



Candlewood Church



Called Together

May 31, 2026

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BIG IDEA: From creation to prophets, from Pentecost to Paul's ministry teams, Scripture consistently shows women and men together bearing God's image, receiving His Spirit, and participating in His mission.

Scripture Focus: No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants—men and women alike—and they will prophesy. **Acts 2:16-18 NLT**

Blurb: The question of women in ministry has too often been treated as a religious cultural debacle or debate, but the better question is biblical: **What does the whole of Scripture actually say?** The BIG PICTURE storyline of Scripture shows how God creates, calls, gifts, and sends both women and men for His mission. This series on Womanhood wasn't about just highlighting women to elevate them; it has been about restoring the biblical vision of the whole church reaching the whole world with the good news of Jesus Christ!

We are wrapping up our series on WOMANHOOD. And, to do that means a **quick summary of where we've been over the past three weeks**, but it also means we should take an **honest look at what the Bible teaches about women being in ministry** today or what **Francis Shaeffer** used in his book title, "How Should We Then Live?"

What does this all have to do with us?

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Let me illustrate where we are going by asking this.

- **Have you ever been in a room where your name wasn't called?**
- **Or a team was picked and you weren't on it?**
- **Maybe even a list was read that you expected to be on and you weren't included?"**

Open to Romans 16:1-15 and slowly read the names Paul greets:

I commend to you our sister **Phoebe**, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchrea. Welcome her in the Lord as one who is worthy of honor among God's people. Help her in whatever she needs, for she has been helpful to many, and especially to me. Give my greetings to **Priscilla** and **Aquila**, my co-workers in the ministry of Christ Jesus. In fact, they once risked their lives for me. I am thankful to them, and so are all the Gentile churches. Also give my greetings to the church that meets in their home. Greet my dear friend **Epenetus**. He was the first person from the province of Asia to become a follower of Christ. Give my greetings to **Mary**, who has worked so hard for your benefit. Greet **Andronicus** and **Junia**, my fellow Jews, who were in prison with me. They are highly respected among the apostles and became followers of Christ before I did. Greet **Ampliatius**, my dear friend in the Lord. Greet **Urbanus**, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend **Stachys**. Greet **Apelles**, a good man whom Christ approves. And give my greetings to the believers from the household of **Aristobulus**. Greet **Herodion**, my fellow Jew. Greet the Lord's people from the household of **Narcissus**. Give my greetings to **Tryphena** and **Tryphosa**, the Lord's workers, and to dear **Persis**, who has worked so hard for the Lord. Greet **Rufus**, whom the Lord picked out to be his very own; and also **his dear mother**, who has been a mother to me. Give my greetings to **Asyncritus**, **Phlegon**, **Hermes**, **Patrobas**, **Hermas**, and the brothers and sisters who meet with them. Give my greetings to **Philologus**, **Julia**, **Nereus** and **his sister**, and to **Olympas** and all the believers who meet with them. Greet each other with a sacred kiss. All the churches of Christ send you their greetings.

1. **Phoebe — Woman** (v. 1) — *"a servant/deacon of the church in Cenchreae... a benefactor of many people, including me"*
2. **Priscilla & Aquila** — Wife & Husband (v. 3) — *"my co-worker in Christ Jesus... risked their own necks for my life"*
3. **Epcænetus — Man** (v. 5) — *"my dear friend... the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia"*
4. **Mary — Woman** (v. 6) — *"worked very hard for you"*
5. **Andronicus — Man** (v. 7) — *"my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me... outstanding among the apostles... in Christ before I was"*
6. **Junia — Woman** (v. 7) — *"my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me... outstanding among the apostles... in Christ before I was"*
7. **Ampliatius — Man** (v. 8) — *"my dear friend in the Lord"*
8. **Urbanus — Man** (v. 9) — *"our co-worker in Christ"*
9. **Stachys — Man** (v. 9) — *"my dear friend"*
10. **Apelles — Man** (v. 10) — *"whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test"*
11. **Aristobulus — Man** (v. 10) — *household greeted*
12. **Herodion — Man** (v. 11) — *"my fellow Jew"*
13. **Narcissus — Man** (v. 11) — *household greeted*
14. **Tryphena — Woman** (v. 12) — *"women who work hard in the Lord"*
15. **Tryphosa — Woman** (v. 12) — *"women who work hard in the Lord"*
16. **Persis — Woman** (v. 12) — *"my dear friend... worked very hard in the Lord"*
17. **Rufus — Man** (v. 13) — *"chosen in the Lord"*
18. **Mother of Rufus** — Woman (v. 13) — *"his mother, who has been a mother to me too"*
19. **Asyncritus — Man** (v. 14) — *greeted with brothers*

20. **Phlegon — Man** (v. 14) — greeted with brothers
21. **Hermas — Man** (v. 14) — greeted with brothers
22. **Patrobas — Man** (v. 14) — greeted with brothers
23. **Hermes — Man** (v. 14) — greeted with brothers
24. **Philologus — Man** (v. 15) — greeted with others
25. **Julia — Woman** (v. 15) — greeted with others
26. **Nereus — Man** (v. 15) — greeted with others
27. **Sister of Nereus — Woman** (v. 15) — greeted with others
28. **Olympas — Man** (v. 15) — greeted with others

Ten women, seventeen men — and Paul wrote **Phoebe** first and had something specific and honorable to say about many of them.

Paul called their names. He saw both women and men, anchoring them in history. He recognized them, he needed them.

The question for us today is... does our church?

Does Candlewood Church recognize both women and men as valuable in all areas of ministry today?

Did you know that the most controversial verse Paul ever wrote about women... was actually written to push back against feminism?

We'll talk about the Artemis cult, a goddess-first religion where women held all the religious power, men were sidelined, and a competing creation myth said the woman came first. Paul's corrective wasn't "women should never lead." It was "stop importing your old religion into the church." This reframe creates instant holy curiosity and disarms people on both sides of the debate before you even get to the text.

Just catching us up.

Image Bearers, Not Backup Plans

Text: [Genesis 1:26–28](#); [Genesis 2:18–24](#); [Genesis 3:16](#)

Point: Women and men are created together in God's image and commissioned together to steward creation. "I will make him an **ezer kenegdo** – a sustainer, a deliverer, a counterpart."

We start where Scripture starts: The woman is not an afterthought, accessory, or lesser image-bearer. Domination is not God's original design, but the Fall distorted male-female relationships.

In Genesis 3:14+ God immediately deals with disobedience to His command to NOT EAT.

Sin changed the male-female dynamics, which shows up in all relationships, but it shows up more prominent in marriage. Why? Because of the coming together as ONE FLESH – a uniting of body, mind and soul.

Sin was THE disrupter of relationships – with God and with each other. The instantaneous consequence of sin is death, but both Adam and Eve were given consequences. Eve's consequences were harsh and women have carried them throughout human history. One, pain in pregnancy & childbirth. How many mothers here have had difficult changes in pregnancy? How about childbirth? The fact that women discuss how many HOURS they were in LABOR, should be an indication that childbirth is hard. Two, I believe the New Living Translation nailed it, “you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.” God has given husbands a governing role in a marriage relationship – that's clearly reflected in Ephesians 5:22-25. Paul leads with vs 21. “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything. For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her. **Ephesians 5:21-25 NLT**

But in marriage there is a governance, an authority structure, that God put in place and Paul wisely gave us the illustration of exactly how it works.

- Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord.
- Husband is the head. “JUST AS” Christ is head of the church.
 - Jesus is the Savior of his body, the church.
 - As the church submits to Jesus, so wives should submit to their husbands.
- This also means that husbands must love their wives just as Jesus loved the church.
 - How's that? He gave up his life for her!
 - Husbands are told to love their wives as they love their own bodies!
 - The man that loves his wife like this shows that he loves himself.
- Paul concludes by saying “this is a great mystery!” It's an illustration of how Christ and the church are one.

Well, what was man's consequences?

God said, “now the ground is cursed because of Adam!” And man's restrictions mean:

- We have to struggle to scratch a living from a cursed earth!
- We have to sweat to eat. (no wonder why so many guys struggle with life – they are holding up their end of the curse by NOT WORKING).
- The restrictions and struggles don't end until our bodies return to the earth itself!

The fall *introduced* hierarchy as conflict and control...that's the curse.

The redemption of the gospel is the *reversal* of the curse, not its institutionalization.

Yet God Still Calls His Daughters

Text: [Exodus 15:20–21 \(Miriam\)](#); [Judges 4–5 \(Deborah\)](#); [2 Kings 22:14–20 \(Huldah\)](#)

Point: The Old Testament includes women who lead, prophesy, judge, teach, and help redirect God's people.

Examples: Miriam, Deborah, Huldah.

We simply follow the thread throughout the Bible. These women are not loopholes nor accidents. They are biblical witnesses that God has never been limited by human assumptions about who He can call.

Sons and Daughters Will Prophecy

Text: [Joel 2:28–29](#); [Acts 2:16–18](#) (Main Scripture Text)

Point: Pentecost announces that the Spirit is poured out on sons and daughters, servants and handmaidens.

No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants—men and women alike—and they will prophesy. **Acts 2:16-18 NLT**

This prophecy continues to be fulfilled: Pentecostal theology matters here. The Spirit does not merely comfort people; He empowers people for witness. The AG position paper specifically ties women's ministry to Joel's prophecy and its fulfillment at Pentecost. ([Assemblies of God](#)).

Paul Had Women in the Room

Text: [Romans 16:1–16](#); [Acts 18:24–26](#); [Philippians 4:2–3](#)

Point: Paul's own ministry network included women who served as coworkers, teachers, patrons, deacons/servants, and notable leaders.

Key Names: Phoebe, Priscilla, Junia, Euodia, Syntyche.

The apostle/evangelist/church planter makes this clear: Romans 16 is not a footnote; it is evidence. **Before we decide what Paul "must have meant" in the debated passages, we need to pay attention to what Paul actually practiced and praised.**

The Hard Texts Deserve Honest Reading

Text: [1 Corinthians 11:5](#); [1 Corinthians 14:34–35](#); [1 Timothy 2:11–15](#)

Point: The debated passages must be read carefully, contextually, and alongside the full biblical witness.

Is the tension purposeful? Yes, there are Scriptural tensions: **Paul speaks of women praying and prophesying in [1 Corinthians 11:5](#), yet also addresses silence/order in [1 Corinthians 14:34](#).**

There are three of them:

But a woman dishonors her head if she prays or prophesies without a covering on her head, for this is the same as shaving her head. **1 Corinthians 11:5 NLT**

Women should be silent during the church meetings. It is not proper for them to speak. They should be submissive, just as the law says. If they have any questions, they should ask their husbands at home, for it is improper for women to speak in church meetings. **1 Corinthians 14:34-35 NLT**

Women should learn quietly and submissively. I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly. **1 Timothy 2:11-12 NLT**

Let's start with this:

We are an Assemblies of God church and I am an ordained pastor (36 yrs), a credentialed minister (8 yrs) totaling 44 yrs with the Assemblies of God.

I am not hiding behind the Assemblies of God position – I believed it since I've been serving in a church or church ministry at 18yrs old.

The [Assemblies of God](#), since its inception in 1914, has believed and promoted women in ministry at all levels in our churches – 16 million people and 451,512 churches are a part of the Assemblies of God.

The [Assemblies of God](#) was created to be the greatest mission's organization the world has ever seen.

The AG position argues these texts are not absolute bans but responses to local problems, especially when viewed alongside Paul's broader ministry practice. ([Assemblies of God](#)).

This is what it means to **contextualize Scriptures according to culture**, it's **admitting that certain practices are allowable in one setting, but not in others.**

One of my favorite theologians, the late Timothy Keller, says, "Contextualization is **adapting the expression and practice of biblical truth to people of a particular culture**, so it is as understandable and compelling to them as possible, without compromising that truth in any way."

Paul shared the gospel to Jews ([Acts 13:16–41](#)), blue-collar ([Acts 14:8–17](#)) and white-collar Pagans ([Acts 17:19–31](#)). And in each of these messages Paul's language matched the audience he was speaking to.

- "The God of this nation of Israel chose our ancestors" to the Jews
- "Friends, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings—just like you! We have come to bring you the Good News..." to the locals in Lystra.
- "Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines..." to the council leaders in Athens.

The text in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 addresses a specific issue in the Church of Ephesus, within the city of Ephesus.

What was this contextual issue in Ephesus?

The Artemis (Diana) Cult was powerful and dominating in first century Ephesus.

In the Artemis cult's origin narrative, the woman came first, and her twin Apollo came second — a birth order that gave Artemis dominance over her male counterpart. [Missio Nexus](#)

Paul wasn't writing a universal policy on women in ministry. He was writing a pastoral letter to a church struggling to confront a goddess cult that taught female superiority, suppressed male spiritual leadership, and blended pagan mythology into the gospel.

The Mission Requires the Whole Church

Text: [Matthew 28:18–20](#); [Romans 12:4–8](#); [1 Corinthians 12:4–27](#); [Ephesians 4:11–16](#)

Point: The mission of Jesus requires the full deployment of Spirit-gifted people.

It's about the Kingdom of God, not our individual preferences:

This is not about status, titles, or winning a theological debate. It is about mission.

The Church is healthiest when every called, gifted, Spirit-empowered person is released to serve faithfully.

“The size of this challenge surely requires the full deployment of all God's Spirit-gifted ministers, whether male or female.” ([Assemblies of God](#))

God doesn't give gifts to half the Church for the mission of the whole world.

Critical Emphasis

The goal should not be “culture finally got this right and the Church was wrong.” Scripture is our authority, the Spirit is the one who empowers, and the mission is too important for us to sideline anyone's calling.

Many faithful Christians and good, solid churches still disagree on these passages.

REFLECTIONS

- **The Image You Carry**
 - before you were assigned a role, you were given an identity. **Genesis 1 doesn't say God created man in His image and woman in man's image.** Both. Together. Equally. The question worth sitting with is: *Have I been treating the women around me as full image-bearers — or as supporting cast in someone else's story?*
- **The Curse Was Never the Design** We have spent centuries building theology on Genesis 3 when God's original design is in Genesis 1 and 2. Hierarchy as conflict and

control entered through the fall — it is a description of brokenness, not a blueprint for the church. Ask yourself: *Where have I confused the curse with the calling?*

- **God Has Never Been Impressed by Our Limitations** Deborah judged. Huldah prophesied when the king needed a word from God. Miriam led worship. None of them were loopholes. They were God simply doing what God does — calling whoever He wants, whenever He wants, for whatever He needs. *When have you almost missed what God was doing because it came through someone you didn't expect?*
- **Ephesus Was a Real Place With a Real Problem** Paul was not writing a universal policy manual. He was writing a pastoral emergency letter to a church being pulled back into a goddess cult that taught female superiority, suppressed men's spiritual engagement, and was smuggling pagan mythology into the gospel. When we rip 1 Timothy 2 out of Ephesus and paste it over every church in every century, we are not being more faithful to Scripture — we are being less faithful to it.

APPLICATION

Now How Shall We Live?

For the Church as a Community:

- **Make room at the table. Don't make someone fight for it.** If your church's culture makes gifted women feel they need to prove their calling rather than simply live it out, that is a culture worth examining.
- Name the women in our Romans 16. Every church has a Phoebe, a Priscilla, a Junia. Call their names. Say what they do. Honor their labor publicly the way Paul did.

For Men Specifically:

- Mutual submission (Ephesians 5:21) comes *before* the instruction to wives. Paul led with it deliberately. **The man who loves his wife the way Christ loved the church is reflecting Jesus. And, the leader who genuinely champions the women God is all about the Mission of God.**
- Ask the women in your life — in your home, in your small group, in your church — "*Do you feel seen here? Do you feel released here?*" And then actually listen to the answer.

For Women Specifically:

- **Your calling is not contingent on someone else's permission. It is commissioned by the Spirit's empowerment,** and Joel said He would pour that out on daughters. If God has gifted and called you, steward it faithfully and keep showing up.

For All of Us:

- **Hold the tension with humility. Faithful, Bible-believing people still disagree on these passages, and that deserves respect, not a culture war. We have far too many as it is. Our goal is not to win an argument; it is to fulfill a mission.** Stay anchored to Scripture, stay empowered by the Spirit, and stay focused on the reason any of this matters: *the world still needs Jesus, and He needs all of us to go.*

SCRIPTURES

Romans 16:1-16 NLT ON SCREEN

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchrea. Welcome her in the Lord as one who is worthy of honor among God's people. Help her in whatever she needs, for she has been helpful to many, and especially to me. Give my greetings to

Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in the ministry of Christ Jesus. In fact, they once risked their lives for me. I am thankful to them, and so are all the Gentile churches. Also give my greetings to the church that meets in their home. Greet my dear friend Epenetus. He was the first person from the province of Asia to become a follower of Christ. Give my greetings to Mary, who has worked so hard for your benefit. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews, who were in prison with me. They are highly respected among the apostles and became followers of Christ before I did. Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys. Greet Apelles, a good man whom Christ approves. And give my greetings to the believers from the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew. Greet the Lord's people from the household of Narcissus. Give my greetings to Tryphena and Tryphosa, the Lord's workers, and to dear Persis, who has worked so hard for the Lord. Greet Rufus, whom the Lord picked out to be his very own; and also his dear mother, who has been a mother to me. Give my greetings to Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters who meet with them. Give my greetings to Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and to Olympas and all the believers who meet with them. Greet each other with a sacred kiss. All the churches of Christ send you their greetings.

Ephesians 5:21-25 NLT ON SCREEN

And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything. For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her.

Acts 2:16-18 NLT ON SCREEN

No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants—men and women alike—and they will prophesy.'

1 Corinthians 11:5 NLT ON SCREEN

But a woman dishonors her head if she prays or prophesies without a covering on her head, for this is the same as shaving her head

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 NLT ON SCREEN

Women should be silent during the church meetings. It is not proper for them to speak. They should be submissive, just as the law says. If they have any questions, they should ask their husbands at home, for it is improper for women to speak in church meetings.

1 Timothy 2:11-12 NLT ON SCREEN

Women should learn quietly and submissively. I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly.



DIG DEEPER NOTES



Eve's restrictions: Her desire to control her husband or all men in general.

Genesis 3:16 — "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

The Hebrew word for "desire" here is תַּשׁוּקָה (*teshuqah*) — and it only appears three times in the entire Old Testament, which makes each usage significant.

The Three Uses of *Teshuqah*

1. Genesis 3:16 — **woman's desire toward her husband**
2. Genesis 4:7 — **sin's desire to master Cain** ("sin is crouching at the door; it desires to have you")
3. Song of Solomon 7:10 — the **beloved's desire for her lover** (used positively)

The Genesis 4:7 parallel is the most theologically loaded. The word in that verse clearly means a desire to *control* or *dominate* — sin wants to master Cain. Most scholars see that as the interpretive key for Genesis 3:16 as well; the woman's "desire" is a desire to usurp or control, and the man's "ruling" is the equal and opposite sinful response. Both are descriptions of the fall, not prescriptions for how things should be.

Is It About Her Husband Specifically, or Men in General?

The text says husband — the Hebrew *ish* in this context almost certainly means the specific covenant partner, not mankind broadly. So grammatically and contextually, the curse is relational and marital, not a statement about women's disposition toward all men universally. Here's why that distinction matters theologically:

- If it were about women and men *in general*, you'd expect it to show up in the social legislation of the Old Testament — but it doesn't. Women judges (Deborah), women prophets (Huldah), women leaders are never framed as violations of a creation-fall principle about female authority over men broadly.
- The curse is parallel in structure — the man's struggle is with the *ground*, not with all of nature universally. It's a specific relational disruption: his primary domain (work/creation) becomes adversarial. Her primary relational bond (marriage) becomes a power struggle. Both are broken shalom in their most intimate sphere.

The Bigger Theological Point

The fall introduced hierarchy as conflict and control — that's the curse.

The redemption of the gospel is the reversal of the curse, not its institutionalization.

Paul's own words in Galatians 3:28 — "*neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*" — read in light of Genesis 3 aren't just a spiritual abstraction. They're a declaration that in Christ, the curse-driven power struggle between men and women is being undone. The mission of the church doesn't operate under Genesis 3 rules. It operates under the new creation.

So the struggle in Genesis 3:16 is specific to the marriage relationship, not a universal statement about women wanting to dominate all men — and **even within marriage, it's a description of brokenness, not a design for godliness**. The design was Genesis 1 and 2: image bearers together, ruling together, sent together.



Paul repeatedly praised women in ministry, holding them up as examples for others to follow. First Timothy 2:11–12 is best understood not as a contradiction of that stance, but a unique situation requiring context.

Tragically, misunderstanding of the apostle Paul's position on women in ministry keeps many women from fulfilling God's calling and robs the Church of their gifts.

A key passage at the center of this debate is [1 Timothy 2:8–15](#). Writing to his young protégé in Ephesus, the apostle Paul seems to indicate Christian women should shut up and yield to male leadership. But is that really what Paul had in mind?

See the rest of the article [HERE](#).



Paul's command to Timothy, pastoring in Ephesus.

Paul, "**do not let women teach men or have authority over them**," but did Paul allow women to teach in other churches or context?

Yes, and the contrast is striking.

The passage in question (1 Timothy 2:12) is almost certainly a *situational* instruction to a *specific church* with a *specific problem*, not a universal ban on women teaching. The evidence from Paul's own letters and practice makes this clear.

What Paul actually did with women:

Priscilla (Prisca) is the clearest example. In Acts 18, when Apollos "began to speak boldly in the synagogue," it was Priscilla and Aquila who "took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately." Apollos was a gifted male preacher — and a woman corrected and instructed him. Notably, both Luke and Paul give Priscilla the place of prominence in most references (Acts 18:18–19, 26; Romans 16:3; 2 Timothy 4:19), suggesting she filled the more influential ministry role of the two. [The Gospel Coalition Assemblies of God](#)

Phoebe is described as a *deacon* of the church at Cenchrea (Romans 16:1) — and she was almost certainly the one who *delivered* Paul's letter to Rome, which means she would have been the one to read and explain it to the congregation.

Junia is called "outstanding among the apostles" in Romans 16:7, and she was in Christ before Paul himself. [The Briefing](#)

Taken together, Paul mentions 10 women in Romans 16 alone, and if women from his other letters are included, the number rises to 18. He valued the ministry of women and regarded many of them as ministry partners. [Marg Mowczko](#)

So, what's happening in 1 Timothy 2?

The key is context. It is probably no coincidence that the one passage in the Bible prohibiting women from teaching appears in the one set of letters where we explicitly know that false teachers were targeting and working through women. [The Junia Project](#)

Paul's purpose in writing to Timothy was to **encourage him to confront the false teachers who had infiltrated the church at Ephesus; and his overarching concern is that women reflect godliness through good works, as a counterbalance to the deceptive and destructive effects of the false teaching.** [Regent University](#)

There's also a significant word worth noting: the Greek word Paul uses for "having authority over" men is "[authentein](#)," which only appears here in the entire New Testament. A growing number of scholars see it as carrying a very negative overtone — meaning "**domineering over**" or "**usurping authority**," rather than the ordinary exercise of leadership. [Theology Pathfinder](#)

The tension is real. **Paul the man who wrote 1 Timothy 2 is the same Paul who celebrated Priscilla teaching Apollos, called Phoebe a deacon, and named Junia an apostle.** If Paul commended female ministers, **there must be more to his seeming prohibition in 1 Timothy, otherwise his teaching on the subject would be incoherent and inconsistent.** [Assemblies of God](#)

The most faithful reading is that 1 Timothy 2 addresses a *local crisis* in Ephesus (false teaching, disorder in worship, women caught up in heresy), not a timeless ceiling on what women can do in the church. And Paul's wider practice, his actual ministry team, shows women fully engaged in teaching, leading, and proclaiming.

Indeed, the cult of Artemis is key to understanding 1 Timothy 2:8–15



The cult of Artemis

The Temple Itself

The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus was an extremely large and famous pilgrimage site in the ancient world, and worship of Artemis was a central part of civic and religious life in Ephesus; major festivals like the Artemisia included processions, sacrifices, competitions, and dramatic performances. The Temple was essentially the heart of the city in more ways than just religiously. [Online Sex Work](#)

Her temple was among the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, measuring close to 400 feet long by 200 feet wide and containing 127 columns, each about 60 feet high. The Ephesians hailed their city as "guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the image which fell down from heaven" (Acts 19:35). This is the same riot Paul triggered when his preaching cut into the silversmiths' trade in Artemis statues (Acts 19:23–27). [Truth Magazine](#)

Who Artemis Was

Artemis of Ephesus was originally an Anatolian goddess before her cult was taken over by the Greeks, and she is related to other Anatolian mother goddesses like Cybele. By Paul's time, she had evolved significantly: once an Anatolian fertility goddess, Artemis of Ephesus had morphed into a tomboy virgin — pure and inviolable, with a retinue of dancing nymphs, and was considered the protector of human children. [LiviusRedemptive History Theology](#)

Women's Power in the Cult

This is the key connection to 1 Timothy. **The Artemis cult provided women with religious authority and social status uncommon in the ancient world**, while simultaneously fostering an environment where male influence in religious matters was comparatively diminished.

[Sallieborrink](#)

One of the main things we know about religion in Ephesus is that the main religion was a female-only cult. The temple was attended by a very large hierarchy of religious persons. The Romans transferred the lead function to a grand priestess, a virgin assisted by a college of virgins. [Truth Magazine](#)

The Creation Myth

Here is where the Artemis cult directly collides with what Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2. **In the Artemis cult's origin narrative, the woman came first, and her twin Apollo came second — a birth order that gave Artemis dominance over her male counterpart.** [Missio Nexus](#)

It was popular belief that Artemis was the pre-eminent firstborn, with Apollo, her twin, being subsequent. This birth order gave Artemis dominance over her male twin — she was the big sister in charge. [Kay Bonikowsky](#)

Now read Paul's words with fresh eyes: "*Adam was formed first, then Eve*" (1 Timothy 2:13). Seeing Paul's instructions to Timothy as an apologetic against false teaching in Ephesus both fits the context and allows interpreters to better synthesize the whole counsel of God. If Timothy's charges in Ephesus were unduly influenced by the Artemis cult and its over-exalting of woman, the Genesis story brought a course correction — the female is not superior; Genesis proves it. [Dr. Sandra Glahn](#)

Paul isn't establishing hierarchy as a timeless principle; he's correcting a specific myth. By reiterating the creation order of Genesis, Paul is correcting the familiar cultural narrative of the day, in which the female goddess Artemis was first. He uses a true narrative to counter a competing false one. [Substack](#)

The Childbirth Connection

Even the strange verse about being "saved through childbearing" (1 Timothy 2:15) makes sense here. Gentile women facing the dangerous experience of childbirth would be tempted to continue praying to Artemis for help, since Artemis was widely worshiped as the protector through the most hazardous of all feminine experiences. Paul is essentially saying: you don't need Artemis for that; trust God. [Grace and Knowledge](#)

The church in Ephesus was operating in the shadow of the immensely powerful Temple of Artemis. The cult's influence permeated the city's social, economic, and religious life, and its elevation of women into positions of religious authority would have been the dominant spiritual framework new converts were emerging from. [Sallieborrink](#)

Paul wasn't writing a universal policy on women in ministry. He was writing a pastoral letter to a church being pulled back into a goddess cult that taught female superiority, suppressed male spiritual leadership, and blended pagan mythology into the gospel. The restrictions in 1 Timothy 2 are **Paul's scalpel for a specific infection, not a ceiling for the whole church in every age.**



The Corinthian Context

Corinth was a major port city; cosmopolitan, religiously pluralistic, and socially chaotic. The church there reflected that chaos. First Corinthians is essentially Paul's triage letter addressing division, lawsuits, sexual immorality, idol food, spiritual gift competition, and disorderly worship, all in one letter. Chapter 14 specifically deals with the ordering of worship, particularly the use of tongues and prophecy.

The Immediate Literary Context

This is critical and often overlooked. **The word "silence" is called for three times in 1 Corinthians 14 — in verses 28, 30, and 34. In verses 28 and 30, silence is called for in specific situations to regulate congregational contributions from tongue-speakers and prophets. The women are instructed to "keep silent" in verse 34 as a third group in the same series. So Paul is applying the same situational principle — be quiet in this specific moment — to three different groups, not establishing a universal ban for any of them.**

What Was Actually Happening

Apparently, there was a situation in Corinth where, when prophecies were being evaluated, presumably by male elders, certain women were interjecting, asking questions, perhaps even challenging the rulings. It was the custom at that time in both synagogues and early churches for the elders to weigh what was said and pass judgment as to whether it was to be received by the church or rejected as heresy. **The disruption wasn't women speaking generally; it was wives publicly questioning or challenging their husbands' prophecies during the evaluation process, which was creating disorder and social awkwardness in a culture with strict household honor codes.**

This also explains why Paul says "*ask their husbands at home,*" he's almost certainly talking about **wives, not all women broadly**. The word translated "women" in verse 34 can refer to either "women" or "wives," the meaning must be determined from context, and in this case "wives" is more likely because the next verse refers to "their husbands." This means at the very least, unmarried women are not included in Paul's instruction.

The Tension with Chapter 11

Paul has already indicated in 1 Corinthians itself that women are allowed to speak in church, for example when they pray or prophesy, activities that were almost always performed aloud in antiquity. How could he allow women to speak in chapter 11 but disallow it in chapter 14? This is the internal contradiction that makes a universal interpretation of verse 34 very difficult to sustain.

The Textual Wild Card

There is a layer here that preachers should at least be aware of, even if they don't preach it. A group of Western manuscripts — including D, G, and 88 — place verses 34–35 after verse 40 rather than after verse 33, which is where they appear in all other manuscripts. **Some**

scholars, including Gordon Fee, have argued this suggests the verses may have been a marginal note that got inserted into the text at different points by different scribes. The majority of scholars still consider them authentically Pauline, but the manuscript instability around these two verses is unique in the entire letter.

The Bottom Line

The Corinthian problem is **disorder in worship** during a **specific evaluative process; not a theological statement about women's capacity to teach or lead.** It's a **situational correction, likely aimed at wives specifically**, embedded in a chapter that tells tongue-speakers and prophets to be quiet in specific moments too. The same Paul who wrote verse 34 wrote chapter 11:5 explicitly assuming women would prophesy publicly in that same church. The tension is real; but it resolves much more cleanly as a *situational instruction* than as a universal policy.