

Clarifying Roles in God's Church – Part 2

1 Timothy 2:8-15

Introduction: After broaching the subject of men's and women's roles in the church last week, I received some interesting feedback from some people. Multiple people asked me by text or face to face "did anyone have a big problem with the message", almost anticipating that there would be some push back. When I told my parents the passage I was teaching through, my mom only said, "you aren't going to get political with it are you?" Still another reminded me that there is a lot of teaching on the subject going on right now, and it is NOT without controversy. *Why is this passage so difficult or even controversial? Why are these verses hard to understand and accept?* I believe there are three reasons:

1. We said last week that we are all **rebellious by nature**, meaning we are born sinners who fight against God's design and rule, who want to do it our own way, and believe we know better than God. When God gives clear standards for life and honoring him, rebels turn to their own way and seek to justify it with others.
2. We have all been **culturally bombarded with the relentless teaching of our culture**. What used to be opinion is now fact, what was once accepted as sinful is now viewed as a right, and what used to be hidden is now done in the daylight. We have education systems from Kindergarten through the University systems that are not neutral in indoctrination or learning but having agenda's to "re-program" students, *taking captive "by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ."* (Col. 2:8)
3. We are bound by our **experiences, most of which have been negative** – When it comes to male leadership and female following that leadership, there have been negative experiences in the **home, in the workplace, and even in the church**. Since the Fall, men have been passive or physically domineering in their leadership, while women can be passive and set against leadership. This sinful response has created conflict, abuse, and harm in the place of loving sacrifice and service. This means that we have many that have never lived in a home with a loving dad, a caring mother, a boss that seeks to sacrifice for the needs of his employees, a pastor that leads in Biblical care. This leaves us skeptical, wary, cautious, doubting, and confused, and it also means we can carry these experiences into the interpretation of the text. Our goal is simply to explain this text as clearly as we can, wrestle with its implications, and seek to obey God to the fullest. We want to be as exclusive as we need to be, and as inclusive as the Bible allows us to be.

As we go into the roles of man and woman in the church, it's important to keep **three things in mind**:

- **We believe the Bible is our final authority, and submitting ourselves to obedience to it is not simply right, it is for our good -**
- **We believe the Bible teaches men and women "complement" each other –**
- **We believe the gospel radically re-orientates our thinking -** The solution to both of these is the transformation that occurs in the gospel, as men take the mantle of servant leadership and women willingly follow men out of their desire to submit to their Savior.

Considering the Context

Immediate Context

Textual Arguments

Temporary Issue

Consistency of Biblical Teaching

Creation and Fall

“there is no male and female” (Gal. 3:28)

Calling for Proper Conduct (8-10)

I **desire** then that in every place the men should pray, lifting **holy hands** without **anger** or **quarreling**; ⁹likewise also that women should **adorn** themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with **good works**.

Strong call for men to pray

There are a couple of key principles here:

1. Public prayer by men should come out of an outflow or overflow of a private prayer life, one that walks intimately with God and desires what He does.
2. When men play their role well, in marriage and the church, it is much easier for women to play theirs.
3. Men in our culture (perhaps any culture) have a hard time leading in prayers. More often do we hear of women's ministries thriving or that women are prayer warriors, when it is men who should lead by example in this.

Strong call for women display modesty and godliness

Paul next picks up on this strong command and counsels the women in the church. Instead of leading in prayer, the women of Ephesus, and everywhere, should be well prepared for worship and gathering together with the church, both in appearance and action. The word **adorn** means to "arrange, make ready, or put in order". There should be thought behind action, preparation behind dress. The idea of **respectable apparel** would be equivalent to the idea of *appropriateness*. *How did someone decide what was appropriate?* The goal or heart behind one's dress would have been **modesty and self-control**. Modesty has the core idea of humility, where one is NOT trying to draw attention to oneself. Self-control was needed to put any urges to become the center of attention, to draw the eyes of married men, or to act in any way that would detract from the worship of God alone. Adorning this way has more to do with the heart of a woman than anything else:

"Do not let your **adorning** be external ---- the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear --- but let your **adorning** be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable **beauty** of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious." 1 Pet. 3:3-4

In the city of Ephesus, there were some women who through marriage or other means would have access to much wealth, just like today, the way to let people know you are wealthy was to literally wear it on your head or around your neck. Gold would be intertwined in braided hair, with tortoise shell ornaments, pearls and other costly apparel worn to signal wealth. Is Paul saying it is wrong to be wealthy? Nope. Remember Lydia was wealthy enough to host the church in her home (Acts 16). It was the **flaunting of wealth** so that eyes would stare that was the problem, especially in the assembly of God's church.

Instead, those who desired to be **godly women** would devote themselves to good works, a reputation not of external beauty but of godly character. Later in 1 Timothy, Paul talked about godly widows who should be taken care of by the church. Their godliness was first shown in their own home and in taking care of parents (5:4), in bringing up children (5:10), showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, caring for the afflicted, and devoting herself to good works. In other words, what is **precious to God is NOT simply external beauty** (though external beauty is a good thing - Prov. 31:22). But a **godly woman knows: Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised!** (Prov. 31:30).

So when we gather together, we should:

Be prepared - We should be prepared in our mind, heart and body. We should confess our sin, reconcile with those we have quarreled with, and be thoughtful to how we dress so as NOT to bring attention to ourselves.

Be active - To pray and to serve, to lead out in gospel driven prayer and to look to the needs of others

Be humble - Modesty is tough, since there is no rigid standards of appropriateness but rather an examination of our heart, motives and intentions. If we are shown to be immodest, humility is willing to change in order to focus all attention onto God through Christ and away from ourselves.

Clarifying the Complementing Functions (11-15)

Let a **woman learn quietly with all submissiveness**.¹² I do not **permit** a woman **to teach** or **to exercise authority** over a man; rather, she is to remain **quiet**.¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve;¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.¹⁵ Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control

Posture and Character of women in corporate gatherings

Now, as we venture into the heart of this clear and difficult passage, we again are faced with the reality that we **must let Scripture speak**, we must be firm and dogmatic where it is firm and dogmatic, and exercise wisdom and discernment when it leaves room for us to do so. We must be clear on what these verses **say AND do NOT say**. In this we stay away from polarizing extremes and needless conflict that simply get in the way of the *point of the passage*.

The Way of Learning

The crux of verses 11-12 is that in the church, men will exercise authority in the office of pastor/elder (the different words describe the same office/function, making pastor/elder interchangeable), and an expression of that leadership is the formal teaching in the church, primarily through the preaching of God's Word. We will see in 1 Timothy 3 that men are called to a high calling of elder, and one of the distinguishing functions is that they **teach** (3:2, 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:2). That means that this is NOT a functional role for women in the church. But we must unpack what this means and does not mean.

What is meant by "quietly"?

Notice that the passage has an *inclusio*, or bookends, with the word "**quietly**". This means that it is not the role of women to teach the whole church, since that would be an expression of authority. Some have taken the word quietly to an extreme where women cannot say anything during a service. This is not the point. *"It seems more likely that Paul refers to a quiet and nonrebellious spirit instead of absolute silence, for the primary issue is demeanor and attitude --- one's submissive spirit."*¹ The whole

¹ Thomas Schreiner, *Women in Ministry*, p. 187.

point is an attitude that willingly sits under the proclamation of the teaching and preaching of God's Word by the pastor/elders of the church.

Now, it is significant that it DOES say women in the church are to **learn**. The word is an imperative form of *manthono*, which means "to learn" or "to be informed", and from which we get the word **disciple**. In other words, women and men alike are to be *learners of God and His Word*, and should be active in that pursuit. When we learn as a disciple, it is always to turn that learning into opportunities to teach others. If the functional role of a woman in the public gathering of the church is to be a learner of God's Word through Biblically qualified leaders, where do women exercise this all important step of discipleship?

1. With Children, especially their own - We are all influenced from our birth on. We learn by direct teaching as well as the example set before us, and the ones who invest the most time into someone have the greatest impact. Can we all agree that mothers have the greatest impact on the early development of children? For the first formative years of life, there is an exceptional bond between mother and child, and she has the primary role of shaping that child's mind and heart. What a gift. I am delighted and thankful that my wife Erin was able to spend thousands of hours with our girls before they entered school, and that she continues to have high influence in their education, processing of life, walking through drama, and showing them what it looks like to follow Christ and love her husband. Remember, **Timothy and Paul** were keenly aware of the role of women in Timothy's life, as he had an absent and/or unsaved father, and was raised in the Scriptures by his **mom and grandma!** Timothy's life and character were shaped by women, and the impact of that carried on into his adulthood and ministry.

2. With other women - This is the marrow of ministry in the church. When the church is at its healthiest, it is where older men and women are investing in teaching and training younger men and women. The Biblical pattern is clear: *primarily, men teach men and women teach women*. Specifically, notice what **Titus 2:3-5** implores older women (more mature in faith and years), "*Older women, likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, or slaves to much wine. They are to **teach** what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, **that the word of God may not be reviled.**"* Notice that these are specific training lessons that young women need to learn as opposed to others that young men need to learn and are trained by older men. This means that my job as a pastor is to teach the whole church through God's Word, but the one's who will disciple the young women ARE the OLDER WOMEN, not me. This teaching is NOT limited to formal classes or studies, but does not exclude them. This teaching will be formal and informal, by word and example, in a classroom and in someone's home.

This reality should never be trivialized or minimized. The trickle down affect is the most fruitful way to train and teach successive generations. This is done in **relational ways, and demands that we are ALL growing as disciples in order to pass along what we've learned and the wisdom we have acquired.** It is also clear that my role as an elder and husband IS NOT TO disciple women, which means we MUST have women teachers in our church, and the more the merrier!

3. With each other, including men - "*Let the Word of Christ rule in you richly, **teaching and admonishing on another** in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God"* Colossians 3:16 There is a place of teaching each other from God's Word. We cited the ability that when Apollos came to Ephesus he began speaking boldly, but he did not quite have a fully developed theology. So Priscilla AND Aquila took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately (Acts 18:24-26). Its comical to me that so many want this to say more than it says, or ignore it all together. A young, passionate, clear, and dynamic preacher came to town, but there were some

areas that he needed to firm up. So a mature couple lovingly took him to their house to walk him through the Scripture, *teaching with all wisdom*. This was NOT Pricilla taking the role of pastor nor was it Aquila abdicating his role as leader, nor was it Apollos coming under their authority. This IS the recognition that we ALL can learn from each other. I have learned much from the women of this church, both in observation and conversation. Some of our greatest times in God's Word is when we have our female staff in meetings and hear how a particular passage teaches them and in our Shepherding group where we get insight into how Scripture informs both men and women, young and old, single and married. This is part of healthy relationships, just as I have learned much at how my wife and daughters process Scripture in their own heart and mind.

The posture of a godly woman is to willingly place herself under the authority of God's Word, to learn quietly and fervently from God's Word, so she can teach God's Word in the areas God ordained. In order to do this, there has to be a posture of the heart, which is where **submission comes in**.

What does submission mean and not mean?

Perhaps one of the most misunderstood and abused words that the Bible commands today, the word **submit** needs to be clarified often for us. In fact, if we really wanted to stir up controversy, we would simply give the command without explanation and see what the reaction would be (a guess: not very positive). Paul says women should learn quietly and with **all submission**. *What does that mean:*

1. The **word "submit" or "submission"** means to "line up under". Specifically here and in other Biblical passages it means a voluntary placing oneself under the authority of another. The key to this definition is the idea of "voluntary". Without willingness, submission is not submission. Submission is a free choice that one redeemed by Christ can make. This also means that if anyone forces another to do something, it is no longer out of submission but rather domineering.

2. **Our greatest source or object of submission is to Christ** - Every believer submits to God (James 4:7), the church submits to Christ (Eph. 5:24), every believer submits to each other (Eph. 5:21) and wives to their husbands *as unto the Lord* (Eph. 5:22). In other words, the call to follow Christ and His Lordship is to give up our own authority and autonomy and yield to Him. "*The head of every man in Christ, the head of the wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.*" (1 Cor. 11:3). Submission comes out of the recognition of headship, which means we willingly place ourselves under the authority of another in the ways God has ordained.

3. **Men and women are both under submission** - This means that men as well as women place themselves under submission. Men and women submit to the governing authorities set over us (Rom. 13:1) and the employer relationships we have (1 Pet. 2:18-19). All of our submission to any and all human institution (1 Pet. 2:13) comes out of our submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. When we are truly submissive to Him, we can submit to human authority, and rebellion against human authority is truly rebellion against Christ.

4. **Submission does NOT infer weakness or lack of ability** - Submitting requires strength and resolve. In human relationships, we submit to those that are not necessarily superior to us in intellect, ability, or gifting, but rather for the sake of good order and obedience. In the workplace, we submit to the authority of a boss that may actually be inferior in certain areas, yet there is positional authority over us. The same goes in government positions. The submission of a wife is NOT to a superior being. In fact, **1 Pet. 3 lays out a fascinating case of submission**. "*For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him*

lord. And you are her children if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening." (3:5-6). Sarah submitted to Abraham even when he told her to say she was his sister (Gen 12:13; 20:2) because he was afraid of his own safety. Abraham did NOT live with her in an understanding way nor treat her as a weaker vessel (one he should protect) (1 Pet. 3:7), but wimped out. Yet Sarah submitted to this imperfect man. It takes resolve to do this. It takes inner strength. It takes confidence in the Lord to share your opinion, be deemed right, and still follow. Submission does not mean "doormat", but instead a willingness to help the one we are submitted to to succeed, since the source of pleasure is in the Lord. Sarah was not weak in character, but rather showed her strength by her fearless willingness to follow her husband.

5. **Submission is a gift** - In a couple of weeks, we will look at how men in the church should lead, which is counter to our culture and unfortunately counter to what so many have experienced. But submission to godly leadership in the church and home should be **freedom!** One of my good friends reminded me of this in our shepherding group the other night, when she said she used to not like the idea of submission but now sees it as freedom. That delights my pastoral heart. Submission puts the onus of trust in the Lord and the responsibility of leadership of elders and husbands. It *should* mean that women are valued, treasured, protected, heard, sought after, lifted up, deemed as precious, and uplifted. It should take the weight of responsibility off their shoulders, entrusting themselves to the leading of Christ and godly men. The problem, of course, is that men do not always lead in godly ways, but that does not change the call. It simply reinforces that it takes **faith in Christ alone to play this out in the church and in the home.**

Since this all has to do with our mission, it is imperative that the women of this church recognize the great opportunity you have in this present culture. You can show those without Christ, who are in a state of rebellion, that there is more joy, freedom, and satisfaction when we yield to Christ and all that He commands than doing it our own way. This is a gift we've received by grace, and is a gift we can offer the world.

The Order of Leading

What is the Biblical teaching on authority?

What teaching is this talking about?

Biblical Consistency for the command