

Questions About Why Bible Said Women Should Not Speak in Church

By Pastor Ed Anderson

I believe God meant what he said in every part of the Bible since every writer was inspired by the Holy spirit. Why then did he say that women should not speak in church?

Answer:

That's a sincere and important question — one that has been wrestled with for centuries. Let's explore this topic **biblically, in context**, and **with care**, because it touches on deep convictions, church order, gender roles, and the nature of Scripture itself.

The Text You're Referring To

You're likely referencing this passage:

"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... for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."

— 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 (KJV)

This passage seems very clear at first glance. But let's dig deeper.

1. Context Matters: What Was Happening in Corinth?

The Corinthian church was **chaotic**, known for:

- Disorderly worship (1 Cor. 14)
- Speaking in tongues without interpretation
- People speaking over one another
- Gender tensions, class divisions, and spiritual pride

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to **restore order**, not to silence Spirit-led participation. In fact:

"God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

— 1 Corinthians 14:33

Right **before** the verse about women being silent, Paul is urging *everyone* to take turns speaking in an orderly way. So, the “silence” may be **contextual** — addressing disruption, not a blanket rule.

2. Paul Elsewhere Encourages Women to Speak

In the very same letter, Paul writes:

“Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head...”

— *1 Corinthians 11:5*

This shows that **women were speaking** in church — praying and prophesying — and Paul didn’t forbid it. Instead, he gave guidelines on *how* they should do it respectfully.

So which is it?

- 1 Corinthians 11 says **women can pray and prophesy**.
- 1 Corinthians 14 says **women must be silent**?

The only logical answer: **Paul was addressing different situations**. In chapter 11, he gives order for Spirit-led speech. In chapter 14, he corrects **disruptive or out-of-order speech**.

3. Possible Interpretations of “Keep Silent”

There are three main interpretations held by Bible-believing Christians:

A. Total Silence View (Complementarianism)

Some take it literally: women should not teach, preach, or lead in public church settings.

B. Contextual View (Egalitarianism)

This view says the command was about correcting *disorder* — not forbidding all female speech. Paul was silencing **a particular type of disruptive speaking** — likely women interrupting or challenging teaching inappropriately.

C. Quotation/Refutation View

Some scholars believe Paul is quoting a **common Corinthian belief** (v. 34–35) and then rebuking it in v. 36:

“What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?” (v. 36)

This would mean Paul is **challenging** their silencing of women — not endorsing it.

4. Scripture Is Inspired — and Interpreted by Scripture

You said something very important:

“I believe God meant what He said in every part of the Bible since every writer was inspired by the Holy Spirit.”

Yes — and that means **we must read all parts of Scripture in harmony**. If Paul said women can pray and prophesy, we must interpret the “silence” passage **through that lens** — not in contradiction to it.

5. Women in the Early Church Did Serve Publicly

Here are a few examples:

- **Deborah** — prophet and judge of Israel (Judges 4–5)
- **Huldah** — prophetess consulted by priests (2 Kings 22)
- **Mary Magdalene** — first to announce the resurrection (John 20)
- **Phoebe** — deacon/minister (Romans 16:1)
- **Priscilla** — taught Apollos alongside her husband (Acts 18:26)
- **Junia** — “outstanding among the apostles” (Romans 16:7)

These are not exceptions — they are **Spirit-empowered women** used by God.

6. Final Thought: Order, Not Oppression

Paul wasn’t trying to **silence women’s gifts**, but to **bring order to worship**. God has always used both men and women to proclaim His Word, and in the last days, He promises:

“Your sons and daughters shall prophesy.”

— *Joel 2:28 / Acts 2:17*

So the question is not *“Can women speak in church?”* — but *“Are they speaking under the leading of the Holy Spirit?”*

If yes, then **we must not quench the Spirit.**