

In the tradition of equality, Quakers have a long tradition of equality of women and men  
Equality, also in status, wealth, age, etc.

Refusal to doff the hat in honor of the king, royalty or wealth

Use of plain language

Fixed prices for everyone

These examples of "doing the truth" came out of their sense of "knowing the truth"

Their testimonies are how the Quaker faith translated into action

Not only was it how they lived their lives in interface with the world—they lived it within the Meetings

Contrary to the culture around them, women were recognized as equals to men

It began with worship and lived experience

It was evident that women were gifted with the Spirit and called to speak in ministry

Reminiscent of Acts 11:16-18 after Peter visited Cornelius and other Gentiles

Peter acknowledged they were full of the Spirit just like followers of Jesus

Therefore, how could he hinder God and deny the truth of God in them

Women spoke in worship and shared in doing ministry with the men

Male Quakers also defended the appropriateness of women in leadership

In the early days they had separate business meetings, which seems sexist to us

But in those days, women were not allowed to conduct their own business

So, it was radical for Quaker women to gather and do their own business

Even presenting minutes to the men's business session

It was good, as they were practiced and therefore leaders in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

When the political movements of women's suffrage happened

Elizabeth Hooten and Margaret Fell were two early Quaker leaders

Elizabeth Hooten was the first female Quaker preacher and one of the Valiant 60

Margaret Fell has been called the mother of Quakerism

But a reading of Scripture seems to counter this

with its admonition that "*women should be silent in the churches*" 1 Corinthians 14:34

That runs counter to Jesus' clear respect for women

Jesus even had women who traveled with him as his disciples—Luke 8:1-3

Rachel Held-Evans recently tweeted a quote:

*"Patriarchy is the backdrop of the Bible, not the message of the Bible"*<sup>1</sup>

Too often we take everything as THE message, rather than the context for the story

Scripture is written by people living in a very patriarchal society and deals with that reality

We have to take the whole of Scripture and even look at all of Paul's writings

Paul acknowledges the value of women leaders—Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4:2-3

Lydia and women were the first converts at Philippi—Acts 16:13-15

Prisca and Aquila had a house church—1 Cor 16:19, Rom 16:3-4 (Prisca named first)

Later writings indicate that Prisca was a teacher of Apollos, pastor of Corinth

Phoebe was a deacon at Cenchreae and Paul called her a saint—Romans 16:1-2

Junia is named an apostle—Romans 16:7

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<sup>1</sup> <https://twitter.com/rachelheldevans/status/728406516198457344?cn=ZmxleGlibGVfcmVjc18y&refsrc=email>.

While I saw this on Rachel Held-Evans' Twitter feed on May 5, 2016, further internet searches reveal that the original author may be Carolyn Custis James. However, I have not confirmed the James source.

Back to *"women being silent in church"*—it has never been taken literally to be completely silent  
But only to limit women from preaching or teaching men  
The context here is orderliness in worship  
If one does a deeper study of this passage, Paul is talking about times of chaos  
He calls those speaking in tongues to be silent—and the prophesiers to be silent  
Take your turn—do this in an orderly manner  
Quiet yourself and let order return to worship—God is orderly not chaos  
Don't chatter during worship, asking what is going on  
If you don't know, and they might not since women were not educated  
Ask later—rather than a prohibition, it was permission to learn more

But in many ways, more troubling is the passage in Ephesians where we read... Ephesians 5:22-23a NIV

*"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife..."*

Context here is how to do this new life of following Jesus and being filled with the Spirit

While there are many new freedoms, not everything goes—Paul gives guidance

Important because everything is different now and it impacts their whole lives

Always look at the context

Besides, there were no divisions in Scripture when written—they were added later

Chapters and verses were added in the 13<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> centuries

Descriptive headers were added in my life time

NIV—header "Wives and Husbands" comes right before these verses

NRSV—header come earlier, "The Christian Household"

*"Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" Eph 5:21*

Then examples of mutual submission are given

Husbands to wives and wives to husbands

This is a voluntary submitting to each other

Wanting the best for each other

*For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church,  
the body of which he is the Savior. Ephesians 5:23 NRSV*

Many have taken this as the husband is authority over his wife and connection to God

Traditional Greek understanding is this—husband is the head and ruler

But in the Greek there is more than one word for head

The one used here does not mean leader, boss, chief, or ruler

It means the literal head of a body, but also means to be in the 1<sup>st</sup> position

In military terms, it meant the one who led the troops into battle

Paul deliberately chose a word that meant something different than ruler

Husbands were to love in a way that would put them in harms way 1<sup>st</sup>

Paul emphasizes that husbands are to love their wives

Paul gives a new model for marriage in comparing a husband's love for his wife  
to Christ's love for the church

Christ is the head of the church—and loved the church even though it meant his death

Christ gave his life, suffering for people so that all might have life

Christ does not rule the church, but serves and loves the church

Jesus said whoever would become great, must be the servant of others

The first must be last

Radical to a culture where husbands took no note of wives,

nor did wives have knowledge about what was important to husbands

Quakers—recognizing that women were anointed in the Spirit and gifted in ministry  
They also saw marriage as the equal joining of two people—a free consent of both parties  
George Fox wrote that the women's meeting for business should consider the marriage  
Even suggesting the prospective couple should be interviewed by an all-female meeting  
prior to the marriage to determine whether they were clear to marry  
These ideas were radical and caused many to criticize Quakers

Not having priests or pastors in the early days, yet realizing the religious nature of marriage  
And believing that a marriage did not need the sanction or solemnization of a priest  
It only needed Divine presence and approval  
In that way, Quakers simply took each other as husband and wife  
in the presence of the Lord and his people  
The marriage took place in a Meeting for Worship with vows spoken out of the silence  
Without a priest to sign the marriage certificate, it was signed by all witnesses present

Lucretia Mott is an American Quaker, abolitionist, and a women's rights activist

In 1879 she wrote: *In the true marriage relationship,  
The independence of the husband and wife is equal,  
Their dependence mutual,  
And their obligations reciprocal.*

My challenge to all couples and families is that we take this sense of mutuality to heart  
That we in fact, model this by setting aside regular times in the family for Meeting  
—a Meeting for Worship to conduct business, much like we do in the church  
As children appear, include them as well  
This is a time to sit together before God and Listen for God's message to you  
Then together, Listen around how to live out these messages  
Everyone has voice and ability to speak the Leadings

It is in this tradition that Jedidiah and Che have chosen to be married  
Given the traditional message of submission at their wedding, they are choosing to restate vows  
In this tradition of mutual submission, equality and love

They have invited friends and family to join them in this celebration of their marriage  
As Che is from the Philippines, they have also chosen to incorporate Filipino traditions  
In Filipino tradition, they have several ninong and ninang—kind of God parents for the wedding  
Two of those—Dylan and Deve—were unable to attend the wedding, as they gave birth  
But living in Canada, were able to attend today  
Dylan and Jedidiah both grew up in the Jesus People movement/commune  
Deve is Filipina like Che  
They will stand with Jedidiah and Che as they repeat their vows out of worship + silence

In Quaker tradition, we will speak words of blessing and messages to the couple out of worship

At the conclusion, I will speak a blessing prayer over them and invite all of us to sign the certificate  
Jedidiah and Che invite us to do that on the back of their Filipino marriage certificate