

## When the Church Comes Together, Part 2 – 1 Timothy 2:11-15

**Our goal is NOT to talk about politics or other churches.**

**Main Idea:** Is the Bible outdated or our culture out of line?

### **I. What to Do | 1 Timothy 2:11**

Having addressed the issue of vanity among women in Ephesian society, Paul now goes on to address pride and ambition. And we left this place last week with one central question in mind—**Which is more likely: That the Bible is out of date or that our culture is out of line?** As a church, we can't abandon biblical accuracy in favor of culture or personal preference. In a church like Ephesus, plagued with false doctrine and false leaders, it is not surprising to find them struggling over gender roles. It is also not surprising that many still struggle with it today. Like a physician, **Paul diagnoses the root of the problems in the church, and he begins to direct people's attention to it.**

In verse 11, Paul shatters a series of ancient stereotypes—not modern. In the Roman world, women were considered to be intellectually second-class. It was widely accepted that females were academically inferior compared to men. The educational system was designed primarily for men, not for women. Similarly, the religious system (Jewish) was also designed primarily for men, not women. The Jewish rabbis were even more chauvinistic than the Greeks and Romans. According to the Jewish Talmud: “It would be better for the words of Torah to be burned than to be entrusted to a woman.” In other words, educating women both politically and religiously was a big waste of time. What may seem obvious to us (that women should be taught) was an unprecedented barrier in the first-century Greco-Roman world. Here, Paul says the opposite of what Jews, Romans, and Greeks defended at the time. **Before making any restriction, Paul writes words of liberation for women**, “Let a woman learn.”

But if women must learn, what should that look like? The Greek word translated as quiet (*hesychia*) does not mean that women must keep their mouths shut in the church. Rather, it refers to a gentle demeanor in the same Paul we see earlier in the chapter when Paul says, “Christians (men and women) should lead a peaceful and quiet life” (v.2). In other words, let women learn respectfully, with undivided attention. But Paul also urges that women should learn “submissively.” To submit is to be obedient, yield to authority, and respect the leadership that God has given to the church's elders. Additionally, **submission applies to both men and women when learning.** As God specifically calls people to serve as leaders and teachers in the church, all who are learning are to do it respectfully, peacefully, and submissively to God-given authority. **The Bible confirms dignity and the necessity for women to become students of God's Word** (Luke 10:38-42). God wants women to be knowledgeable in the Scriptures and learn sound doctrine. **In no way does the NT treat women as spiritually inferior to men.**

### **To Ponder:**

1. Is the idea of submission in the Bible different than the way our culture understands submission? If yes, how so?
2. Are there areas in your life in which you have lacked in quietness and submission to God?
3. Who is your example of submission?

## II. What Not to Do | 1 Timothy 2:12-15

Starting in verse 12, Paul (under apostolic authority) begins to highlight what women should not do within the context of the church. **Paul's concern here is regarding women being put in positions of ultimate leadership and authority over the church (which God has designed for men).** Paul begins to urge the women in Ephesus not to aspire to roles that God had not intended for them to hold. Verse 11 and 12 are joined together by the conjunction "but" (de – Greek): women are to learn but not to teach. Some people have taken this verse to mean that no woman should ever teach any man anything. In some churches, women are forbidden not only to preach but also to teach Sunday school, participate in home Bible studies, or give any other kind of instruction to men. When Peter preached at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-22), he quoted the prophet Joel: "and in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy (Acts 2:17-18).

According to Joel's prophecy and Peter's preaching, all God's sons and daughters exercise a prophetic/teaching ministry. This does not mean they are called to serve the church in a teaching office, but they all bear witness to the gospel. In keeping with this principle, the apostle Paul gave the following instructions to women as well to men: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom" (Col.3:16). It is clear that at least certain kinds of teaching are to be carried out universally within the church. **Prohibiting women from teaching men goes against biblical command and goes against biblical examples.** One thinks especially of Priscilla, who, with her husband, invited Apollos into her home "and explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26). She did this despite the fact that Apollos "was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24). **Let us not forget that there are times and places when it is necessary for Christian men to learn from Christian women.**

**There is one place where it is not appropriate for women to teach, however: in the authoritative proclamation of God's Word in the context of the public worship of the church!** What Paul writes in 1 Timothy is not intended to govern men and women in every situation in life, but applies especially to those occasions when the church gathers for the preaching of the Word in the official teaching of sound doctrine (1Tim. 4:11; 2 Tim.2:2). Paul is referring to the teaching in which he and elders of the church (in their official roles) were doing. In this passage, **the main thing that God forbids women to do is to preach or to exercise the doctrinal and disciplinary authority that is tied to the preaching and leadership ministry of the church. Incidentally, most men are forbidden to do the same thing. Verse 12 does not mean that all men are to teach all women. Nor does the Scriptures say that all women are to submit to all men. Rather, these verses teach that all women are to submit to the teaching and discipline of the pastors and elders of the church as well as to their husbands as spiritual leaders in their homes.**

Starting in verse 13, Paul's first reason for telling women to learn but not teach comes from the order of creation: "Adam was formed first, then Eve." Historically, many people have taken this to be a statement of superiority of men. However, **what Paul says is similar to the ancient and biblical law of primogeniture, in which the firstborn son held a place of spiritual responsibility within the family.** He may or may not have been more talented than his siblings. Yet the eldest son inherited the leadership responsibility in the home and worship. So, too, Adam was God's first-formed son. **Paul appeals to the created order before the fall when everything was good and in perfect order. The effect of this appeal is to look beyond culture or context and to focus on God's purpose for men and women.** With the fall, the first woman reversed the order established by God, and instead of following her God-given leader, she tried to take the lead over Adam's role.

The point in verse 14 that “Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived” is that, unlike Eve, Adam knew full well what he was doing when he ate the forbidden fruit. Eve fell because Satan deceived her about the true nature of sin, but Adam sinned with his eyes wide open. God held Adam accountable for the fall into sin, not Eve (Gen.3:9). **The fall of Adam and Eve shows what can happen when the created order is reversed.** Men and women who seek to overthrow God’s order for the church do exactly the same as Adam and Eve did and are seen by God as transgressors. **But when men and women follow the biblical pattern (established by God), His name is honored, and the gospel advances.** Paul ends the second chapter in 1 Timothy by painting a beautiful picture of the gospel. From creation, God had already told both the deceiver (Satan) and the deceived (Eve) that there would come one from woman to be the great liberator of humanity. **While through the disobedience of a woman, the entire human race was led into sin; through the obedience of a woman, sinners would be led out of sin.**

**To Ponder:**

1. Does the Bible support women serving as pastors or elders in the church?
2. In what ways can women reverse the creation order of leadership in both the church and their homes?