:1-4.)

True Parallels

What would you do if someone tried to stop you from making contributions to certain orphan homes? You would probably tell him not to try to bind something on you that the Lord did not bind. You would probably remind him that God gave *general* instructions to do this work, and not detailed *specifics*. But what if your friend said you should prove your practice by a "thus saith the Lord," and since your practice is to send money to the homes, then prove it with a scripture which teaches that practice? How would you answer him? You would probably tell him that you don't need specific and detailed instructions in order to obey general commands. But what if he said you were violating the *silence* of the Scriptures by your practice? You would probably ask him if he knows of any scriptures which spell out the details of doing this work. But what if he said you could not prove your practice to be right by asking him for his authority for the way he obeys this

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general command? By then you would probably be suspicious of one who is not willing to test his own position in the same way he would test the position of others. Logicians call this *special pleading*. You would probably suggest that he read Romans 2:1-3, where Paul said that we would not escape the judgment of God if we are guilty of doing the same thing that we accuse others of doing. The point is, he would be accusing you of practicing something without *specific* authority, but he would be doing the same thing. (Where did the Lord ever say who is to pray aloud when prayer is offered in mixed groups?)

Some of you are probably thinking that this issue does not deserve the attention that it is getting. You may even be thinking that those who believe the practice is a good one should nevertheless be willing to give it up in order to keep peace in the brotherhood. Yet, I wonder how many of you are willing to give up your Sunday morning Bible classes at the church building in order to have peace with your brother who thinks it is wrong to have them. How many of you are willing to use only one cup for the whole church when observing the Lord's supper? You are aware, are you not, that your practice of using individual cups offends those who believe that all should drink from a common container? You no doubt continue in these things because you see the benefits to be derived from them; and you don't let your brother who opposes them bind a law on you that God did not bind. In like manner, many see the benefits and advantages of the kinds of mixed prayer under consideration in this study. Although they don't want to be unkind, or cause trouble in the church, yet they can see that the objector has no valid basis for his objection.

CHAPTER III

OBJECTIONS TO GIRLS PRAYING

Since the reaction to girls participating with boys in chain prayer has been strong, both for and against the practice, we shall devote this chapter to exploring these opposing views by examining the main objections to the practice, while we also set forth some valid reasons for encouraging the practice.

Since the Scriptures do give us a few examples of women speaking their prayers to God in the presence of men, without any apparent disapproval by the Lord at that time, then we should, as brethren, be able to accept these examples. However, some feel, regardless of what may have happened during the days of the Old Testament, that God has now, through the New Covenant, made it plain that he does not want Christian women to utter a prayer in the presence of men. This is strange reasoning, since the principle of subjection has been in force since the time of Adam and Eve (and this is the principle said to be violated when she speaks her prayer in man's presence). Would God wait over twelve hundred years to make it known that Hannah sinned by praying in the presence of Eli and Elkanah? Or, would He wait sixty-eight years to tell the world that Anna sinned when she prayed in the presence of Joseph and Simeon? Or, would He wait sixty

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years to tell us that the prophetess in Corinth sinned when she lived up to Paul's instructions for her to pray with her head covered, as was the practice of the early churches? (See Chapter IV for a more complete examination of these examples.)

There are four primary objections, that I am aware of, to girls voicing their prayers in the presence of boys at the youth devotionals. First, some think it is a violation of I Corinthians 14:34, which says, "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." The second objection is based on I Timothy 2:11-12, which reads, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." The third objection is based on I Timothy 2:8, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." The argument here is on the word *man*, which is *aner* in the Greek, which usually means *male* as opposed to *female*. The fourth objection is based on the alleged silence of the Scriptures concerning any such practice. Let's now consider these in the order listed.

The Silence-Obedience of

I Corinthians 14:34

The many theories and speculations concerning this passage have paved the way for much misunderstanding of Paul's instruction to the Corinthians. Whatever restrictions

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Paul is binding on the actions of certain Christian women of his day should not be interpreted in such a way as to make void all else that God has said on the subject. The *silence* of this passage must not be understood to mean that women are not to sing aloud in the assemblies of the saints where mutual edification of one another is the purpose of the meeting. We are told to admonish one another in song, and this includes the women. Likewise, the *silence* of this passage did not preclude her from exercising her gift of prophecy which she received from the Lord. In fact, Paul told her in I Corinthians 11 how she was to dress while exercising this gift. This *silence* surely must not be interpreted to mean that she cannot confess her faults before the church, else she could not obey James 5:16. We might also notice that *silently* filling out a response card is not what Paul was talking about in I Corinthians 14:34.

Behold, how easy it is to speak the magic word, yea, even quote a Scripture, and put the woman to silence forevermore! And, just in case the silence and obedience of verse 34 were not enough, we go to verse 35 for the "clincher." It says, "And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." I realize that Paul meant exactly what he said here, but he didn't say what a lot of people are making him say. Did he mean that women were not to learn *anything* while present in such an assembly? Have we forgotten that he had just said in verse 31 that the prophesying was to be conducted in such a way that ". . . all may learn . . ." ? I believe he included the women in this kind of learning. However, this was not the time for her to raise questions about what was being revealed

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by the speaking prophet, or prophetess. The fact that someone appeared to be speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit did not mean his message could not be questioned. In fact, Paul said in verse 29 that there should be judging prophets; but, verses 34 and 35 do not give the women that privilege. In fact, they are rather emphatic about it. They just plainly say that under such circumstances she is to remain silent. And, we should point out that this means *absolute silence* with reference to her questioning or judging the truths that were being revealed. She was not permitted to pit her judgments against those of the judging prophets. But, will someone please tell us where such a meeting as this may be found today in the church? If it does not exist today, then neither does the injunction governing such a meeting.

Does the mere fact that woman is to be in subjection and under obedience to man mean that she cannot speak her prayer in his presence? Must we believe that when a husband and wife are praying in the privacy of their own home, that she is in subjection to him as long as she listens to his prayer, but that she suddenly ceases to be in subjection when she expresses her thoughts to God in his presence? Dear brother, do you not realize that one of the most effective ways your wife can fulfill her role of helpmeet is to let you hear her praying for you? In I Peter 3:7 Peter said that husbands should give honor unto their wives, “. . . that your prayers be not hindered.” Thayer says, on page 166 of his Greek-English Lexicon, “that ye be not hindered from praying (together).” Paul told husbands and wives in Corinth not to deprive themselves of each other, except by mutual consent, “. . . that ye may give yourselves unto prayer . . .” (I Corinthians 7:5). If

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they had waited until Paul told them how to conduct this part of their prayer life, they would never have gotten around to it. This, however, was not a problem in Paul's mind, because he knew the marriage relationship would be enhanced by their praying together (even in such a way that each could hear the other praying for their mutual needs). How many marital ills would be cured if we had more of such! But there is no reason to limit the power of this kind of prayer to the marriage relationship. It will work among young people, and older ones alike.

First Timothy 2:8 was written approximately nine years after Paul told the husband and wife at Corinth to give themselves unto prayer, but, if it forbids the wife from speaking her prayer aloud in his presence, isn't it strange that there is no hint of such a restriction prior to 66 A.D.? Hannah didn't know about it in 1170 B.C. Anna didn't know about it in 4 B.C. The prophetess in Corinth didn't know about it in 56 A.D. And, neither did Paul know about it when he wrote I Timothy 2:8. A command for the man to pray everywhere says nothing about where, nor under what circumstances, the woman may pray. (See more on I Timothy 2:8 later in this chapter under a separate heading.)

The Silence-Subjection-Dominion of I Timothy 2:11,12

The second objection to girls speaking their prayers in the presence of boys is based on the fact that woman is to learn in silence, or quietness, with all subjection, and that she is not to

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have dominion over man, according to I Timothy 2:11,12, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." The word translated *silence* or *quietness* in verse 11 is the Greek noun *hesuchia*. Thayer, on page 281 of his Greek-English Lexicon, says it means, "Quietness: descriptive of the life of one who stays at home doing his own work, and does not officiously meddle in the affairs of others." Concerning the busybodies and those who would not work, Paul said, "Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with *quietness* they work, and eat their own bread" (2 Thessalonians 3:12). The word *quietness* is the same as that in I Timothy 2:11 under consideration. It is easy to see that the *silence* or *quietness* of our present text is not the same as that in I Corinthians 14:34.

Perhaps we should point out that the subject of mixed prayer is not specifically under consideration in I Timothy 2:11,12. The principle of silence and subjection here is to apply in all walks of life—not just in worship assemblies. Therefore, whatever it means in the home relationship, or on the job, it also means the same in the assembly. We can't give it one meaning in one situation and another meaning in a different situation. We have seen, through Bible usage and by definition, that the word does not demand absolute silence.

We should point out that the *subjection* mentioned in verse 11 of our text, where Paul said, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection," is the same word as used in I Timothy 3:4, where Paul said, concerning the qualifications of elders, "One that ruleth well his own house, having his

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children in subjection . . .” Does this mean that the elder’s son violates his role of subjection to his father when he prays audibly in his presence? That’s what some are saying about the women. Does subjection really demand silence in prayer when in the presence of the one to whom subject? Paul said that Christians are to be subject to principalities and powers (Titus 3:1). Does this mean we violate the rule of subjection if we pray in their presence? Peter said, “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder . . .” (I Peter 5:5). Does this mean the younger Christians could never speak a prayer in the presence of the older ones? The next part of that verse also says, “. . . Yea, all of you be subject one to another . . .” Does this mean that none of us are allowed to pray aloud in the presence of the others? Paul told the Corinthians to submit to the house of Stephanas and to “every one that helpeth with us, and laboreth” (I Corinthians 16:15,16). One of Paul’s helpers was a woman, Phebe, according to Romans 16:1,2. Although some of the Corinthians to whom Paul was writing were men, yet, would any among us say that these men could not utter a prayer in the presence of Phebe simply because she was one of his helpers to whom they were to be subject?

Brethren, we need to be consistent in our reasoning. If woman’s subjection to man means she cannot speak a prayer in his presence, then man’s subjection to man would mean the same thing.

What about the idea of woman usurping man’s authority? The King James Version of the New Testament says, “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” (I Timothy 2:12). The American

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Standard Version says, "But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over man, but to be in quietness." Some have objected to the wording of the King James Version, "usurp authority," since, to them, such language is too strong. They say Webster's definition, "To seize and hold in possession by force, or without right," suggests more than is implied by "have dominion over." They object to the idea of it meaning to seize and hold *by force*, but Webster says it also means to seize and hold in possession "without right." When a woman occupies any position, either by force, or simply without right, she is still a *usurper*. She has taken something that does not belong to her. The Greek word in question is *authenteo*. W. E. Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, page 90, says, "to exercise authority on one's own account, to domineer over, is used in I Timothy 2:12, A.V., 'to usurp authority,' R.V., 'to have dominion.' In the earlier usage of the word it signified one who with his own hand killed either others or himself. Later it came to denote one who acts on his own authority; hence, to exercise authority, dominion." Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, page 84, says, "one who acts on his own authority, autocratic . . . an absolute master . . . to govern one, exercise dominion over one." It should be obvious by now that when a woman simply shares audibly in prayer with a man, she is not necessarily domineering or exercising authority over him. It would take some assertion on her part to be guilty of this crime. Taking turns praying in an orderly fashion doesn't even come close to suggesting such a thing.

Some women, however, are domineering in their actions. Some will stand outside the church building and argue and

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dispute with a man, trying to teach him something, who wouldn't think of doing such in a class inside the building. Some are so domineering at home that their husbands are known to be "hen-pecked." Some will hardly say a word in the Bible class, but they will dominate every conversation elsewhere. Some will try to dominate the discussion in a mixed Bible class. All such action is not befitting her as one who is to manifest a meek and quiet spirit. Many men will tolerate her actions in these things, but when she meekly, and with a quiet spirit, participates with men in an orderly chain prayer, some of these same men will throw the book at her, and charge her with domineering over man. Lord, help us!

Since woman is forbidden to exercise authority over man, perhaps we should look at some Bible examples of those who exercised authority over others, to see just what was involved in their exercising of authority. A centurion came to Jesus upon one occasion and asked him to heal his servant. As he explained to Jesus the authority he had over others, he said, "For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." (Matthew 8:9). Now this is a picture of one who had authority to exercise authority, and he did it by commanding those under him to do his bidding. If some unauthorized person had come along and started giving orders to this centurion's troops, he would have been usurping the authority of the centurion. So it is in the church. God has given men the authority to reprove, rebuke, exhort, take care of the church, convince the gainsayers, and stop the mouths of the unruly, the vain talkers, and the deceivers. When a

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woman begins to operate in these spheres, she has usurped man's authority—she has exercised authority on her own account. This she cannot do. But simply uttering a prayer in her meek and quiet spirit, even though a man is present, hardly constitutes dominance.

The "*Aner*" of I Timothy 2:8

One of the most frequent arguments used to discourage girls from speaking their prayers in the presence of boys is based on I Timothy 2:8, where Paul said, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." The idea of girls keeping silent in prayer (in the presence of boys) is thought by some to be emphatic since the word "men" in the verse is the Greek word *aner*, which usually means "male" rather than "female." Thayer gives four basic uses of the word: 1) It is used to distinguish man from woman. 2) It is used to distinguish an adult man from a boy. 3) It is used where mention is made of something usually done by men. 4) It is also used when "persons of either sex are included, but named after the more important." (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, page 45). Even though its basic meaning is "male," we cannot afford to take the position that the spiritual application of every verse which uses it is limited to *men only*. The meaning must be determined from the context.

There are several places in the New Testament where *aner* is used when it obviously includes both men and women in its application. For example, in James 1:8 we read, "A double-minded man (*aner*) is unstable in all his ways." Surely we

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would not exclude women from its application, for we all know that a double-minded woman is also unstable in her ways, but we know it because of this verse. Again we read in James 1:12, "Blessed is the man (*aner*) that endureth temptation." Would we not also say, "Blessed is the *woman* who endures temptation"? In Romans 4:8 we read, "Blessed is the man (*aner*) to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Surely the same applies to women. In I Corinthians 13:11 Paul said, ". . . when I became a man (*aner*), I put away childish things." He is obviously talking about maturity in the faith, and so it is with our women. Do not these verses apply with equal force to both men and women? Yet, *aner* is used in each case. We need to be careful about building a doctrine on only one use of a word when the Scriptures do not so limit its application.

Let's look at I Timothy 2:8 from another point of view. Which of the two following statements would we say represents the teaching of Paul in this verse? 1) "I will therefore that men pray everywhere," or, 2) "I will therefore that men only lead every *audible prayer* that is prayed in *mixed assemblies*." Since the first statement is a direct quotation from Paul, how then can we say the verse teaches what the second statement says? Does it not have much more information in it than the first one? A mixed assembly is neither stated nor necessarily inferred in the verse. Neither is audible prayer. Paul's admonition could be obeyed even if there was no mixed assembly or audible prayer involved. Yet, both of these conditions would have to be inherent in the verse if it teaches that men must lead all audible prayers in mixed assemblies. We should also note that when Paul said, "I will therefore

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that men pray everywhere . . .,” he was talking about *places* rather than *composition of the audiences*. There is a great difference between saying that men should pray *everywhere*, and that men should *lead all prayers in mixed groups*.

Obviously, there is some contrast drawn between men and women in verses 8 through 12 of I Timothy 2. However, does this mean that everything mentioned in verse 8 applies to *men only*, and that everything mentioned in verses 9 and 11 applies to *women only*? Let's see if we can live with that kind of reasoning.

First, if verse 8, which says, “I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting,” applies only to men, then women would never be allowed to “lift up holy hands” in prayer, even in situations where we all would agree that she could pray. Why? Because that's part of a verse which some brethren say cannot possibly apply to women. Also, if only men are allowed to do everything mentioned in verse 8, because of *aner*, then women could never pray anywhere. Why? Because the command to pray is a part of that verse which some say applies only to men.

Second, if verse 8 is limited to *men only*, then verses 9 and 11 must be limited to *women only*, since they read, “In like manner also, that *women* adorn themselves in modest apparel . . . Let the women learn in silence . . .” Do these verses mean, because they are addressed to women, that it would be wrong for men to dress modestly, and that it would be wrong for men to ever learn in silence? Surely not! Yet, if what is said in verse 8 is limited to men only, then what is said about women in verses 9 and 11 would of necessity be limited

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to women only. I doubt that we are ready for such a conclusion.

Third, let's notice that verse 8 does not say, "I will therefore that *men only* pray everywhere." How inconsistent of us when we tell our *faith only* neighbors that Romans 5:1 does not say we are justified by *faith only*, then turn right around and make I Timothy 2:8 say, "I will therefore that *men only* pray audibly in mixed assemblies . . ." Not only are we guilty of adding the word "only" to the verse, but some would add "audible prayer" and "mixed assemblies" to a passage which says neither. That makes us doubly guilty. Brethren, we can respect the principle of woman's subjection to man without reading into a verse things that are not there. Let's be careful lest we make *man* the mediator between God and woman.

Since there is no new principle of subjection under consideration in our text, we need not draw conclusions different from what God has always allowed in the matter of mixed prayer. If I Timothy 2:8 teaches that only men may utter prayers everywhere, then why does it not also teach that if there is an audible prayer in the ladies Bible class, that some man must be there to utter it, and then leave if a woman is teaching the class? Remember, now, the verse says nothing about mixed or unmixed audiences, but since it does say that *men* are to pray *everywhere*, then why not in the ladies class? Isn't that a part of *everywhere*? Ridiculous, you say? Certainly! But, so is the other man-made law which says that women may not speak prayers in the presence of men.

The contrast between men and women, found in I Timothy 2:8-12, is not a contrast between his *audible prayer* and her *silent prayer*, since neither is mentioned. When Paul said that

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men were to pray everywhere, that does not mean that women are not to pray anywhere. Where does the Bible teach that women may speak audible prayers only in private, or only in groups of women? How can we decide what a woman is *not* to do by simply reading what a man *is* to do? We may as well reason that a man cannot teach young women to be sober, to love their husbands, or to love their children, since Titus 2:3,4 says that *aged women* are to teach them these things. Don't we know that the expression "aged women" cannot possibly include men? The contrast between men and women in our text must be found in the fact that woman is not to be in authority over man, whether in the assembly of the saints, or in her everyday walks of life. To whatever degree this passage applies to the general assembly, to the Bible class situation, to the youth devotional, to the family devotional, or to the Priscilla-Aquila-Apollos teaching situation, it applies with equal force to the relationship between man and woman in all walks of life; and Paul tells us why in verses 13 and 14 of I Timothy 2.

We should make it clear that we are not trying to prove that *aner*, as used in I Timothy 2:8, must include women. It's not an offensive argument with us at all. However, since some think the verse prohibits women from speaking their prayers audibly in the presence of men (because, to them, *aner* always means *men* as opposed to *women*), we simply show that the word sometimes includes women in its application. Since that is true, then the argument is not valid which says that verse 8 applies to men only because of the *aner* of it.

While we are dealing with the *aner* (men) of I Timothy 2:8, and its definition, and the limitation in usage to *men only* by

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some, perhaps we should look at some other words and their definitions and usage to illustrate why we should be careful about building doctrine on one usage only when the Scriptures use the words in other ways. A case in point is *anthropos*, which is the term for mankind in general, without reference to sex. Usually when this word is used you may apply it to both men and women, yet, there is at least one exception to that general rule, and it is found in Galatians 5:3. "For I testify again to every man (*anthropos*) that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law." According to man's reasoning if there was ever a time when the Holy Spirit should have used the term *aner* it should have been in this case. So we see that the term (which normally includes both men and women) is used here to mean *male only*. Likewise, in Matthew 18:15 we read, "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone . . ." In this case the word *brother* obviously includes both men and women, yet, do I hear someone saying that we must insist on the *male* application here?

If the meaning of a passage must always depend on whether the masculine or feminine gender of certain nouns or adjectives is intended, then we have some situations in the New Testament which the objector cannot accept. For example, in I Corinthians 14:23,24, we read, "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all (*pas*) speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say ye are mad? But if all (*pas*) prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all . . ." The *all* (*pas*) who were speaking in tongues, and the *all* (*pas*) who were prophesying

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are both masculine and feminine in gender. Does the objector realize what this does to his logic? We find the same word *all* (pas) in John 1:7 where it is said, concerning John, that he came to “. . . bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.” This would certainly include women.

(Much of the content of this section entitled “The Aner of I Timothy 2:8” is either a direct quotation or a paraphrasing of this author’s article entitled “In Defense of Girls Praying,” as published in *The Firm Foundation*, April 1, 1975, Volume 92, No. 13, published by The Firm Foundation Publishing House, Austin, Texas.)

Alleged Silence of the Scriptures

There is a slogan among us which says: “Speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent.” This was evidently intended to be a paraphrase of I Peter 4:11, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.” The principle expressed is certainly a good one, but it is also a much abused one. Men have used it to rule out anything they disapprove, even though that thing may be in the realm of human judgment. We do a gross injustice to the principle when we use it that way.

Some use it to rule out churches supporting orphan homes, since they cannot find any Bible command, approved example, or necessary inference for churches to send money to such homes. They seem to overlook the fact that God expects His people to take care of such needs, even though He did not see fit to give us one example, or one command, telling us how He wanted it done. Neither did He give us one

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necessary inference to go by. Yet, the work must be done. However, if we wait until we find the *how* in the Scriptures, the work will never get done. But, the objector continues his objection by reasoning that we should discontinue the practice since the Bible does not mention that particular practice. Thus he will get on his soap box and boldly declare that these churches are engaged in an *unscriptural* practice. And, unfortunately, he will make a few converts; he will cause considerable unrest in the brotherhood; he will create suspicion in the hearts of many toward the good works of the others, and he will divert the time and energies of many to the propagation of his hobby. Through his constant battle against this “unscriptural” practice, we all lose—God, Christ, the church, the orphan, and the sinner who needs the gospel but won’t get it because too many people are fighting the straw men of their own creation. Unfortunately, however, the application of this principle doesn’t stop here. Some would use the same reasoning to disallow women ever praying audibly in the presence of men.

It has been a common practice among us to let each student in a mixed Bible class take turn reading the Scriptures that pertain to the lesson being discussed by those in the class. However, if the present trend in some quarters continues, it won’t be long until the objector will try to kill that practice also. His understanding of *consistency* will force him to do so. Since he reasons, concerning prayer, that the Bible does not give us an example, a command, or a necessary inference for a woman ever *leading* a group of men in prayer, then to be consistent, he will also reason that the Bible does not give us an example, a command, or a necessary inference for a

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woman to ever *lead* a group of men by reading the Scriptures aloud in their presence. And, he must further reason that if the woman may thus read the Scriptures from her seated position in a mixed Bible class, then she has the same right to stand before the group as she reads. And if she is at liberty to do that, then what is to keep her from standing before the Sunday morning general assembly and doing likewise?

In all his reasoning the objector fails to consider that Christians, both men and women, are to edify each other as befits the occasion. He doesn't seem to realize that there are several ways of edifying one another. We can do it through singing to each other—and she is vocal in this (Colossians 3:16). We can do it by teaching one another—and she is vocal in this, according to Acts 18:26. Also, according to I Corinthians 14:15-17, we may edify others by our prayers. Now, let's make the application. We have no difficulty understanding that women may edify men in song. Most of us have no difficulty understanding that women may also edify men through their teaching, at least in certain type situations. However, when it comes to their edifying men by their prayers, we suddenly go into orbit and shift to another set of standards. If we had asked the objector earlier if he believed that God has specified every detail involved in our edifying of one another, he doubtless would have answered in the negative. Yet, when we point out that prayer is also one of God's ways of having us edify each other, then he takes the position that woman is forbidden to edify man in this way. We must ask, "Who said so? God, or man?"

While many are saying that the Scriptures are silent on the subject of women praying aloud in the presence of men, I

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think you will agree, after studying the next four chapters of this book, that there is more evidence to support the practice than has been thought by many. They are offered for your prayerful consideration.

CHAPTER IV

EXAMPLES OF PRAYER IN MIXED GROUPS

Perhaps everyone who reads this book will appreciate the fact that God often shows His approval of a practice by giving us an example in His word illustrating such conduct. Of course, there are unapproved examples in the Bible as well as approved ones; but it isn't too difficult to distinguish between them. Thanks be to God that he did not leave us without example regarding prayer in mixed groups. He didn't always furnish every detail involved, but He did give us enough that we may be sure of the ground whereon we stand. Our greatest difficulty is, not in finding the example where a woman prayed in the presence of men, but rather, our problem seems to be in accepting that fact. Brethren, we will never convince the world of our intellectual honesty when it sees us shying away from some truth of God simply because it is contrary to our custom, or to our liking. But above all, we need to be honest with God. If God said something—brother, let it stand!

Hannah's Prayer in I Samuel 1:28-2:1-11

It is difficult to establish how old Samuel was when

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Hannah presented him to Eli the priest. This passage indicates it was shortly after he was weaned, but the difficulty is in determining what the normal weaning age was in that day. Some of the early historians say it took place at *five* years of age, while others say *twelve*. (See Adam Clarke's comments on Genesis 21:8.) The only reason for raising the point of Samuel's age is because the text indicates he was old enough to worship God, and to minister unto the Lord before Eli the priest. This would make him more than just a babe in arms.

The passage under consideration, from verse 25 of Chapter one, to verse 11 of Chapter 2, shows that at least four people were present upon that occasion—Eli, Elkanah, the boy Samuel, and Hannah. The latter part of Chapter 1, verse 28, and the first part of Chapter 2, verse 1, says, "And he (or they) worshipped the Lord there. Hannah also prayed and said . . ." Some translations say, "*he* worshipped the Lord there," while others say, "*they* worshipped the Lord there." It makes no difference whether it was *he* or *they* who worshipped there, the point is still made that Hannah prayed in the presence of one or more *males*.

Perhaps some of you are ready to ask, "How do we know she was not praying silently as she did in verse 13 of Chapter 1?" First, there is no reason to assume that her prayer in Chapter 2 was a silent prayer. The Bible does not say it was silent, therefore, we should not say it was silent. All the evidence is to the contrary. The record says, "And Hannah prayed, and *said* . . ." When the Lord wants us to understand something to be different from what we would normally understand the passage to teach, He makes it explicit, as He did in Chapter 1, verse 13, where He said, "Hannah was

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speaking in her heart . . .” Had He not made that point clear we all would have understood that she was *speaking* a prayer in the normal sense. However, in Chapter 2 He did not make such a point. The record simply says, “And Hannah prayed, and *said* . . .”; yet, many would insist that all the men suddenly pulled a disappearing act when she started praying.

There is nothing in the context to warrant our thinking that this was either a silent prayer, or that it was prayed outside the presence of the others mentioned in the passage. To illustrate how we would normally understand such language, let's substitute a man's name in the place of Hannah's and then see if we would interpret the passage any differently. Let's substitute the name of her husband, Elkanah, in the place of hers. Now what do we have? “And they worshipped the LORD there. Elkanah also prayed and said . . .” If it had been worded that way would we still insist that the prayer was silent? Surely not! Yet, many will read *silence* into this prayer. Brethren, I know many of you are thinking that we don't have enough evidence to say that this was an audible prayer (since the record doesn't say “she spoke an audible prayer”), but by the same token, neither do we have enough evidence to say that it was a silent prayer (since the record does not say “she spoke a silent prayer”). Shall we call it a standoff just because neither of the expressions (“silent prayer” or “audible prayer”) is mentioned? No, there is no reason to do that. Let's just accept it as we would if we didn't have some pet theory to protect.

Anna's Prayer in Luke 2:33-38

The case of Anna praying in the presence of Joseph,

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Simeon, and Mary is too clear to miss. Let's get the picture. The Holy Spirit had revealed unto Simeon that he would not die before seeing Christ. He came to the temple where Joseph and Mary had brought the child Jesus to present him to the Lord. Simeon then took Jesus into his arms and prayed to God in verses 29 through 32. While this was taking place, the record says concerning Anna that “. . . she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” She did what? She came in *that instant* and *gave thanks* likewise unto God. Did the verse say she gave *silent thanks* to God? No! Then let's not read that into it. Adam Clarke's comments on verse 38 are very appropriate here: “She, as well as *Simeon*, returned God public thanks, for having sent this Saviour to Israel.” (Volume V, page 376).

Some think we should not use this passage to teach the propriety of women speaking their prayers in the presence of men, because, as they say, it teaches more than we want to hear. You see, the latter part of the verse says that she “. . .spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” Some would say, “Now you have women preachers.” Not so! We shall reserve most of our comments about the prophetesses of God for later, but suffice it to say that we have no reason to shy away from what God has plainly revealed through the Holy Spirit. The verse does not say that she spoke of him to *all the women* who were looking for redemption, therefore, let's not read that into it. This is where we must exercise some of that intellectual honesty we mentioned earlier. Brother, it's there, so let's accept it. I can just hear some good brother saying, “I think we should not

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emphasize the passages which mention women teaching men, or prophesying in their presence, because it might encourage the *women's lib* movement." Brethren, if our faith and understanding of the Scriptures is not strong enough to differentiate between the *women's lib* movement and what God has allowed women to do in the presence of men, then we, of all men, are most miserable. If God intended that we understand Anna's prayer to be a silent one, then He would have told us so. However, since He didn't, we must accept it as we would normally understand it.

Mary and the Women Praying with the Apostles, Acts 1:14

This is a very interesting passage. After naming the remaining eleven apostles in verse 13, Luke then said (verse 14), "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." We don't know exactly how this prayer meeting was conducted, but we do know they had one. Therefore, let's not start eliminating the various ways it could have been conducted simply because the record does not specify any particular way. As far as the language is concerned, each of them may have been praying silently, or perhaps one of the men took the lead in speaking for the group (if there was any *leading* taking place), or maybe it was a chain prayer, each participating in the same manner as the other, including the women. But whichever possibility you allow, you must admit that the passage does not say it was conducted that way. For example, if you think the most likely way it was handled was

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for the men to do all the speaking, it would be unkind of me to reject that as a possibility, even though you could not prove it. In like manner, if I say it is just as reasonable to allow that they may have been praying a chain prayer, it would be equally unkind of you to reject that possibility, even though I could not prove that it was conducted that way. Thus, we could use this same kind of reasoning about every possible way it may have been handled, and when we finish we still wouldn't know how it was done. But the point is, *it was done!* Shall we eliminate every possibility since none of them are mentioned specifically?

If the Lord had intended to place any importance on how this prayer meeting was conducted, He would have spelled it out for us. If we rule out any particular method under consideration, we must do so on the basis of some other passage, but not because of what this verse says. When the Lord uses such loose terminology to describe a meeting of this nature (by *loose*, I mean He was not specific with details), then we must accept this *general* language. He was specific about one thing, though, and that is, that He included the women in this prayer. As far as the wording is concerned, the same thing is said of the women that is said of the men. It makes no distinction between who may have been speaking. The verse still says, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women . . ."

They Continued Steadfastly in Prayers, Acts 2:42

After Peter preached his famous sermon on Pentecost, and told those people to repent and be baptized for the remission

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of their sins (verse 38), we then notice what happened in verses 41 and 42: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Surely no one will argue that the "they" of this passage does not include women, for Peter had just said in verse 39, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Surely you will admit that women are also called by the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

Again, we are not told how these prayers were conducted. But let's notice some things about verse 42. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine—*including the women*. They continued in fellowship—*including the women*. They continued to break bread—*including the women*. But isn't it strange, that when we come to the last part of the verse, people start getting nervous, and putting up various restrictions. It says they continued steadfastly in prayers—*including the women*. But someone is ready to say, "I know these prayers included the women, but don't you know it could be said that the whole group prayed when one man led the prayer for them?" Yes, I'll agree that it could have been done that way. But, brother, I will not agree that the record says it was done that way. As far as the language is concerned it could also have been a chain prayer. I would not take the position that a chain prayer is always expedient. Much would depend on the size and purpose of the gathering. If the three thousand who became obedient on the day of Pentecost were all gathered in one assembly, chain prayer would be rather

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cumbersome. It would be difficult to maintain order and hold down confusion in such a large assembly. It would be difficult for each to speak in turn without several speaking at the same time. But a part of their continuing in these things took place in their homes (verse 46), which suggests they often met in smaller groups. The number of the disciples grew rather rapidly after the day of Pentecost. By the time we read Acts 4:4 we learn that there were about five thousand men, and we don't know how many women and children. It would be rather difficult for that many to meet from house to house at one time.

We should not place any restrictions on the woman's involvement in these prayers, except those that would indicate that she has ceased to be in subjection, or that she is exercising authority over the man, or in some way domineering over him. That's the only restriction the Lord places on her in these matters. Shall we do more?

The Multitude of Believers Prayed, Acts 4:24-30

After Peter and John were released by the authorities they went to "their own company" and reported what had happened to them (verse 23). Then in verse 24 we read, "And when they heard it, they lifted up their voices together to God and said . . ." Again, we must say we don't know for certain how this prayer was conducted by the group. There is a strong inference that all of them were speaking this prayer in some manner. Was one person "leading" while the others lifted their mental voices to God? Perhaps, but I would hate to be

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given the task of proving it. Was it a chain prayer? Perhaps, but I couldn't prove it. Was it a responsive prayer, that is, one where one person speaks a sentence and the others quote it in unison after him? We don't know, but the language would certainly allow for such. This is a rather unique prayer. Some of it seems to be quoted from Psalms 146:6 and 2:1,2. Even though we don't know the particulars surrounding this prayer, the language is flexible enough to include the idea of a responsive prayer. And, there is certainly nothing wrong with such a prayer, even though it may be contrary to our custom. We sing responsive songs without our members becoming too alarmed. Why not a responsive prayer? Who says prayer must be so formal that one person must be "leading" it, with an *official* beginning, and the traditional ending of "in the name of Jesus we pray," and the rest of the group only giving silent consent, with perhaps one or two vocal "amens"—by men only, of course? Those of you who have taught your children to pray probably used the responsive method. Does this ring a bell? Parent: "And now I lay me down to sleep." Child: "And now I lay me down to sleep." Parent: "I pray the Lord my soul to keep." Child: "I pray the Lord my soul to keep." Perhaps we would think that is a childish way for adults to pray, but you must admit it is effective. It helps the participants to concentrate on what they are saying to God, and it probably results in more people participating than if only one person spoke for the group. It is easy for the mind to wander when the tongue is silent, or when the speaker speaks so softly that he can hardly be heard.

Now, back to our text. When the Bible says, "They lifted up their voices together to God . . .," list as many ways as

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you can think of that would satisfy the language, then ask yourself, “Which one of these ways is *the scriptural way*?” You might be surprised at how you would answer that question if you really think about it. But, whatever way you eliminate, be sure the Word of God also eliminates it.

The Prophetess in Corinth

One of the most neglected chapters of the New Testament is I Corinthians 11. The first sixteen verses deal with the prophet and prophetess in the early church. Most of us don't want to be accused of advocating women preachers, so it becomes more convenient for us to bury our heads in the sand and hope no one asks us to explain the prophetess in Corinth. But, brethren, this doesn't make the problem go away. Because of our preconceived ideas about what constitutes woman's subjection to man, many seem to be afraid to accept the woman prophetess as revealed in the New Testament. What is there to be afraid of? The Lord has not made any provisions to have women elders in the church, so we need not fear being accused of wanting them. The Lord has not made any provisions for women preachers in the sense of publicly proclaiming the gospel as did the apostles, or Timothy, or Titus—although all Christians are to spread the word. Therefore, we need not fear being accused of teaching that such would be proper. Women can hardly meet the qualifications laid down for elders in I Timothy 3, and we don't find any charge being given to them to appoint elders (as was Titus, Titus 1:5), nor do we find them being ordained as preachers (as was Paul, I Timothy 2:7), nor do we find them being given

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the charge to rebuke, before all, the elder who sins (as was Timothy, 1 Timothy 5:19,20), nor was any woman ever charged with the responsibility to preach the word, to reprove, to rebuke, or to do the work of an evangelist (as was Timothy, 2 Timothy 4:2,5). But, what about the prophetess in Corinth?

We need to realize that the work of the prophet and prophetess in the early church was unique and temporary. The role of the prophetess has always been the exception to the general rule, even in the Old Testament. But, when they did exist for brief periods of time, they were from God. Joel foretold that God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, and that “. . . your sons and your daughters shall prophesy . . .” (Acts 2:17). When the Spirit was given on Pentecost, Peter said, “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.”

Therefore, when we read of the prophetess in the church at Corinth, we need not get overly excited, wondering how we can explain her away, or harmonize her actions in the early church with all else that is said about woman’s subjection to man. Let’s accept her for what she was at that time. God makes the rules, and He also makes any exceptions to these general rules that are to be made. We have already noted the unique situation in the early church when there was a display of various gifts in their meetings when God was revealing His will through the prophet and prophetess. The women were not allowed to sit in judgment or question what was being revealed. She could not debate or pit her judgment against that of the man. In these things she was to remain silent. This was no time for her to be raising questions. However, the man had

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this right. But the prophetess still had her prophesying to do in that same assembly. When the Spirit revealed some new truth to her, she was obligated to declare it to the rest of God's people. It is begging the question to say that she did this only among groups of women. First Corinthians 11 is too plain about this matter. In this chapter, Paul lays down rules to govern her dress as she exercised this gift in the church. Let's notice these things as revealed in verses 4-6 and 13-16.

“Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved. If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head . . . Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.”

Perhaps we should first look at the New Testament definition of *prophesy*. According to I Corinthians 14:4, Paul said, “. . . he that prophesieth edifieth the church.” So, whether it was a man or a woman, when they prophesied, they edified the church. In our text, in I Corinthians 11, Paul lays down some rules to govern their dress when they prophesied. The man was not to cover his head when he prayed or prophesied, but the woman was to cover her head when she prayed or prophesied. If the Lord did not intend for woman to exercise

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her gift of prophecy in the church, why did He tell her how she was to dress when she prayed or prophesied? Don't forget, this was in the church according to verse 16. If they were not in mixed assemblies when they prayed (in the setting under consideration), then why did Paul say in verse 13, "Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?" Upon what occasions did the custom in Corinth require that she be covered? It was when she was in public. How could any men make this judgment if she were not where they could see her? What would have been the purpose of the head covering if this praying took place at home in her closet? Her praying and prophesying, with long hair and a covering, was to be done in the same place where man was to pray and prophesy, with shorter hair and with his head uncovered; and, according to verse 16, that was *in the church*. Paul said the churches of God had *no other practice than this*. I can hear the objector now. He is saying, "I knew it! I knew it! Brother Casey starts by letting the girls pray in the youth devotionals—now he has the woman prophet praying in the church assembly at Corinth." But such a charge is only half right. It is true, I would encourage them to pray in the youth devotionals, but it was the apostle Paul (not Brother Casey) who had certain women praying in the church at Corinth; and let's not forget that fact.

We cannot explain this passage away by saying that the men prophets prayed and prophesied in the church assemblies but that the women prophets prayed and prophesied only in the presence of women. When the Holy Spirit revealed some new truth to the prophetess, how did she make it known to the rest of the church? If she could reveal it only to women,

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then the early church had some truth known only to women. Can we accept that? Also, if she could not reveal it to the whole assembly, then how could the judging prophets weigh what she was claiming as a revelation from God? That would have really created confusion, but Paul said, “. . . God is not the author of confusion . . .” (I Corinthians 14:33). If she revealed it only to a group of women, then what was that—the women’s church? Brethren, it is much easier to accept what the Lord said about where she prayed and prophesied. But let’s also remember that the gift of prophecy was a temporary gift. After the word of God had been completely revealed, and the infant church had an opportunity to mature, then such gifts ceased. (See I Corinthians 13:10,11 and Ephesians 4:7-16).

There should be no question about whether or not the prophetess prayed and prophesied in the church at Corinth. And there is no question about whether or not the gift of prophecy was to cease near the end of the first century. And, in view of the other examples of prayer in mixed groups which we have already considered, there should be no doubt that women were allowed to pray audibly in the presence of men. However, there is a question that we need to wrestle with until we find a satisfactory answer, and that is, “During the time that God approved prophetesses in the early church (which was also a time when women were to be in subjection to men), was he allowing a practice to exist which was contrary to the teachings of I Timothy 2:8-12?” This would be difficult for me to believe. Could we reconcile the matter by saying that the kind of exercising of authority which is forbidden to the woman, is that which is given to elders and preachers? Think

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on that for awhile—then let me hear from you. You see, I don't have all the answers either, but I do know that the prophetess in Corinth prophesied in the church. Although the work of the prophetess was temporary, there is no reason to believe that the practice of women speaking prayers in the presence of men was temporary. The Bible does not indicate that we are to always associate such prayers with the role of the prophetess. Women prophesying was the exception to the general rule, but her praying was not exceptional.

Perhaps an observation is in order concerning I Corinthians 11:16. We have been quoting from the New International Version, which is essentially the same as the Revised Standard Version, which says, "If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God." The King James and American Standard Versions say, ". . . we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." Some have wondered about this difference in wording. Is Paul trying to say that the church has *no other* custom, or *no such* custom as that just described in the preceding verses? It would seem to make a difference which he meant. One thing is quite evident, and that is, that Paul would not go to great lengths in describing a dress code for both the prophet and the prophetess, and then say they did not have to pay any attention to it if anyone objected. Whether we say that the church had *no other* custom or *no such* custom depends on what you mean by *custom*. If you are applying it to the dress code mentioned in verses 4 through 6, and verses 13 through 15, then Paul is saying the church had *no other* custom than this; that is, that the man must not pray or prophesy with long hair or with his head covered, and that the woman who pro-

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phesied had to do so with her head covered and with longer hair. However, if by *custom* you mean that which the contentious man was advocating, that is, that it would be proper for the man to prophesy with his head covered and with long hair, and that the woman did not have to prophesy with her head covered, or with long hair, then you would say that the church had *no such* custom as that. Adam Clarke's comments on verse 16, found in Volume VI of his commentary, pages 253-254, are worthy of notice. "If any person *sets himself up* as a wrangler—*puts himself forward* as a defender of such points, *that a woman may pray or teach with her head uncovered*, and that *a man may*, without reproach, *have long hair*; let him know that we have no such custom as either, nor are they sanctioned by any of the Churches of God, whether among the *Jews* or the *Gentiles*."

Paul Prays with Some Disciples, Their Wives, and Children, Acts 21:5

While on their third missionary journey, Paul and his company landed at Tyre so the ship could unload its cargo. They remained there seven days after finding some disciples. Then we read in verse 5, "And when he had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed." The *we* who knelt and prayed on this occasion included more than just Paul and his company; it included the disciples of Tyre, their wives, and children. We know this to be true, not only because of verse 5, but also because of verse

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6, which says, "And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again." The *we* under consideration were those who took their leave one of another.

This is just another example of the many situations whereby it is appropriate to engage in group prayer. Who led whom in this prayer? I don't know, and neither does anyone else. Perhaps it was a silent prayer. Maybe it was a chain prayer, with each expressing his concern for the other at what must have been a touching farewell scene. This is the kind of love and concern our young people have for one another after they have worked hard together in a campaign. On the eve of their departure it is not uncommon for them to come together to praise God for the way He blessed their lives that week, and to pray for one another. You see, they are genuinely concerned about each other, and have learned to love and appreciate one another for their work's sake. Would to God we had more such manifestations of this kind of love among our older members.

The Church Prayed for Peter, Acts 12:5,12

When Peter had been placed in prison by Herod we find the church praying for him. Verse 5 says, "Peter was therefore kept in prison: but prayer was made for him by the church unto God." After the Lord delivered him we find him going to the house of Mary, for we read in verse 12, ". . . he came to the house of Mary the mother of John . . . where many were gathered together praying." Again, we don't know the details surrounding this prayer for Peter, but whatever details

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you come up with, be sure the passage clearly spells them out. If you can't do that, then maybe you should consider the possibility that the Lord did not consider such details to be of grave importance—as long as the women did not domineer over the men. It takes more than participation in a group prayer to do that.

Some have assumed that only the men “led” in this prayer, and that the women could have been praying *silently*. Perhaps, but how do we know? Some have suggested that when one man leads the prayer, that it can be properly said that “they prayed.” That is correct, but is that the only way it could have been done? Since verse 16 says “they” opened the door, some have wondered if we would contend that each took turn opening the door. No, but neither would I rule out the possibility that more than one person had a hand in opening the door, one of which was very possibly a *damsel named Rhoda* (verse 13). Will the objector allow for that possibility?

There is one more example of a woman praying in the presence of a man, but we will devote the whole of Chapter V to its discussion. It has to do with Hannah's prayer we read about in I Samuel 1:9-18.

On the following page we have formulated a number of questions which are designed to help you in deciding what the will of the Lord is in this matter. If you will apply these questions to each example of prayer you can find in the Bible, it will help you to appreciate where God has legislated and where He has not. Start by applying them to the eight passages we have discussed in this chapter.

Questions to Consider When Analyzing Examples of Prayer

	Yes	No	Insuf. Infor.
1. Does it say who spoke this prayer?	_____	_____	_____
2. Does it say how this prayer was conducted?	_____	_____	_____
Such as,			
a. Was it one person addressing God?	_____	_____	_____
b. Was it a silent prayer?	_____	_____	_____
c. Was it an audible prayer?	_____	_____	_____
d. Was it a chain prayer?	_____	_____	_____
e. Was it spoken in unison by several?	_____	_____	_____
f. Did one person speak it, with others repeating it aloud?	_____	_____	_____
g. Was it totally a silent prayer?	_____	_____	_____
3. Does it include the idea of women praying audibly?	_____	_____	_____
4. Does it exclude the idea of women praying audibly?	_____	_____	_____
5. Is it neutral concerning women praying audibly?	_____	_____	_____
6. Does it say that any men were present?	_____	_____	_____
7. Does it say that no men were present?	_____	_____	_____
8. Would you allow for the possibility that both men and women were present?	_____	_____	_____
9. Would you allow for the possibility that a woman spoke audibly in this prayer?	_____	_____	_____

CHAPTER V

HANNAH'S "SILENT" PRAYER

In our anxiety to prove a point we often get more out of a passage than the author put into it. How many times have you heard brethren use Hannah's "silent" prayer, in I Samuel 1:11, as proof that women's prayers must always be silent when they are in the presence of men? This is an unfortunate conclusion, especially since the very next chapter records another one of Hannah's prayers, which was spoken in the presence of Eli the priest and Elkanah her husband. But, let's take another look at her so-called "silent" prayer in Chapter 1.

Let's establish beyond any doubt that she was in the presence of at least one man when she started praying and weeping bitterly. Verses 9, 10, and 26 prove this to be true. Several months after the event of this prayer she recalls it to Eli, and in verse 26 she said to him, ". . . Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD." Verse 11 tells us that she ". . . vowed a vow and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thy maidservant, and remember me, and not forget thy maidservant, but wilt give thy maidservant a son, then will I give him unto the LORD all

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the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head." Up to this point there is nothing to indicate that she was either praying or weeping silently, since the record says she vowed a vow and *said*; and, what she said is quoted for us in verse 11. It is after this point that Eli observed her speaking in her heart, with only her lips moving, and her voice not being heard. Also, it is significant that the rest of her prayer is not quoted, which would indicate that it was only the latter part of her prayer which was not heard. However, if Eli heard none of this prayer, even the part quoted in verse 11, then how did he know she was asking God for something? At this point Hannah had not told him the nature of her prayer. It could have been a prayer of praise, or of thanksgiving, as far as Eli would know, unless he heard her petitioning the Lord for something. But verse 17 says that he knew she had been asking the Lord for something, for we read, "Then Eli answered, 'Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your *petition* which you have made to him.'"

May we not conclude that Hannah was not acting strangely in the first part of her prayer when she was asking for a son? She was not even showing any lack of subjection to Eli by praying in his presence. But, when her prayer ceased to be heard, and when she continued it by speaking in her heart, moving only her lips, then it was that Eli thought she was drunk. Let's look closely now—when the quoted part of her prayer was ended, the record then said, "As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard . . ." When did Eli notice that she was moving only her lips and that her voice was not being heard? The

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Bible says he noticed these things "as she *continued praying*," and not when she "*began praying*." There is a difference between "beginning" something and "continuing" it. Yet, in spite of this plain language, some would take the silent part of Hannah's prayer and forever bind it on God's women when they are in the presence of men.

We are not taking the position that Hannah was conducting some kind of worship service, or that she called this small group to order by leading a prayer for them. Yet, we cannot overlook the fact that she was pouring out her heart to God in the presence of man. Brethren, this is a Bible example of God's woman being in subjection to man, even though she *said* a prayer in his presence. This is the same kind of subjection Paul was talking about in I Corinthians 14:34 when he said that women were to be in subjection, ". . . as also saith the law."

CHAPTER VI

The Role of Examples In Establishing Authority

The question of whether or not New Testament examples are binding on us today has intrigued me for some time. Are some of them binding? Are all of them binding? If some are and some are not, how do we determine which ones are? This is not an easy task. Obviously, some examples must be binding because we are told to follow the examples of Christ and Paul, according to I Peter 2:21 and I Corinthians 11:1. But, what kinds of things are we to follow them in? The early church gave us many examples, some of which we follow, and some we do not. How can we clearly determine whether an example is illustrating something we must follow, or whether it is only illustrating something that is optional and incidental? Surely, common sense and logic must play a part, but what seems logical to some would seem illogical to others. When we insist that man must follow the example of another, it should be in matters sufficiently important to warrant such devotion.

We need to be aware of where God has placed the emphasis throughout his dealings with man. It has always been important to him that his preachers of righteousness carry the good news to the world, and we are no exception to that rule.

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However, there is no reason to believe that God expects each of us to travel by boat from Seleucia to Cyprus to preach simply because Paul and his group did so. It is obvious that God has not made our following Paul in this example a condition of our salvation. Yet, the carrying of the gospel to others he *has* made a condition of our salvation.

We also know that Christ is to be our example. But, does this mean we are to follow every example of His short of His miracles, in order to be pleasing to God? It should be obvious by now that such is not the case. Christ went to a place called Gethsemane to pray. Is our salvation dependent upon our literally following his example in this? Surely no one thinks we must literally go to Gethsemane for prayer at least once in our lifetime in order to entertain hopes of heaven, even though we have a Bible example of our saviour doing so. Christ also attended a marriage feast. Shall we conclude that we will miss heaven unless we attend at least one during our lifetime?

There is no command to observe the Lord's supper every first day of the week. Traditionally we have looked to Acts 20:7 as our authority for this practice. Yet, we should be careful about basing our authority on the example alone, because we have within this same verse another example which I doubt anyone would say we must keep today, and that is, that Paul ". . . continued his speech until midnight." But what makes the difference between these two examples? Why do we deem one important and the other not? We certainly cannot make this decision on the basis that God has said, "Observing the Lord's supper each first day of the week is important, but preaching until midnight is not important." We must make

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our decision on some other basis.

It is important that we notice the purpose clause in this verse— “. . . when the disciples came together *to break bread . . .*” Obviously this was not just a chance meeting of the disciples at which they just happened to break bread. The meeting had to be prearranged (that is, purposed beforehand), before it could be said that they came together for a certain purpose. So, we really have more than an example here—we have them meeting for a stated purpose, namely, that of obeying the command to “Do this in remembrance of me.” It seems to me, therefore, that the purpose clause of Acts 20:7 is strong enough to make this example assume the force of a command.

Even in the matters of church autonomy and appointment of elders we are not left simply to examples. When Peter, in I Peter 5:1-2, told the “. . . elders which are *among you*” to “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof . . .,” he surely limited the sphere of their authority as elders to “. . . the flock of God which is *among you . . .*” That sounds very much like local autonomy by command. Even though we don't have Paul's command to Titus to appoint elders in every city, we do have his letter to Titus reminding him that he had previously charged Titus with this responsibility (Titus 1:5). Therefore, we today can follow the example of Titus with the full assurance that he was acting on command.

I don't want to leave the impression that Bible examples are not important to us, but it seems to me that the example is worthy of following as a law when it illustrates some previous authority already spoken, and not simply because it is a re-

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corded example of something being done by God's people with his approval.

When the New Testament gives us an example of how the early Christians obeyed the commands of God, then we can be sure that it would be scriptural for us to do likewise under the same circumstances. Yet, if the *how* of doing it is obviously not the important thing with God, then there may be several other acceptable ways to carry out the command, even though only one or two are recorded for us. There are some *hows* which are important to the Lord. For example, we are commanded to worship God, and the *how* is very important. Yet, the *how* of getting to the assembly for worship is obviously unimportant. But the point is, we make such decisions by using common sense and logical deductions based on the context and on our knowledge of the kinds of things God has indicated to be important, and not simply because we have a recorded example of such in the Bible.

Now let's apply this principle to our subject at hand. What can we learn from the examples of prayer which we have been considering? Is each example binding to the degree that we cannot deviate from it under similar circumstances? I doubt that any would say so. Could we agree, though, that we would be allowed to duplicate the example, insofar as sufficient details are given, if we were in similar circumstances? Must we do nothing concerning prayer when we are trying to follow an example of one when many of the details are missing? Would we be allowed to supply some of the missing details, as long as those details are not condemned elsewhere in the Bible?

If one of our members is placed in prison could several of

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us meet at Mary's house and pray for him? How far could we follow the example in Acts 12:12? If we did no more than was recorded for us, who specifically would be praying, and how would they be doing it? Silently? Audibly? You see, it's rather difficult to answer these kinds of questions from the example because many of the details are missing. If I should say that everyone present, both men and women, could engage in such a prayer in an audible manner, some would be quick to say, "Not so! Where do you get your authority to do it like that?" Yet, when the objector says it could be done by the men "leading" the prayers, and the women following silently, I could ask him the same question he asked me, "Where do you get your authority to do it like that?" If he says I Timothy 2:8 is his authority, then we would have to remind him that the passage says nothing about "audible prayer." We could just as appropriately look to Luke 18:1, which says, "And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray . . ." This was said concerning His disciples, and surely all will agree that the principle is general in its application; even our women can obey it.

When the Scriptures tell us that the disciples continued steadfastly in prayer, and then we try to imitate them in this example, exactly how will we go about it? It will become much easier when we stop trying to regulate woman's prayer life by a misapplication of I Timothy 2:8.

CHAPTER VII

COMMANDS TO PRAY

We rely heavily upon the commands of the Lord to furnish us with authority to do what is pleasing in His sight. We also try diligently not to go beyond what is written. For some reason, though, it seems that many of us cannot refrain from requiring *specific* instruction in carrying out *general* commands. That, within itself, is going beyond what is written. Most of the commands to pray, found in the New Testament, are of such general nature that it would be impossible to obey them if we waited until we found the specifics. Peter said, in I Peter 3:12, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers . . ." Yet, if God's people waited until He spelled out the details concerning each prayer—such things as whether the prayer is to be silent or audible; whether it is to be spoken by *men only* if women are present; or, whether it is to be a chain prayer—then most prayers would never be prayed. Yet, we find more than thirty commands in the New Testament for Christians to pray.

Jesus said, ". . . pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). He didn't say whether this was to be done in private, or in the presence of the persecutor—whether it was to be silent or audible—or,

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whether *men only* were to lead such a prayer if in a mixed audience. Therefore, in the absence of any specific way of accomplishing this, we conclude that any method we use (which does not violate some other Scripture) is acceptable. When Stephen was being stoned to death by his persecutors, the Bible says, “. . . he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge . . .” (Acts 7:60). If that had been a woman being stoned, could she have cried with a loud voice (in the presence of her persecutors), “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”? I believe she could have done so without violating the principle of subjection. It would not be as though she were calling that group to attention by leading them in prayer, and no one would think that she was conducting a worship service. She would have simply been pouring out her heart to God in the presence of others, some of which were men, according to verse 2 of Acts 7.

Paul told husbands and wives in Corinth to “Deprive ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer . . .” (I Corinthians 7:5). Does anyone really believe that this wife’s soul stood in jeopardy if she obeyed this command by praying for her husband in such a way that he heard her? Yet, if I Timothy 2:8 teaches that only men are to speak audible prayers when women are also present, then such is the conclusion we would be forced to accept. Who can believe it?

In James’ 5:16 we find a very interesting command. “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another . . .” Is the woman allowed to confess her faults (audibly) in the presence of men? Surely she is! Is this a violation of I Timothy 2:8-12? Surely not! Yet, the position of

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some is that she may confess her faults *to men*, in the presence of men, but that it would be wrong for her to confess her faults *to God*, in the presence of men. Can we believe it?

The following chart has been prepared to help you determine how specific the Lord is in His commands to pray. If you will answer each of these questions relative to the Scriptures listed below, you may be surprised to learn how flexible they are. (Matthew 5:44; 6:7; 9:38; 21:13, 21:22; 24:20; 26:41; Luke 18:1; 21:36; Romans 12:12; 15:30; I Corinthians 7:5; 11:5; 11:13; 11:16, 14:15; 14:17; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2; I Thessalonians 5:17; 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; I Timothy 2:1,2; 2:8; 4:5; 5:5; Hebrews 4:16; 13:18; I Peter 3:7 and 3:12).

	Yes	No	Insuf. Infor.
1. Does this command include women?	_____	_____	_____
2. Does this command say that women are to be silent when they pray if any men are present?	_____	_____	_____
3. Does this command allow that it may be done silently?	_____	_____	_____
4. Does this command allow that it may be done audibly?	_____	_____	_____
5. Does this command demand that it be a silent prayer?	_____	_____	_____
6. Does this command demand that it be an audible prayer?	_____	_____	_____
7. Does this command say that <i>men only</i> are to pray aloud under the circumstance mentioned in the command?	_____	_____	_____

CHAPTER VIII

SHALL WE KILL THE DEVOTIONAL?

One of the charges often brought against having youth devotionals is that they have a tendency to encourage the sensation-seeker. Some think they produce too much emotionalism in the participants. Let's get the true picture of a typical youth devotional. The setting is likely to be the living room in one of the member's home, where the participants are sitting in most every allowable position around the room—some in chairs, some on the floor, while others may be standing. In this somewhat casual setting, with perhaps the lights dimmed, they will sing spiritual songs, study the Scriptures, and engage in chain prayer.

It is human nature to be skeptical of things which we know very little about. When we hear of improprieties that may have developed at some youth devotional, or within some adult prayer group, our first impulse may be to get rid of the evil by removing the opportunity. This may not be a bad philosophy if we are talking about frivolous occasions which could be abandoned without loss. However, when we are considering religious devotionals, Bible study periods, and prayer sessions, we are talking about things the Lord provided for our edification. Therefore, if there are any misdeeds upon

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these occasions, let's deal with the specific problems, but let's not kill the devotional. Can you imagine Peter or Jude telling the early disciples that they should stop having their love feasts simply because some people were attending for the wrong purpose? See 2 Peter 2:12-14 and Jude 12. Also, according to John 6:26, Jesus knew some people followed him for the loaves, but he did not tell his disciples to stop feeding them. If the skeptical would become more involved they would have less occasion to the suspicious.

Brethren, we need to stop viewing this matter as though we were granting the young people some special indulgence, or appeasing them by "letting" the girls participate with the boys in chain prayer. I am sure there will be times when this liberty will be abused by some of the more aggressive girls, but that is no reason to remove a valuable tool of spiritual growth and development. There are also some women who get rather aggressive in our Bible classes. Shall we remove the privilege just because some abuse it? Surely not. It is the responsibility of the men in charge to see that such is kept to a minimum.

Some have gotten the idea that we are letting the young people run the church today, and that we are too concerned with satisfying their whims and desires. This need not be true. It is true that we have shifted some of the emphasis to take care of their neglected spiritual needs. But, unfortunately, some have interpreted this to mean that we now have a "youth church," with all the evil stigmas usually associated with such. It is true that we are now encouraging them to spend more time together—doing such things as studying the Bible, singing praises to their Lord, praying together, walking

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the streets together looking for any who will listen to the simple story of Jesus, preparing themselves to carry the gospel to all people, visiting the shut-ins, mowing the laws of some of the elderly, and going from house to house singing the gospel to those who are bedridden. Yet, some are ready to see only the "bad" that may come from such activities. If, while talking to others about the gospel, some of these young people encounter a doctrine which they do not understand, or if in some other way their faith is challenged to the degree that they want to talk about it, then some will immediately get on their soap boxes and start campaigning against sending them on such campaigns. Such encounters only further emphasize the fact that we need to prepare our young people more thoroughly. They have a great amount of energy which they are willing to use in the Master's service. Let the older ones among us give them the training and direction they need, but let's never be guilty of quenching the fire of their zeal and enthusiasm for carrying the gospel to the lost.

The Bible does not teach that all worship must be patterned after the custom of our regular worship. We don't have many pictures of how worship was conducted in the early church. It may have been more on the order of our youth devotionals, with little emphasis on formality. When the whole church came together during the days of the gift of tongues Paul gave them some instruction about how to order their worship, according to I Corinthians 14:23-40. They were not to all speak at the same time. Each one had a hymn, or a doctrine, or a tongue, or a revelation, or an interpretation, but in all this they were admonished to "Let all things be done unto edifying" (verse 26). Paul allowed for the possibility of an un-

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learned person coming into that assembly and being taught sufficiently that he would fall down on his face and worship God. Even if we disregard the miraculous associated with such a worship, it would still be considered "way out" according to our standards and customs today. But who will say it was an unscriptural worship? Therefore, let's not misjudge our young people simply because they want to worship God on some occasions with less formality than they are accustomed to at our regular worship periods. Diversity need not imply digression.

CHAPTER IX

LIGHTS OUT!

Many times the lights are dimmed during the prayer part of the devotional. This has given occasion for some criticism among those who are of a suspicious nature. They immediately see satan operating in the darkness in opposition to God's people who stand in the light.

We need to realize that in such gatherings there will be people present who have not been accustomed to family devotionals in the home. They have had little or no experience praying in the presence of others. We have learned that there is less embarrassment for those who are a little shy in wording a prayer in the presence of others if the lights are dimmed. This helps them overcome the feeling of being in the spotlight. We should never do it with the thought of creating a mystical atmosphere whereby some might get the idea that they can feel the presence of the Spirit to a greater degree.

Some have wondered if we thought that turning out the lights brought us closer to God, and if so, perhaps Romans 10:17 should read, "Faith cometh by hearing the word of God and turning out the lights." I have never thought that turning out the lights brought me any closer to God; however, there are things and circumstances which do tend to make us

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more keenly aware of his presence. For example, when we sing certain songs I am made to feel a closeness that does not exist all the time. Yet, I would never have thought about paraphrasing Romans 10:17 to read, "Faith cometh by hearing the word of God and singing *Amazing Grace*." Some seem to have this feeling of closeness to God emphasized when they view the handiwork of God, whether it be the grandeur of his mountains, or the vastness of the firmament above. Perhaps in this frame of reference I can appreciate how the darkness could cause some to feel a closeness to God which they do not normally experience. But, there need not be anything mystical or supernatural about it. It is still true that the Holy Spirit converts the sinner and instructs the saint through his word.

CHAPTER X

BENEFITS OF MIXED PRAYER

If there ever was a time when the church needed all the strength and power at its disposal, it is now. If there ever was a time when the church needed its members to share a feeling of closeness and understanding, it is now. Brethren, these are the kinds of benefits to be derived from the type prayers we have been considering in this study. We are not saying that our private prayers do not reach the throne of God, or that they do not accomplish what the Lord said they would accomplish according to Matthew 6:6, "When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." There very definitely is a time for private prayer of this nature. But there is also a time for the other kind. Don't forget the edifying nature of the prayer mentioned in I Corinthians 14:15-17. Not only was its purpose to give thanks to God, but to edify the audience as well. Certainly we don't want to be guilty of praying to be seen of men, but let's not shy away from the group prayers just because someone may misjudge our motives. Even though our individual private prayers accomplish their intended purpose, yet they do not carry some of the additional "side" benefits associated with

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group prayers. A private prayer can only edify self, while prayers spoken in groups can edify many.

Young people, as well as the older members, need to be able to express themselves in a variety of ways that may be different from the routine of the general assembly worship on Sundays. The family devotional is one way to achieve this needed diversity of expression. There they can feel free to join other members of the family in song, Bible study, and prayer, that is, if they have been brought up in a praying home. But what about those who are not so fortunate? Who will teach them to pray? Where will they get the needed experience in expressing their hearts' desires to God if not allowed to do so at some informal gathering of their peers? If you want to dampen the enthusiasm of a group of young Christians regarding their devotionals, then simply give them a steady diet of the same type worship to which they are accustomed on Sundays. I am not making light of our Sunday worship periods, but I am saying that we should not be too surprised at their lack of interest in attending a devotional on Sunday night, after the regular worship hour, if that devotional is patterned after the two preceding worship periods of the day. However, if you want to increase their enthusiasm, strengthen their faith in God and in each other, help them to mature spiritually, cause them to love one another more, help them to share each other's burdens, cause them to better appreciate their parents, and bring them closer together in a harmonious group, then by all means encourage them to share their feelings about one another in prayer.

If any of you have teen-age daughters, and have never heard them pour out their heart's desire to God at a youth

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devotional, then brother, you have missed a most touching experience. If you are a smoking father, her prayer might go something like this: "Dear Father in heaven, I'm worried about my daddy. I'm afraid his cigarettes will cause him to miss heaven. Please, Father, help him to overcome that habit. He smells so bad I just can't stand to get very close to him, and I don't know how mother puts up with his kisses. Please dear Lord, I don't want him to miss heaven." When they are concerned about one of their group who is not yet a Christian you might hear something like this: "Dear God, I want you to know how concerned I am about Ted. I pray that he will not wait too long to obey your Son. Please, dear Lord, help him to see how important this matter is. We all love him so much." I realize that the religion of Jesus Christ is not primarily based on emotionalism, but there is a place in it for the kind of emotion that is expressed in the earnest prayers of our children.

Instead of picking the practice to pieces, why don't we look for some of its good points? What other benefits may we expect from the practice? (1) We can understand and appreciate each other better if we know what the other is praying about. (2) Experience tells us that we may expect to see a great amount of spiritual growth as a result of the practice. (3) We are strengthened when we hear someone pray specifically for us, including the women. (4) We will strive harder to do what is right if we know others are praying for us. (5) Greater peace and harmony will result between brethren when we pray for one another at such gatherings. It is hard to stay mad at someone who is praying for you. (6) We will be obeying James 5:16 if we confess our faults to each other and ". . . pray one for

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another . . . ,” even in a mixed group. (7) If we encourage the practice in the devotionals it will overflow into their home life and will tend to stay with them as they establish their own homes. When you increase a Christian’s prayer life you have done him a real service. God bless our faithful youth ministers who are working hard to achieve this goal. They are having to overcome some strong traditional barriers in many places. We need to hold up their hands in this good work, now that we know there is no violation of I Timothy 2:8-12.

When the family devotionals are conducted at home, some men think the girls and mother should remain silent at prayer time. They believe it is proper for the whole family to study together, and for the men and boys to express audible prayers in the presence of the whole family, but that the father and Christian brothers must leave the room when the time comes for the girls to engage in prayer. Lord, help us! If there is anything this country needs, it is a good dose of praying mothers. But, what are the young girls to do who no longer have a mother to help them with their prayers? You dads had better be right there with them, not only praying in their presence, but also listening to them as they stumble through their prayers. And don’t wait until they no longer have a mother. Get in there now and share with them and God the innermost thoughts of your heart, and don’t be ashamed to let them hear you.

Sometimes I wonder if we don’t have our sense of values mixed up. There are those in the church who would let their daughters dance with the boys, swim with the boys, and play with the boys, who would not think of letting them pray with the boys. I realize we cannot justify the dancing, or the

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swimming while dressed immodestly, but I am trying to get you to see that some would encourage those things which have a tendency to destroy spiritual character, while discouraging that which would build them up spiritually. Of course, we must prove *all* things, and hold fast to that which is good (I Thessalonians 5:21). But it has been sufficiently proved that joint participation in prayer by girls and boys stands on firm ground.

Jesus said we could know a tree by its fruits, and that a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit, and that a good tree brings forth good fruit (Matthew 7:15-20). He further states that a corrupt tree *cannot* bring forth good fruit. But what are the fruits of mixed prayer? Paul said the fruit of the Spirit is, “. . . love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23). We may, with all confidence, affirm that the fruit of mixed prayer includes every one of these things. If you have ever been involved in such, you will immediately recognize that it does create more love for one another; that it brings about joy; that it fosters peace between the participants; that it aids in developing long-suffering and gentleness; that much good results from it; that it increases one’s faith; and, that it makes one more meek and temperate. Brother, when you can get this kind of fruit from a practice, you had better encourage it. Paul said, “. . . against such there is no law.” If there is no law against reaping this kind of fruit, then it necessarily follows that there is no law against doing that which produces such fruit. Remember, Jesus said a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit; but the fruit we have examined is good. Therefore, the tree that produced it is not corrupt.

CHAPTER XI

“LEADING” IN PRAYER

When we say that a woman is not to “lead” a man in prayer, or that she is not to “lead” prayer in a mixed audience, I suspect that we are placing too much emphasis on the word “lead.” We have coined an *unscriptural* phrase to describe a *scriptural* act. To most of us the expression “lead in prayer” conveys the idea of *leadership* in the sense of being in authority over one. It usually depicts one standing before an assembly, addressing God for the group. Of course, it can properly carry that idea if that is what is taking place. But the point we need to see is that every prayer situation is not like that. When I say we have coined an unscriptural phrase, I don’t mean it is wrong to use the expression “lead in prayer,” but I mean we don’t find that expression used by the early church, yet, we use it, and many get the idea that it always carries with it the idea of exercising authority over the group.

In one sense when a woman reads from the Bible in a mixed Bible class, or when she makes comments about the lesson, she is *leading* the thoughts of the whole class. Yet, who would say she is exercising any forbidden leadership over the man? How do we come to the conclusion that she is exercising a forbidden leadership when she prays in this type situation,

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but that she is not exercising a forbidden leadership when she reads the Scriptures aloud, or when she comments about the lesson? Is it because we don't usually associate the word "lead" with reading, or with commenting? Yet, the leading is just as real in the latter as in the case of prayer.

Why doesn't someone start a campaign against our women asking questions at the devotionals, or in any other type Bible class? Those of you who think they violate I Corinthians 14:34,35 when they pray aloud in the presence of the men must of necessity also forbid them to speak or ask questions in that same assembly. Actually, you would have a more plausible argument if you did that, because these verses do plainly say, "Let your women keep silence . . . for it is not permitted unto them to speak . . . if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home . . ." Of course, you would be misapplying the passage if you used it that way, but so are you when you use it to forbid them speaking their prayers in that same type assembly.

The question often arises concerning the propriety of women praying audibly in the regular general assemblies, such as those on Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. Before we answer that question let's make some observations about worship.

Looking at the broad spectrum of worship, it is sometimes conducted with a considerable degree of formality (such as most of our Sunday and Wednesday periods of worship), while at other times it is on a much less formal basis (such as our family devotionals). We need to understand that the degree of formality used is of human choice—the Bible does

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not concern itself with such details. We read in the New Testament what type activities the early church engaged in when they assembled, but we don't know just how formal it was. This is not to say there was no regulation involved, for we know there was. In their Sunday assemblies we know for certain that they partook of the Lord's supper, which involved some prayer in giving thanks, and they laid by in store. This would account for three of the often mentioned five items of worship. We also know that Paul preached to those who had gathered on the first day of the week to break bread. So, that accounts for four items of worship. The only one that is not mentioned specifically as having taken place on Sunday is singing. However, I'm certainly willing to agree that they no doubt engaged in song upon these occasions. At least they had to be assembled to carry out the command to speak to one another in songs, and we know they were assembled on this day.

What do we know about the order of their worship? Very little. When observing the Lord's supper it is evident that they partook of the bread before partaking of the fruit of the vine (I Corinthians 11:23-25). We don't know whether they had someone to pass the bread and fruit of the vine to each of them, as is our custom today, or whether they individually partook from a common table. I think we would all agree that such details should not become matters of faith with us. Expediency would seem to dictate the desired course of action. We know not to what degree the women may have participated in *dividing it among themselves* (Luke 22:17), but I am confident they did not put themselves forward in such a way as to suggest that they were usurping man's authority in con-

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ducting a worshipping assembly. As in group prayer, we need to differentiate between *leaders* and *joint* participators. It is one thing for a man to stand before the general assembly and speak to God on behalf of all others present, but it could be quite another thing when Christians meet in small groups to share ideas and mutually edify each other, and each speak to God for himself (or herself), without suggesting that each is taking the leading role in conducting that period of *joint participation*.

Many people object to the girls expressing themselves in a chain prayer in the mixed devotional type assembly because they believe such action places them in a position of *leadership* over the group. We say we don't want women in positions of leadership over men (and rightly so), yet, when we try to apply this principle I fear we are not consistent in our use of the word "leadership." We say she is not in a position of leadership when she asks or answers questions in the devotional, or when she reads the Scriptures aloud in relation to the lesson. Yet, when she simply utters a prayer to God, from the same insignificant position she occupied when she read the Scriptures and discussed the lesson, some are ready to call that "leadership," even though there is no hint of self-assertion, or occupying the leading role, or acting as intercessor or mediator for the group. She is simply speaking *her* prayer to *her* God, and she is no more occupying the forbidden leading role over man than when she speaks concerning the lesson, or when she reads Scriptures relative to the discussion. Her position in this type assembly suggests anything but pre-eminence. What is there about this kind of prayer that makes it so different (regarding the principle of subjection)

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from the Bible class discussion where she is encouraged to jointly participate? Has God said, “Woman, you may speak in man’s presence about my word, you may read my word in his presence, yea, you may even read the prayers contained in my word in his presence, but, don’t you dare speak your own prayer to me in his presence”? I believe we are drawing some rather fine lines when we admit that woman may *sing* a prayer to God in a class composed of men and women, but that she sins if she *says* that same prayer to God in that same class. Where did our consistency go? “But,” someone is sure to say, “the Lord commands her to sing.” Yes, and that same Lord commands her to pray. “But,” you say, “she can obey the command to pray in this situation by praying silently.” Perhaps, but who says it must be done that way? And if that be the case, let’s insist that she also sing silently. It is possible, you know, for one to sing silently in his heart. But some will say, “Yes, but Paul said we are to *speak* to one another in song,” to which I agree, but Jesus also said when you pray, that you are to *say*, “Our Father which art in heaven . . .” (Luke 11:2). This is a general command to *say* a prayer, and whatever it means to the man, it means the same to the woman. The only restrictions placed upon her obeying this command must be found within the context of the principles of subjection and quietness which we have been considering. Any action on her part that would suggest that she occupies the same role as man in exercising authority over the assembly should be avoided. Most of our general assemblies are conducted in such a way that decorum, if nothing else, would dictate that woman should not parade herself before the group in such a way that would suggest pre-eminence. How-

ever, that is not to say that every general assembly worship must be conducted in the same manner. The size of the group will often determine which is the expedient way to conduct the worship. If the whole church in a particular location consists of only a dozen members, then the worship could be conducted one way, whereas, if the assembly was made up of several hundred, then another more expedient way might be chosen. A chain prayer may be perfectly in order within the smaller group, which would not be expedient among the larger group. All could participate in the former, but such would be much too cumbersome in the latter. In the case of the smaller church, it may be meeting in some member's home where the degree of formality employed could be considerably less than that of the larger group—but in neither case is the woman to assert herself in such a way as to be guilty of exercising dominion over man, or of leaving her quiet role of subjection. That's the scope of the prohibition in this matter. However, her joint participation in the chain prayer of the smaller group, or her participation in a responsive prayer in the larger group, suggests neither of these violations.

How far is the woman to go in expressing her worship to God in the presence of man? She is to carry out every command of the Lord involving worship that is generally expected of every Christian, but in doing this she is not to teach nor to exercise authority over the man in any way. When she becomes domineering in her worship, she has gone too far. When she seeks to impose her will over his, she has gone too far. When she seeks the office of those who are to be in authority over God's people, she has gone too far.

CHAPTER XII

QUESTIONS FOR THE OBJECTOR

Any serious student of the Bible will raise questions about the subject he is investigating. Such questions help him to reach a proper understanding. The following questions are asked for this very purpose. I believe we must deal with them if we are to, in all good conscience, live with our decisions in this matter.

1. If woman may participate with men in discussing the Bible in a class situation without being guilty of sin, why may she not also participate with them in a chain prayer, *in the same type situation*, without being guilty?

2. What Scripture has a woman violated when she speaks an audible prayer in the presence of men in a chain prayer at an informal gathering in my home?

3. If a man has sinned against a woman, and then repents and asks her to pray for him, could she obey James 5:16 by wording a prayer which could be heard in his presence? If not, why? (The verse says, “. . . pray one for another . . .”)

4. Do you believe a woman may obey the first part of James 5:16 (“Confess your faults one to another . . .”) by confessing her sins *to men*, in the presence of men, but that it would be a sin for her to confess her sins *to God* in the presence of men?

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5. What is there about prayer that makes it a sin for women to jointly participate in with men that would not also be true when she participates with him in discussing the Bible?

6. Can a woman teach a man in the public school class without violating any scriptural principle? If "no," then what Scripture has been violated?

7. Can a woman write an article for publication in a religious journal without violating any scriptural principle? If "no," what Scripture has been violated?

8. Can a woman write a prayer for publication in a religious journal without violating any scriptural principle? If not, what Scripture has been violated?

9. Does the Bible teach that only men are to speak audible prayers in mixed groups? If so, where is such taught?

10. If the Bible teaches that only men are to speak audible prayers in mixed groups, which method of teaching does it employ? (a) Direct command, (b) approved example, or (c) necessary inference?

11. Does a woman sin simply by speaking an audible prayer at home in the presence of her husband and her Christian teen-age sons and daughters?

12. Could she speak that same prayer if some of their Christian friends were present?

13. Could a Christian widow speak her prayer at home in the presence of her Christian sons and daughters?

14. If a woman has no children is she at liberty to speak her prayer at home in the presence of her husband?

15. Does the prohibition of I Timothy 2:11,12 apply only to religious assemblies?

16. Is it scriptural for women to jointly discuss the Bible with men in a class situation, that is being taught by a man, by asking and answering questions, and even by reading the Scriptures which pertain to the lesson? If so, which Scriptures teach such?

17. Does I Corinthians 11:16 refer to the general assembly of the saints, including both men and women?

18. Did the prophetess of I Corinthians 11 do any prophesying in the church?

19. Did the prophetess in I Corinthians 11 do any praying in the church? If so, do we know whether it was either audible or silent?

20. If you say that the prophetess of I Corinthians 11 neither prayed nor prophesied in the church, then what does verse 16 mean?

21. If the prophetess of I Corinthians 11 did pray and prophesy in the church, was she violating either I Corinthians 14:34,35, or I Timothy 2:8-12? Which?

22. Can a man obey I Timothy 2:8 when he is alone? If so, then a *mixed assembly* is not inherent in the verse.

23. Can a man obey I Timothy 2:8 by praying silently in the privacy of his own home? If so, then *audible prayer* is not inherent in the verse.

24. Can a woman receive instruction from I Timothy 2:1,2 to govern her in a part of her private prayer life? If so, then this chapter is not simply regulating prayer in a mixed assembly worship situation.

CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of any work of this nature should be to assist people in reaching whatever logical conclusions the facts warrant. Now that the evidence has been presented, where do we stand? Can we now intelligently answer the questions that have arisen concerning the girls praying audibly in the presence of the boys? Let's emphasize again that every question does not deserve an answer. Sometimes Jesus answered with silence. Man will often ask loaded questions. By this we mean that he is not really seeking truth, but he is trying to get his opponent to answer in a way that will gain the disapproval of the audience—thereby making the querist look good. He may be aware that God has not given *specific* instruction on the matter, but he will ask you for specific ways of doing that which is under consideration. Once you give him such a specific, then he will press for a Scripture which teaches that specific practice. Don't fall into that trap.

There are times when "I don't know" is a perfectly legitimate answer. Always be willing to study further, but don't give up the solid ground you have gained simply because you cannot answer all questions, either to your own satisfaction, or to that of others. Those who have done considerable study

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on a subject will naturally be able to raise difficult questions for the one who is not as well informed, but that doesn't mean his position is solid simply because he can raise difficult questions. Don't be intimidated by such questions—keep studying.

Our approach to the subject has been to point out the general rule of subjection that woman must respect, to give the examples where women prayed in the presence of men, and to point out the general guiding principles that must prevail. I do not claim to have the wisdom or ability to speak for the whole brotherhood in this matter. There are many things which each eldership must take into consideration when trying to give advice and set the example for their flocks. Consideration must be given to the general make-up of the congregation. If it is steeped in tradition against the practice, then one course of action may be indicated. On the other hand, if they are broad-minded enough to consider another point of view, without getting upset simply because they have not been accustomed to the practice, then a different course of action would be indicated. But in neither case should we become dictatorial in the matter. Paul said that the servant of the Lord “. . . must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves . . .” (2 Timothy 2:24,25).

We may need to do much teaching on the subject before many in the church will accept and appreciate our efforts to get the most out of the members' prayer life. There may be times when we should tread lightly until the people are prepared. But remember, Paul did not require the stronger Christian to forever give up his liberty to eat meats simply

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because some brethren objected. He did require that they be charitable, and that each accept the other (Romans 14:3). Although Paul respected the feelings of those who could not conscientiously eat meats, he still tried to help them overcome this weakness by continuing to teach that it was not wrong to eat such food (I Timothy 4:1-4). After considering the evidence, elders, preachers, and all other Christians must be prepared to weigh the calculated good expected to be accomplished by a given course of action, against the objections of the dissenter, and then proceed in full assurance that they are glorifying God by obeying His *general* commands in these *specific* ways.

Some of you will be challenged by those who will not accept the few Bible examples of women praying in the presence of men. They will try to make your position look unsound by reasoning that the Bible does not say that these women spoke *audible prayers*, even though the prayer is quoted for us in some cases. They will press for a New Testament example of a woman *leading* men in prayer. They will hit you hard with the idea that since the Bible does not say *audible* with reference to their prayers, then you are building your faith on an assumption. Don't let such charges shake your faith. Just kindly remind the objector that neither do we have a New Testament example of *men leading* a mixed group in prayer, and anyone who takes such a position has built his faith on an assumption. If he turns to I Corinthians 14:15 for his proof, where Paul said, "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also . . .," simply remind him that the "I" of verse 15 is broadened to include the "thou's" and "thy's" of verse 16, which reads, "Else, when

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thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at *thy* giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what *thou* sayest?" These "thou's" and "thy's" include everyone to whom this letter was addressed in verse 2 of Chapter 1, which says, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." If the women are excluded from the instructions found in I Corinthians 14:15, then they are excluded from singing also, because the latter part of the verse says, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."

Youth ministers, conduct your devotionals in such a way as to keep them above suspicion. Keep everything open and above board, and thus put to silence the objector, giving him no reason to speak evil of you. Take courage in Paul's admonition to the young preacher Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (I Timothy 4:12).

Young ladies, and older ones alike, accept the quieter role which God has made you for, and never be guilty of seeking the position of pre-eminence over man. Your quiet submissive role in life is too beautiful and too delicate to sacrifice on the altar of supremacy. God made you to be the perfect companion and helpmeet for your husband. He never did intend that you should rule over him. However, in your desire to be of the meek and quiet spirit, don't let the forces of negativism so invade your being that you fail to give him the encouragement and edification which you are so capable of providing.

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Don't let the smoke screens and scarecrows of sophistry frighten you into doing nothing. Study hard and be sure of your ground, then you will have nothing to fear from the opposition.

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