

Interpretations and Applications of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

Margaret Mowczko (2012)¹

... the women should be silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but are to submit [or control] themselves, as the law also says. If they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home, since it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. [1 Corinthians 14:34-35 CSB](#)

A few New Testament passages are regarded as critical in the discussion on the roles of women in the church.² [1 Corinthians 14:34-35](#) is one of these passages.³ Throughout church history, many explanations have been offered by biblical scholars as to how these verses should be interpreted and applied. The purpose of this article is to present brief summaries of interpretations by a few well-known classical and contemporary scholars. This information may help us to determine what [1 Corinthians 14:34-35](#) means and how these verses can be applied in contemporary church life.

Women must be Completely Silent during Church Meetings

At first glance, [1 Corinthians 14:34-35](#) seems clear: women are not permitted to talk in congregational meetings and must be silent. This is the stance many have taken throughout much of the church's history.

From Tertullian⁴ to Thomas Aquinas⁵, commentators concluded that women could not even sing or pray audibly among men. Although the Reformers relaxed some of these restrictions, as late as the 1890s certain Presbyterians still forbade women's singing in the context of church worship. (Grenz 1995:121)

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² The Greek word *gunē* can mean "woman" or "wife." The precise meaning is usually determined by context.

³ Some believe the passage being discussed in this essay should begin half-way through verse 33. However, "... to begin a new paragraph at 33b would produce an awkward redundancy: 'As in all the churches of the saints, let the women be silent in the churches' . . ." Moreover, "Let the women . . ." is a typical Pauline start to a new paragraph (see [Eph. 5:22](#) and [Col. 3:18](#)). " (Belleville 2001:117)

⁴ For example, "It is not permitted to a woman to speak in the church; neither (is it permitted for her) to teach, nor to baptize, nor to offer, nor to claim to herself a lot in any manly function, not to speak (in any) sacerdotal office." Tertullian, *On the Veiling of Virgins*, Chapter 9.

⁵ For example, "Speech may be employed in two ways: in one way privately, to one or a few, in familiar conversation, and in this respect the grace of the word may be becoming to women. In another way, publicly, addressing oneself to the whole church, and this is not permitted to women." Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Question 177, Article 2.

Silence is called for three times in [1 Corinthians 14](#): in verses 28, 30 and 34.⁶ In [1 Corinthians 14:28](#) and [30](#), silence is called for in specific situations to regulate congregational contributions to church meetings. (The “silence” in verses 28 and 30 is not gender-specific.) It is likely the silence called for in verse 34 is also addressing a specific situation and is not meant to be a blanket statement to silence all women for all time in all church worship services.

In fact, Paul’s intention could not have been to silence women at all times during church meetings; in [1 Corinthians 11:5](#), Paul acknowledges that women prophesied and prayed aloud in church, and he doesn’t silence them.

Paul not only approved of praying and prophesying by women in the assembly but he encouraged it! Reading [1 Corinthians 11:10](#) with the literal, active voice (“has authority”) instead of the presumed, passive voice (“sign of authority”), Paul states that a woman has authority⁷ (has the right!) to pray and prophesy . . . (Hicks 1990)

If Paul condones verbal ministry from women in chapter 11, it is unlikely that he censures it in chapter 14. It is more likely Paul was prohibiting a certain form of speech from the women in 14:34-35. Several theologians have tried to identify the type of speech Paul was disallowing.

Women must not Engage in Idle Chatter in Church Meetings

John Chrysostom, archbishop of Constantinople between the years 398 and 405, refers to [1 Corinthians 14:34-35](#) in his [9th homily on First Timothy](#). His view was that some women were treating congregational meetings as an opportunity for socialising and recreation. He mentions that women chatted more during church gatherings than they did in the marketplace or at the public bath. Chrysostom wrote that it is this idle conversation that brings confusion into church meetings.⁸

Chrysostom, among others, believed the instructions in verses 34-35 were designed to prohibit nuisance chatter from the women. To support this understanding, some people have interpreted

⁶ The Greek word used for “keep silent” in [1 Corinthians 14:28](#), [30](#) & [34](#) is the verb *sigāō*. The NASB and NRSV have translated *sigāō* consistently as “keep silent” and “be silent” respectively in [1 Corinthians 14](#). The NIV 2011 has been inconsistent in its translation of *sigāō* with the result that it is not clear that Paul asks for silence from three different groups of people in the Corinthians church and not just disruptive women.

⁷ The Greek word *exousia*, usually translated as “authority” in [1 Corinthians 11:10](#), is a common word in the New Testament and can mean authority, right, freedom, licence, etc. According to Paul, women have the freedom, or the right, to pray and prophecy aloud in church meetings with their own authority (*exousia*) upon their own heads ([1 Cor. 11:10 NIV](#)).

⁸ While Chrysostom believed [1 Corinthians 14:34-35](#) was intended to silence idle chatter, he maintained that these verses are also prohibited women from speaking about spiritual things.

the Greek word *laleō*, used in both verses 34 and 35, to mean “chatter” or “babbling.” *Laleō*, however, is a common word in the New Testament and simply means “speak.” Moreover, in the immediate context of verses 34-35, Paul used the word *laleō* three times to refer to the speaking ministries of tongues and prophecy, and not to chatter ([1 Cor. 14:27-29](#)).

If, however, the intent of verses 34-35 was to silence women who were disrupting congregational meetings with inconsiderate chatter, these verses cannot be used to silence women who have a valid speaking ministry.⁹

Women must not Disrupt Church Meetings with Rudimentary Questions

[1 Corinthians 14:35](#) begins with, “But if they [the women] wish to learn (Greek: *mathein*) something ...” Craig Keener takes into consideration the culture of learning in the first century and proposes that the problem being addressed in [1 Corinthians 14:34-35](#) was women who were interrupting the flow of congregational meetings by asking too many rudimentary questions. He writes, “Throughout the first-century Mediterranean world, novices were expected to learn quietly, but more advanced students were expected to interrupt all kinds of public lectures with questions.” (Keener 2001:50) Keener suggests the Corinthian women may not have realised that interrupting the meetings with their basic questions was culturally inappropriate, even shameful.

According to Keener’s explanation, 14:34-35 was intended to silence ignorant questions posed by uneducated women. But today, in most churches in the western world, spontaneous questions from the congregation are dissuaded, and women are mostly well-educated, so if Keener’s explanation is correct, 14:34-35 has little application in contemporary church life.

It is difficult, however, to see how verses 36-37 follow on from the idea of ignorant, nuisance questions, unless the women were monopolising the meetings with their questions and were also behaving arrogantly. Verse 38, on the other hand, fits well with the idea of ignorant people with ignorant questions: “But if anyone ignores this [or, is ignorant]¹⁰, they themselves will be ignored” ([1 Cor. 14:38 NIV 2011](#)) Keener’s interpretation is plausible, especially as the idea of ignorance is emphasised in verse 38.

A popular view, somewhat similar to Keener’s explanation, is that men and women were segregated in the Corinthian church which met in a synagogue, and that women were calling out

⁹ *Contra* the explanation that 14:34-35 was designed to silence chatter from disorderly women, and similar views, Stephen B. Clark (1980) states, “All these views miss an important point: Paul instructs the women to be silent because they are women, not because they are disorderly.”

¹⁰ The Greek word *agnoeō* can mean “to be ignorant, not to understand; sin through ignorance.” (Perchbacher 1990:4)

questions to their husbands seated some distance away, thus disturbing the meeting. However, there is no historical or archaeological evidence that supports the idea that men and women were segregated in church or synagogue meetings at that time. Moreover, while the Corinthian church started in a synagogue ([Acts 18:4](#)), at the time of Paul's letter, the church probably met in homes (cf. [Acts 18:7](#)). (Keener 2004:161)

Women must not Evaluate Prophecy Audibly

1 Corinthians chapter 14 is largely advice concerned with the regulation of prophetic speech in church meetings. In 14:29 Paul wrote, "Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said." With this context in mind, Wayne Grudem proposes that Paul's intent in 14:34-35 is to silence women from evaluating prophecy.

On this view, Paul would be saying, "Let the others [that is the rest of the congregation] weigh what is said [by the prophets . . . but] the women should keep silence in the churches." In other words, women could not give spoken criticisms of the prophecies . . . (Grudem 1988:220-221) (His use of square brackets)

Grudem goes on to say that women may evaluate prophecy silently in their own minds, but cannot voice these evaluations audibly as this requires spiritual authority. He acknowledges that Paul allows women to pray, speak in tongues, and prophesy aloud in church meetings, yet Grudem maintains that women may not minister in any way that can be construed as exercising spiritual authority.¹¹

Prophecy is arguably an influential ministry that can carry a great deal of spiritual authority. Paul lists prophets and prophecy before teachers and teaching in his lists of ministers and ministries in [1 Corinthians 12:28](#) and [Ephesians 4:11](#) (cf. [Eph. 2:20a](#); [3:5b](#)). Wayne Grudem is well-known for espousing a hierarchical complementarian ideology regarding so-called gender roles.¹² He

¹¹ In accordance with his complementarian ideology, Grudem (1988:224) believes that in 14:34-35 "Paul is arguing from a larger conviction about an abiding distinction between the roles appropriate to males and those appropriate females in the Christian Church." To assist churches (which hold complementarian views) work out what ministries are "inappropriate" for women, Grudem (1995) has painstakingly listed 83 church ministries in, what he considers to be, decreasing order of spiritual authority. (These 83 ministries are categorised in three lists.) The idea is that a line is drawn somewhere in the lists and that women are excluded from the ministries higher up in the lists. Where exactly the line is to be drawn is arbitrary. [My article entitled *Wayne Grudem on What Women Should Do in Church* looks at these lists, [here](#).]

¹² Hierarchical complementarians believe God has ordained only men to be leaders and have spiritual authority, and conversely, that all women have been designed to be submissive and responsive to male-only leadership and authority. They prohibit women from leading and teaching groups that include men. It is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss the validity or veracity of complementarian beliefs. Other complementarians, including D.A. Carson, hold to similar interpretations of [1 Corinthians 14:34-35](#) as Grudem.

believes women are forbidden from ministering with spiritual authority. It seems he has manufactured the idea that the ministry of prophecy lacks spiritual authority simply because the scriptures show that prophecy is a ministry open to women.¹³

Grudem claims his interpretation of verses 34-35—that women cannot evaluate prophecy audibly—is consistent with the context of Chapter 14, but it is difficult to see how verse 36 fits (“did the word of God [first or originally] go forth from you ...?”). The subject shifts suddenly from instructions about women (in verses 34-35) to a reprimand to a group which, according to Greek grammar, includes men or consists only of men (in verse 36). (More on this below.) Grudem’s view is not as neat as he claims it to be.

Women must not ask Personal Questions of the Prophets

Ben Witherington takes into account the broader Corinthian culture in trying to determine the meaning of 14:34-35. Witherington believes it is likely the Christians in Corinth, especially those with pagan backgrounds, had incorporated inappropriate pagan worship practices into Christian worship. (Witherington 1995:274; cf. Keener 1992:78; Kroeger 1978)

Since the sixth century BC, Greece was famous for the oracle at Delphi. In the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, a prophetess called the Pythia¹⁴ would respond to questions asked from inquirers.¹⁵ In ancient times, people travelled great distances to ask the Pythia questions.¹⁶ With this in mind, Ben Witherington (1995:287) suggests the following context for 14:34-35.

It is very believable that these women [in the Corinthian church] assumed that Christian prophets or prophetesses functioned much like the oracle at Delphi, who only prophesied in response to questions, including questions about purely personal matters. Paul argues that Christian prophecy is different: Prophets and prophetesses speak in response to the prompting of

¹³ According to the Megillah (one of the tractates of the Talmud), seven prophetesses prophesied to Israel: [Sarah](#), [Miriam](#), [Deborah](#), Hannah, [Abigail](#), [Huldah](#), and [Esther](#). (See [Megillah 14a and 14b](#).) Anna and [Philip’s four daughters](#) are acknowledged as respected prophetesses in the New Testament.

¹⁴ In [Acts 16:16](#), the fortune-telling slave girl in Philippi is referred to, in the Greek, as having a “pythian spirit” (*pneuma pythōna*).

¹⁵ It is widely believed that the female Pythia sat on a three-legged stool that was positioned over noxious vapours which escaped through a fissure in the earth. The noxious vapours caused the Pythia to become delirious and speak gibberish. The gibberish was then interpreted by a male priest-prophet. Ben Witherington, however, relies on the scholarship of Joseph Fontenrose (1978:197) who claims “the Pythia experienced no frenzy that caused her to shout wild and unintelligible words; she spoke quite clearly and directly to the consultant without the need of the prophet’s mediation.”

¹⁶ By New Testament times, interest in the Delphic Oracle was declining.

the Holy Spirit, without any human priming of the pump. Paul then limits such questions to another location, namely home.

If Witherington's suggestion is correct, the women were mistaking the true function of prophets and were hampering the ministry of Christian prophecy by asking questions about personal, and possibly domestic and mundane, concerns that would not have been edifying for others.¹⁷ If Paul is silencing the women from asking personal questions of the prophets then, again, 14:34-35 cannot be used to silence gifted women with a valid speaking ministry.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is a Quotation

Most of the scholars mentioned so far have tried to determine the meaning of 14:34-35 by exploring the broader social context of the first-century Corinthian church, but others have focused solely on the text of 14:34-35 in trying to determine how to interpret and apply these verses.

First Corinthians was written in response to a verbal report from Chloe's people ([1 Cor. 1:11](#)) and in response to a letter Paul had received from the Corinthians asking his advice ([1 Cor. 7:1](#)).¹⁸ At times it is evident in his letter that Paul is quoting from the Corinthian's letter as he deals with its contents. Some of these quotations include, "It is not good for a man to touch a woman" ([1 Cor. 7:1](#)), "We all possess knowledge" ([1 Cor. 8:1](#)), "There is no resurrection" and "Christ has not been raised" ([1 Cor. 15:12, 14](#)). Some scholars believe [1 Corinthians 14:34-35](#) may also be a quotation. This would account for the way it does not seem to fit with what Paul is saying in the surrounding verses.

[1 Corinthians 1:10ff](#) tells us that there were competing factions in the Corinthian church (cf. [1 Cor. 11:18-19](#)). It is possible one of these factions was trying to silence women in church meetings. This would have been a real concern for women like Chloe. Perhaps Paul quotes the faction's injunction for women to be silent in 14:34-35, but then reprimands the faction, which includes men, with, "What!" Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the *only ones* it

¹⁷ Legendary sources and ancient papyri provide information about what sort of questions were posed to the oracle. These included questions about domestic concerns such as marriage, childbearing, separation, and the death of a spouse. (Witherington 1995:279)

¹⁸ First Corinthians may be a compilation of several letters that Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians. L. L. Welborn proposes that there are three letters contained in First Corinthians. Letter A ([1 Cor. 10:1-22; 6:12-20; 10:23-11:34](#)) covers issues related to associating with immoral and idolatrous people. Letter B ([1 Cor. 7-9, 12-16](#)) was written in response to a letter from the Corinthians. Welborn refers to Letter C ([1 Cor. 1:1-6:11](#)) as "Counsel of Concord". L.L. Welborn, "The Corinthian Correspondence" (forthcoming).

has reached?” (cf. [1 Cor. 14:36 KJV](#) and [1 Cor. 14:36 NRSV](#)).¹⁹ The Greek adjective *monous*, which occurs in verse 36 and is translated as “only ones” in the NRSV, is grammatically masculine. According to Greek grammar, this adjective cannot refer only to women. The masculine gender of “only ones” in verse 36 does not seem to follow logically after 14:34-35 and its instructions to women unless verse 36 is a reprimand to a group of men that wants to silence women.

The view that 14:34-35 is Paul quoting the Corinthians is one of the few that offers a plausible explanation for the change of tone which verses 34-35 bring into the text, as well as the subsequent change of topic, tone, and gender in verse 36. If this explanation is the correct one, then Paul is not silencing women in 14:34-35. Rather, Paul quotes and then rebukes the people who are trying to silence the women.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is an Interpolation

As noted, verses 34-35 sit uncomfortably within [1 Corinthians 14](#), both grammatically and hermeneutically. In fact, if you skip over verses 33b-35, and go straight from verse 33a to verse 36, the passage flows and makes good sense. Furthermore, because of the existence of textual variations involving verses 34-35 in several early manuscripts of 1 Corinthians, some scholars, notably Gordon D. Fee and Philip B. Payne, suggest verses 34-35 may have been inserted into the text of Paul’s letter by an unknown scribe at a very early date.²⁰

In several early (mostly Western) texts of [1 Corinthians 14](#), verses 34-35 are located after verse 40. Metzger (1994:499) offers an explanation for the different location of these verses: “Such scribal alterations represent attempts to find a more appropriate location in the context for Paul’s directive concerning women.”

The sixth-century Codex Fuldensis is especially ambiguous in its treatment of verses 34-35.

¹⁹ [1 Corinthians 14:36](#) begins with the tiny Greek word η which is the Greek letter *eta*. This one-letter word occurs twice in [1 Corinthians 14:36](#). The KJV translates the first η as “what” but the second η as “or.” Most English versions have “or” twice. A few leave the first η untranslated (e.g., NASB, NET). Different translations of [1 Corinthians 14:36](#) can be compared [here](#).

²⁰ Interpolations are later additions inserted into the Scriptures by unknown authors. Grudem seems disingenuous when he criticises those who dismiss some Bible verses as interpolations. Interpolations are not rare in the New Testament. Several interpolations, such as the Johannine Comma ([1 John 5:7-8](#)) and the ending(s) of Mark’s Gospel ([Mark 16:9-20](#)), are widely acknowledged as such.

Verses 34-35 may have started out as someone’s margin notes in a very early text, which a copyist then later incorporated into the body of Paul’s letter when making new copies of 1 Corinthians.

The Latin text of [1 Corinthians 14](#) runs onward throughout the chapter to ver. 40. [But] following ver. 33 is a scribal siglum that directs the reader to a note standing in the margin of the page. This note provides the text of verses 36 through 40. [But omits verses 34-35.] Does the scribe, without actually deleting verses 34-35 from the [main] text, intend the liturgist to omit them when reading the lesson? (Metzger 1994:499) [My square brackets add for clarity.]

These textual variations, plus others,[21] suggests verses 34-35 may not be original. If 14:34-35 is a non-Pauline interpolation, then the scriptural authority of this verse is dubious and its use to silence women is questionable.

“Women are to subject themselves, just as ‘the law’ also says.”

Apart from the uncertainty as to what sort of speech is being prohibited, another significant problem with understanding the intent of 14:34-35 is knowing what is meant by “the law” (*ho nomos*) mentioned in verse 34. Nowhere in the Hebrew Bible, often referred to in the New Testament as “the Law” (*ho nomos*), does it command or instruct women to be silent or to be in submission. Yet Chrysostom, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther and many other theologians took *nomos* in 14:34-35 to refer to the Old Testament and, specifically, to [Genesis 3:16](#). (Krizo 2009:33)

Grudem, however, is careful to distance himself from linking the complementarian concept of male authority with [Genesis 3:16](#) and the Fall. Grudem claims that “the Law” probably refers to the Old Testament in general and [Genesis 2](#) in particular “where Adam is the ‘firstborn.’” (Grudem 1988:223) Hierarchical complementarians use the created order of Adam first, Eve second, to support their view that God has ordained men to have authority over women. [I have written about “the Created Order” [here](#).]

Other theologians suggest Paul is referring to a Rabbinic Law. Still others suggest Paul is referring to a Roman Law. There were many Roman laws that governed various religious observances in the Roman world. Richard and Catherine Kroeger (1978:9) believe Paul is referring to laws passed by the Roman Senate that were designed to curb women from engaging in wild, orgiastic Bacchanal worship. The Kroegers believe the Christian women in Corinth may have imitated Bacchanalian worship styles in church meetings, and so Paul instructs them in 14:34-35 to be silent, control themselves, and stop acting disgracefully.²¹ However, Grudem (1988:223) notes, “in the 119 occurrences of the word ‘law’ (*nomos*) in Paul’s letters it never unambiguously refers to either Rabbinic law or Roman Law.” Cynthia Long Westfall (2016:237, fn85), on the other hand, states that *nomos* is used here with “its most common meaning ‘rule, principle, norm.’”

²¹ Some manuscripts include *humōn* (“your”) after the Greek word for women/wives. This is probably a scribal addition as many older texts do not have *humōn*. See endnote 24 for other textual variations.

According to this understanding, talkative women were to be quiet and behave according to the cultural norms of the day.

As already noted, the Hebrew Bible contains no instructions, or even encouragements, for women to be silent or submissive.²² Jim Reiher (2006:83), who takes [1 Corinthians 14:34-35](#) as a quotation from the Corinthians suggests that since the Greek Christians in Corinth would not have known the Jewish law as well as the Jewish Christians, it is possible the Corinthians may have simply been mistaken on this issue of “the Law.” Or perhaps the people who were trying to silence women in the Corinthian church mentioned “the Law” speciously to support their view.

The ambiguous reference to “the law” is a hindrance to understanding the real meaning of 14:34-35. The verb “be subject” (or “be submissive”) is less ambiguous.²³ Nevertheless, some people assume the submission called for in verse 34 is the submission of wives to husbands. Some apply it even more widely and believe Paul was directing women, as a group, to be submissive to men, not just to husbands. Importantly, however, the same verb is also used two verses earlier, in verse 32, where it says, “The spirits of prophets are *subject* to the prophets.” The Kroegers (1978), and others, believe Paul is using the word “subject” to mean “control,” and that Paul is instructing the prophets to control their spiritual gift of prophecy and not get carried away like some pagan prophets. The NIV conveys this meaning in its translation of verse 32: “The spirits of prophets are *subject to the control* of the prophets.” (My italics.) Similarly, the use of the word “subject/submit” in verse 34 may be an injunction to the women to exercise control, restraint, in the manner in which they speak and not get carried away.

Chloe of Corinth

One woman who may have ministered in the church at Corinth was [Chloe](#). In the opening chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul writes that he had received a report from some people who had

²² Jesus ben Sirach, whose book is included in the Septuagint (the ancient Greek version of the Old Testament), wrote, “a silent wife is a gift from the Lord” (*Sir.* 26:14). Is this where the idea of womanly silence and submission and “the law” came from? Sirach’s work is not part of the Hebrew Bible and is not included in Protestant Bibles. In *Against Apion*.2.25 §201, Josephus comments on what the law says about marriage and then makes the comment, “Scripture says, ‘A woman is inferior to her husband in all things.’” But there is no scripture in the Bible as we have it that says anything like this. Josephus was an educated Jewish man who knew the scriptures well but he was mistaken on this. Likewise, if [1 Corinthians 14:34-35](#) is a quotation from the Corinthians, they were mistaken about a law that says wives should be submissive.

²³ The Textus Receptus has the present middle-passive infinitive form of *hupotassō*, in [1 Corinthians 14:34](#). Other, more reliable, texts use the present middle-passive imperative verb (3rd person plural). *Hupotassō* has a broader range of meanings other than just “submit” and “subordinate.” [My articles on Submission are [here](#).]

come from Chloe ([1 Cor. 1:11](#)).²⁴ These people somehow belonged to Chloe.²⁵ They were most likely members of her household and may also have been members of a church that met in her home.²⁶

Chloe may have sent these people to Paul. Sending a delegation is clearly something only a person functioning as a leader can do. Considering the purpose of the delegation, and assuming Chloe is a Jesus' follower, it seems she was a church leader.²⁷ Perhaps Chloe's people did not just bring a verbal report to Paul about the problems in the Corinthian church, perhaps they had also brought the letter that Paul responds to in 1 Corinthians.^[28] Could Chloe, as a concerned church leader in Corinth, have written this letter?

In New Testament times, most Christian congregations met in homes, and some house churches were hosted, cared for, and led by women. [Nympha](#) was the host of a house church ([Col. 4:15](#)), and so was [Priscilla](#), with her husband Aquila ([1 Cor. 16:19](#)).²⁸ It is unlikely Paul would restrict Christian women from speaking and ministering in their own homes, especially as the New Testament provides ample evidence that he valued the ministry of his female colleagues and encouraged participation in ministry as long as it was done in an orderly and edifying manner ([1 Cor. 14:26](#); [Col. 3:16](#)).

Conclusion

The summaries presented in this article are a sample of some of the better-known interpretations of 14:34-35. Still more interpretations have been proposed by respected scholars. Because of this variety of interpretations, it is difficult to know precisely how to understand these verses and apply them in the context of contemporary church life. One thing is certain, however, [1 Corinthians 14:34-35](#) cannot be used to completely silence women from speaking in church

²⁴ The NIV 2011 translates [1 Corinthians 1:11](#) as: "My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you." The word "household" has been added; it is not in the Greek text. Another possible translation might be: "... some [people] from Chloe have informed me ..." [More on Chloe [here](#).]

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²⁶ Lydia ([Acts 16:15, 40](#)) and Mary the mother of John Mark ([Acts 12:12](#)) appear to have been in charge of their own households and used their homes to host church meetings.

²⁷ Chloe was obviously known to the Corinthian church; otherwise, Paul would not have mentioned her by name in his letter to them. Catherine Clark Kroeger (2002:646) writes, "'Chloe's people' probably indicates a worshipping community with a female leader." [More on Chloe [here](#).]

²⁸ Other New Testament women who were possibly house church leaders include [Euodia and Syntyche](#) ([Phil. 4:2-3](#)) and [the Chosen Lady](#) ([2 John 1, 5](#)). Philip's daughters ([Acts 21:9](#)), Phoebe ([Rom. 16:1-2](#)), [Junia](#) ([Rom 16:7](#)), and some of the other women mentioned in [Romans 16](#) were possibly church leaders also. [I have written more about *New Testament Women Church Leaders* [here](#).]

meetings, as Paul condoned the verbal ministries of prayer and prophecy from Corinthian women ([1 Cor. 11:5](#)).

Taking into account that Paul did not silence women who prophesy, it is difficult to see how 14:34-35 can be used to exclude women from other equally influential and authoritative speaking ministries in the church.²⁹The meaning, intent, and even the authorship, of 14:34-35 is uncertain. Because of this uncertainty, we need to be wary about using and applying these verses definitively.

The bibliography for this article is [here](https://margmowczko.com/interpretations-and-applications-of-1-corinthians-1434-35/): <https://margmowczko.com/interpretations-and-applications-of-1-corinthians-1434-35/>

²⁹ [1 Timothy 2:11-15](#) is also used by some churches to prohibit women from ministries that include speaking, teaching and leading. [I have written about [1 Timothy 2:12 here](#).]