

Prayer, Men, and Women (3)

A month or two ago, we began to unpack a controversial passage, 1 Timothy 2:11-15, which addresses God's design and role for women in the local church. This passage has sparked considerable debate and controversy, particularly in recent years.

But, before we move on to any new material, let me take a moment to review and clarify a few key points we covered last time. Paul's first letter to Timothy was written to address specific problems at a specific church, the church in Ephesus. It was written to confront and correct issues that had arisen from the teachings of false teachers. Paul wrote to Timothy to give instructions on how believers should conduct themselves when gathered together as a local church. One of the problems that Timothy was to address was the attitude and behavior of some women during the worship service, an issue that was causing great turmoil and disturbance in the church. When the church gathered together for corporate worship, some of the women were improperly dressed, flaunting their sexuality, showing off their wealth, drawing attention to themselves, and distracting others from the worship of the Lord God.

1 Timothy 2:9-10 likewise 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, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness – with good works.

The main idea is that a modest and self-controlled woman would feel great concern and great conviction if her appearance and demeanor distracted others from the worship of the Lord God. In the local church, a woman's proper adornment must be the attitudes of humility and discretion.

Another issue that needed to be addressed was the role of women in the church. Some of the women were not only improperly adorned, distracting others from the worship of the Lord God, but were also attempting to usurp the authority of the men, thereby disrupting God's established order for the church.

Please turn with me to 1 Timothy 2:11-15. Let us read the passage together.

1 Timothy 2:11-15 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.

According to this passage, what is the Lord God's role for women in the local church? What function has the Lord God ordained for women to perform in the local church?

1. Women are to receive instruction (v. 11)
2. Women are not to teach or exercise authority over a man (v. 12)
3. Women are to understand the reason for this command (vv. 13–14)
4. Women are to recognize their contribution (v. 15)

Last month, we addressed 1 Timothy 2:11, specifically regarding the role and function of women in the local church. Paul begins by stating a culturally significant command: Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. This statement was just as controversial then as it is today, but for an entirely different reason. Counter to the Roman, Greek, and Jewish opinions of the day, which often suppressed and marginalized women, Paul commands that women must receive instruction. In the household of God, women must be taught the word of God. Women must be included in the learning process.

The reason for this command is that men and women share an equal standing before the Lord God. In terms of salvation, there is no Jew or Greek, no slave or free person, no male or female, but all partake of the same spiritual blessings. Regardless of race, gender, nationality, social or economic standing, all are one in the Lord Jesus Christ, and all are equal in the Lord Jesus Christ. Men and women were both created in the image of God, and thus, both men and women are equal in their standing before Him.

However, the spiritual equality that men and women share does not negate the differences in their roles. Equality does not mean sameness. Yes, men and women have spiritual equality, but they also have very different roles to fulfill. In the church, the household of God, it is the Lord God's design for men to lead and teach, and for women to follow and learn. And according to Scripture, the two attitudes that should characterize a woman's learning in the local church are quiet and with all submissiveness. I want to point out that these two words —quietly and with submissiveness—do not describe a strange or uniquely female way of learning. Not at all. These describe the only posture in which anyone can truly learn, whether man or woman. It is impossible to teach effectively when people are talking over you. It is impossible to teach when your authority is being challenged or disregarded by your listeners. Yes, 1 Timothy 2:11 is addressed to women, but I believe its underlying principle applies to everyone in the church, both men and women. As any teacher will tell you, to be a successful learner, you need to stop talking and start listening. You need to be respectful and receptive to your teacher. In essence, you must submit yourself to their knowledge and authority. You must learn quietly and with all submissiveness. Otherwise, what is the point?

In the local church, according to the design of the Lord God, women are to receive instruction quietly and with all submissiveness. Paul gives further instruction in the following verse. The command of 1 Timothy 2:11 is then followed by a prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:12.

1 Timothy 2:11-12 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.

As you are well aware, over the past few decades, this passage has been widely misunderstood and misinterpreted on both sides of the theological divide. There are some who attempt to evade the plain and clear meaning of this passage by arguing that “quietly” merely describes how a woman is to teach. According to this view, the verse does not prohibit a woman from teaching, but only from teaching with the wrong attitude. In this interpretation, women are permitted to teach, provided their teaching is characterized by a quiet and submissive spirit. On the other hand, others have swung the pendulum in the opposite direction, using this passage to argue that women should never speak in the local church, under any circumstances. Neither of these interpretations is valid.

What is the correct interpretation of this passage? How do we determine its true meaning? The answer is context. The context makes the meaning of this passage abundantly clear. If there were any doubt about the meaning of verse 11, it is clarified in verse 12. How is a

woman to quietly receive instruction? How is she to demonstrate all submissiveness? What is Paul's answer? In the local church, women are to receive instruction quietly, meaning they are not to teach or have authority over men. They are to demonstrate all submissiveness by not teaching or exercising authority over a man.

1 Timothy 2:12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.

In Greek, the word translated as "permit" means to give leave or to allow someone to do what they desire. The implication is that some women in Ephesus wanted to teach and exercise authority over men, but Paul did not grant them that permission. He did not allow it. He did not permit it. It is a common practice for some to limit the application of this verse by claiming that Paul was merely expressing his personal opinion. According to this view, the verse should be read as, "I, Paul, do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet."

This idea suggests that Paul was not speaking on behalf of the Lord God, but simply sharing his own opinions and preferences. Because of this, some argue that this instruction is not authoritative and is therefore not applicable to the local church today. Is this a valid view? Is there anything fundamentally wrong with this view? Let me ask you this: How do you differentiate between the view of Paul and the view of the Lord God? How do you clearly distinguish the inspired words of God [the words that are God-breathed] from the personal opinions of the biblical writers? Or let me ask you this: Are the words of Jesus Christ more true than the words of Paul? More true than the words of Peter? Or John? Or Moses? Are the red letters in your Bible more inspired and true than the black?

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

All Scripture is inspired, breathed out by the Lord God. All Scripture is from the Lord God. He is the source; from Genesis to Revelation, from Moses to John, the Bible is God's perfect revelation to man. In his letter to Timothy, Paul wrote under the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit. As a result, his words are not merely his own; they are the very words of God: authoritative and applicable to all people, for all time.

Consider [for a moment] what the Scripture says about itself. Peter writes that Scripture is not a product of human opinion or personal interpretation.

2 Peter 1:19-21 And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible is not a collection of human ideas or merely the best of earthly wisdom. The writers of Scripture did not write according to their own imagination or initiative, but were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Meaning, while human authors penned the words, it was the Spirit of God who directed their message. Our confession of faith, the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, states in (A1/P4):

The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God.

In our passage this morning, it is essential to recall that Paul was speaking with the full apostolic authority granted to him by the Lord God. Paul was speaking on behalf of the Lord God, who is Truth. In fact, he even reminds us of this earlier in his letter.

1 Timothy 2:7 For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Our passage this morning is not merely the opinion of a single man. This passage is God-breathed, and it carries with it the full authority of God.

Another common interpretation of this passage is that it reflects only a cultural limitation, that Paul's instructions applied solely to the church in Ephesus at that time. But was Paul addressing a temporary cultural issue, or does this passage hold ongoing relevance for the church today?

Certainly, there are some passages in the Scriptures that are shaped by their cultural context. For example: Refraining from eating meat sacrificed to idols is not really a concern for most Christians today, at least not within our cultural context. However, the principles behind the issue remain timeless: exercising Christian liberty, loving fellow believers, honoring matters of conscience, and avoiding idolatry. Similarly, greeting one another with a holy kiss was a culturally appropriate gesture in the early church, but it is not so much so today. Still, the underlying principle of warm Christian fellowship remains, even if it now takes the form of a handshake, a hug, or a pat on the back. Paul's instruction to Timothy to use wine for medicinal purposes was a practical, situational guideline, not a timeless command.

While some passages are indeed cultural, 1 Timothy 2:11–12 is not one of them. These instructions were not just for the church in Ephesus. Other Scriptures make it clear that these standards reflect the Lord God's design for all churches, for all time. For example:

1 Corinthians 14:33-35 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, 34 the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. 35 If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

The intent of this particular passage was not to prohibit women from speaking altogether, but rather to prevent disruption and disorder during worship service. The church at Corinth was a chaotic mess. It was full of confusion and disorder, and some women were disrupting the service by speaking in tongues and evaluating and interpreting those tongues, all out of turn and out of order. Paul's rebuke was clear: "It is shameful for a woman to speak in church." Paul's concern was that disruptive speech, including women speaking out and evaluating tongues and passing judgments on prophecies, caused confusion and hindered the orderly worship that the Lord God desires. The phrase "shameful" refers to something improper or dishonorable in that specific context of public worship; speaking in a way that undermined the order and authority structure the Lord God ordained.

This instruction was not based on the spiritual inferiority of women. Many women have tremendous leadership abilities and profound insights into the Word of God. However, while women may be gifted teachers and powerful communicators, these gifts are not to be exercised over the authority of men within the church. This is by God's design.

There is a very good reason behind these instructions. The role and function of women in the local church were not based on the opinion of one man. It was not rooted in Greek or Roman culture, Jewish tradition, or specific cultural issues within the Ephesian church. If it were based on any of those things, then these verses would have limited application, and women could preach, teach, and exercise authority over men as they pleased. But the rationale behind these instructions is far deeper: it is grounded in the decree of the Lord God from the very beginning of creation.

1 Timothy 2:12-14 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.

The basis and grounds for a woman's role and function in the local church are rooted in Creation. It is rooted in the Lord God's created order. It is rooted in the Lord God's specific and intentional design. Adam was formed first, then Eve. In God's created order, we clearly see the priority that has been given to man. Adam was formed first. Adam was created first. Adam existed before Eve was even created, underscoring his role as the head in God's design. The fact that the Lord God created Adam first, and not Eve, clearly establishes his headship and his authority over her. By the decree of the Lord God, it was Adam who was appointed as the head of creation. He took Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and care for it. Adam was given responsibility for all that the Lord God had entrusted to him. He was given dominion and became the primary steward of God's good creation.

Genesis 2:18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

I have always found this verse fascinating. Even though everything in Genesis 1 was declared "very good," it was not good for man to be alone. Before the fall, before sin, death, disease, and despair entered into the world, in a perfect and pure world, it was still not good for man to be alone. Adam needed a companion. He needed a helper, someone suitable, someone complementary. So God created the woman to be a helper for man. Again, this was by God's design: woman was created to help man.

1 Corinthians 11:8-9 For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. 9 Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.

Today, most people would scoff at the idea that woman was created to help men. But this principle is not a product of cultural bias or patriarchy; it is the clear teaching of the Scriptures. Regardless of how this truth is received in our modern context, this is the design of the Lord God, rooted in creation itself. Have you ever thought about why, in 1 Peter 3, it says that a woman who adorns herself with "the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit" is precious in the sight of God? I believe it is because a woman with a gentle and quiet spirit is one who reflects an understanding of God's design for her life. She embraces the role and function that the Lord God has given her, and willingly, she submits to His design, which is what makes her truly precious in His sight.

Do you see why the role and function of women in the church has nothing to do with the culture? This is not a cultural issue. Nor is this something that can be explained away because it was based on Paul's biased beliefs and preferences. Men and women have different roles. Men and women function differently. This is because of God's created order. Adam was created first, and Eve was created to be a helper for Adam.

1 Timothy 2:13-14 For Adam was formed first, then Eve; 14 and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

In this verse, Paul further affirms the Lord God's design and intention for women. He points to the fall in Genesis 3 as an example, using it to confirm that it is man's role to lead and woman's role to follow. In the first two chapters of Genesis, we see a beautiful portrayal of how life was meant to be lived. There is a loving and leading husband, and a submissive and helping wife, living side by side in perfect harmony and unity. Adam and Eve were one flesh. Adam was, quite literally, the perfect husband, and Eve was, quite literally, the perfect wife. By the Lord God's design, Adam was the head and leader, and Eve was the helper and follower. In Genesis 3, the serpent entered the scene, and the beauty of creation was marred with the dreadful stain of sin.

Genesis 3:1-7 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

In this passage, we witness the first instance of a woman usurping the authority and role of a man. By taking the fruit and eating it, Eve stepped out from under the protection and headship of her husband. Eve had been deceived. Adam, however, though not deceived, was no less culpable. He had violated his God-given role by following his wife instead of leading her. Adam sat idle and listened when he should have taken initiative. He failed to lead, failed to protect, and remained silent rather than speaking out against the lies and deception of the serpent.

Genesis 3:17 And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

It is interesting to note that the Lord God not only disapproved of Adam and Eve's disobedience in eating the fruit, but He also disapproved of how the man and woman related to one another during the entire incident. "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife..." This is a very important and significant statement. The Lord God was displeased that Adam abdicated his responsibility to lead and protect his home. In effect, the Lord God was saying: "Adam, because you listened to your wife, because you followed her lead, took direction from

her, and failed to fulfill the role I gave you as head, here are the consequences.” And those consequences are laid out in the rest of Genesis 3.

Genesis 3:17-19 16 To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” 17 And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

The Lord God held Adam responsible for the fall in Genesis 3. Though it was Eve who sinned first, Scripture consistently places the primary responsibility on Adam. Do you know why? Because Adam was the head. Adam was the one appointed to lead, protect, and guard what the Lord God had entrusted to him, including his wife. This theme is seen throughout the Scriptures, but especially in Romans 5.

Romans 5:12 Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

Romans 5:14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

Romans 5:15 Many died through one man's trespass...

Romans 5:17 Because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man,

Romans 5:18 As one trespass led to condemnation for all men...

Romans 5:19 By the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners.

Do you ever wonder why Satan approached the woman and not the man? Why is it that Satan approached Eve and not Adam? I think it is because Satan knew the order that the Lord God had established. Satan knew that Adam was the head, and that is why he bypassed him and spoke directly to Eve. In opposition to the design of God, Satan approached the woman and put her in a position of authority. Satan put the woman in the position of leadership. And the consequences were dire: the entrance of sin, death, disease, and despair into the world.

Women are not to lead or exercise authority over men because the Lord God did not create men and women to function in that way. He could have, but He did not. In the local church, men are to lead, and women are to submit to their leadership. The created order is the reason for the command.

Lastly, women are to recognize their contribution (v. 15).

1 Timothy 2:15 Yet she will be saved through childbearing –if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

This is a [really] difficult verse to exposit. In my mind, it just does not seem to fit with the rest of the passage. So make sure to be a Berean. As with any sermon you hear, make sure that you go back to the Scriptures and line up what is said with the Scriptures.

In 1 Timothy 2:15, Paul offers a difficult but deeply meaningful statement: “Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.” The word translated as “saved” is the common New Testament term for salvation (*sōzō*), although in certain contexts, it can also mean to be preserved, rescued, or delivered. Clearly, Paul was not saying that women are justified before the Lord God by having children; this would contradict all of the Scriptures. Rather, Paul seems to be pointing out that, even though a woman (Eve) was the first to fall, God, in His grace, has appointed a unique and honorable role for women within His redemptive plan. Far from being sidelined, women are called to embrace godly femininity, including, when applicable, the noble calling of motherhood, as a way of living out their faith.

In this context, “childbearing” likely represents the broader sphere of womanhood as designed by the Lord God, particularly in the home. And Paul says that women who continue in faith, love, holiness, and self-control will be saved, not by the act of motherhood itself, but as they faithfully live out their roles in godly submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Of course, not every woman is called to be a wife or a mother. But every woman is called to embrace her God-given identity, not seeking fulfillment in roles meant for men, but in joyfully living out the beauty of biblical womanhood. It is there that women will find true contentment, peace, and purpose, not in imitation of men, but in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'd like to close with this thought. In Genesis 3:1-2, the serpent said to the woman, “Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?” Is that what God actually said? No, it was not.

Genesis 2:16-17 And the Lord God commanded that man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

Have you ever considered why Satan phrased his question the way he did? “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” It was a deliberate attempt to shift Eve’s focus onto what she was forbidden to do. This question was designed to plant doubt and distort God’s generosity. Satan knew exactly what the Lord God had said, but he twisted it, deceiving Eve into questioning God’s command.

Satan is still working in the same way today. “Did God really say, ‘You shall not preach’? Did God really say, ‘You shall not teach’? Did God really say, ‘You shall not exercise authority over a man’?” Did God truly say that? That does not seem fair. That does not seem right. Shouldn’t women be allowed to do everything men can do? This is just another one of Satan’s tactics. He shifts women’s attention to what the Lord God has prohibited, causing them to overlook the vital and irreplaceable roles that He has entrusted to them. As a result, the church, the family, and marriages suffer from a lack of what only women can uniquely provide. It is deeply tragic that in today’s world, and even within the church, many women feel incomplete and unfulfilled simply because they are not permitted to serve in the same roles as men. These women have been deceived; they have believed the lie of Satan.

The Scriptures clearly attest that women should embrace and celebrate the role that the Lord God has given them. Women are to receive instruction (v. 11). Women are not to teach or exercise authority over a man (v. 12). Women are to understand the reason for this command (vv. 13–14). And women are to recognize their contribution (v. 15)

Do not fall into the trap of questioning the Lord God's clear commands and design. Instead, may both men and women joyfully embrace their distinct callings, for the glory of God, the health of the church, and the flourishing of Christian families.