

February 8, 2026

Series: Let the Church Be the Church

Title: Calling Over Control

Text: 1Timothy 2:9-15, 3:1-10

The church of Jesus Christ is not merely a gathering of people; it is the visible witness of God's redemptive work in the world. How the church worships, how it orders itself, and how it develops leaders matters deeply, because the church is meant to reflect the wisdom, holiness, and character of God. Paul writes to Timothy not as a detached theologian, but as a spiritual father addressing a real crisis in a real church. Ephesus was a vibrant, gifted, influential, but deeply troubled church. False teaching had taken root. Worship gatherings were becoming disruptive. Immature believers were being elevated too quickly. And if left unaddressed, the credibility of the gospel itself was at stake. Paul's goal is not to suppress gifting or silence voices. His goal is order that protects the mission and leadership that reflects the gospel. **1. Church**

Promotes Modesty, Maturity and Teachability 1 Timothy 2:9-10, "I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God." Paul's concern here is

not fashion—it is focus. In Ephesian culture, extravagant dress was often associated with wealth, status, and even temple prostitution tied to the worship of Artemis. These outward displays distracted from worship and created division within the church. For

these women who came out of prostitution, the way they dressed attracted the attention of men. Paul's instruction regarding their attire is not what gets God's attention. Also, their elaborate and provocative dresses became a distraction to worship. Paul calls women, and by implication, the entire congregation, to let character speak louder than appearance. This is consistent throughout Scripture: **1 Samuel 16:7** – God looks at the heart. **1 Peter 3:3–4** – True beauty flows from godly character. **Proverbs 31:30**

– A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. You can decorate a building beautifully, but if the foundation is weak, it will not stand. God is far more interested in what sustains the church than what decorates it. Paul is affirming that women are visible, influential, and spiritually significant in the life of the church. Their maturity and conduct matter deeply to God's mission. **1 Timothy 2:11-12**, “**A**

woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.” This is one of the most quoted and misunderstood sentences in the New Testament. To read it faithfully, we must do what Paul himself expects: read it in context. There are those who would say you need to interpret it literally. The question we must consider is whether all Scripture can just be interpreted literally. Can context help us better understand its meaning and application? Here's an example from Jesus taken from Matt 18:9, “And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away.**” Is Jesus promoting self-mutilation? No! **I. The Immediate Context: False Teaching in Ephesus.****

Paul is writing to a specific church in Ephesus, dealing with false teaching, disruptive worship practices, and poorly instructed new converts, many

of whom were women newly freed from pagan temple culture. This is not a theoretical essay on women's capacity. It is pastoral damage control. Notably, Paul begins by saying: "A woman should learn..." In the first-century world, that alone is revolutionary. Paul is not silencing women—he is **insisting they be trained**. Quietness here refers to a posture of learning and humility, not enforced muteness, discipleship, not inferiority. **II. Order and Authority, Not Gender, Is the Issue.**

Order in the church gatherings - Some have said the reason for this is that in these ancient cultures (as well as some present-day cultures), men and women sat in separate sections. The idea is that women interrupted the church service by shouting questions and comments to their husbands. It was lawful for men in public assemblies to ask questions or even interrupt the speaker when there was any matter in his speech which they did not understand, but this liberty was not granted to women. As you can well imagine, people shouting across the room disrupted the service and the teaching of God's Word. **Authority -** The phrase "assume authority" implies usurping or dominating authority, not exercising God-given leadership. Paul is addressing disorderly teaching, not forbidding women from ministry. This is confirmed by Scripture: **Acts 18:26** – Priscilla teaches Apollos sound doctrine. **Romans 16:1–7** – Phoebe, Junia, and other women are commended as leaders. **Gal 3:28** – "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are **all one in Christ Jesus.**" Paul is not saying, "Women may never lead men." He is saying something closer to: "I am not permitting untrained, disruptive teaching that seizes authority in a harmful way." Paul is addressing how authority is exercised, not

who may ever exercise it. Paul does not dismantle women's leadership; he depends on it.

Is there any examples of women in leadership in the Old Testament? Deborah appears in Judges 4–5 as a judge with civil authority over Israel. A prophet speaking God's word. A leader who directs a male military commander, Barak. God appoints her, and Israel thrives under her leadership. Scripture never treats her role as a problem. If "women must never exercise authority over men" was a timeless moral law, Deborah could not exist. But she does, and she leads with God's full blessing.

2. Leaders In the Church are Meant To Reflect the Nature of Christ

1 Timothy 3:1-13, "Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer (elders, pastors, bishops) desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested, and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and

trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.” God’s design for leadership is intentional and effective.

I. **Elders** provide Spiritual Oversight and Shepherding. Elders are entrusted with: Guarding doctrine, Shepherding people, and Modelling Christlike maturity. They lead by example, not control. 1 Peter 5:2–3, “To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”

II. **Deacons:** provide servant leadership that strengthens the Church. Deacons ensure the practical life of the church supports its spiritual mission. The first deacons were a group of seven men in the Jerusalem church who were appointed to oversee daily food distribution. A deacon, therefore, is one who serves others in an official capacity in the church. Importantly, 1 Timothy 3:11 acknowledges women in this role. The Church of God rightly recognizes women as elders, deacons, ministers, and pastors because Scripture does.

Elders provide direction. Deacons provide support. Together, they allow the church to move forward in unity and strength. Leadership structures protect the church from chaos, burnout, and mission drift. Paul’s vision for the church is not restrictive—it is redemptive. When the church embraces God’s order, Men and Women

are empowered. Leaders are accountable, and the gospel advances with credibility. Authority must be exercised rightly, wisely, and in order. The Church of God affirms that the calling is not gender-based; rather, character and gifting qualify a person for ministry. The church flourishes when leadership reflects Christ, not culture.

At COG-MJ, we are guided by the Holy Spirit through the Elders (pic), we are led by the Holy Spirit through our Pastors & staff team (pic), and we are empowered by the Holy Spirit through our Deacons (and volunteers) (pic).

Three Responses to the Message: **1. Trust God's Design for Order** - Choose to see biblical structure as protection, not limitation. Ask God to give you a teachable heart toward spiritual authority. **2. Affirm Women Called to Ministry** - Celebrate and support women serving in leadership, teaching, and pastoral roles. Encourage a woman in ministry this week through prayer or affirmation. **3. Serve Faithfully**

Where God Has Placed You - Whether leading or supporting, commit to serving with integrity and humility. Ask God how He wants to deepen your role in the life of the church.